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Rega Elicit-R

Of late, Rega has branched out into electronics with not inconsiderable success. The Elicit-R is a recent arrival that's a little different, as it has a built-in MM phono stage that can be switched to a line-level input via a rear panel switch if desired. Rega says it's of especially high quality, so should be used for your best audio source.

Inside, the Elicit-R's power amplifier circuitry is based on a complementary pair of Darlington output transistors forming an emulated Class-A driver stage. This is fed by a discrete FET line preamp complete with programmable stepped attenuator volume control. Rega says that polypropylene capacitors are featured throughout the signal path, and the new R version gets improved power supplies which take the power output up a bit over the old model.

This amplifier's ornate aluminium casework is very well made and looks great, but I was disappointed to find the user interface isn't quite as nice; eg, the gain control action was poor and the buttons fiddly.

SONIC FINGERPRINT

Like the cheaper Rega Brio-R, this is a tonally warm and fulsome performer, one which gushes with emotion and cuts to the heart and soul of the song. But still it sounds a little soft and indistinct in some respects. For buyers using anything less than really sophisticated loudspeakers, this may be no bad thing, as the Elicit-R's distinct sonic fingerprint will complement rather than confound them. Indeed, because it is one of the most euphonic solid-state amplifiers around, it should prove handy for taming forward-sounding systems.



However, the Rega does come over as rather veiled and opaque across the midband, and is a good deal less transparent than, say, the Naim or Exposure. Yet this amplifier always proved great fun to listen to.

'Humdrum' had less space between instruments than with all the other amplifiers here, with a rather dense and foggy quality to instruments at the back of the mix, but the playing seemed to have more passion than with all but the Exposure 3010S2.

Peter Gabriel's singing was wonderfully tuneful, almost as if he had woken up refreshed and revitalised from a deep sleep! The piano and guitar danced with one another and the ending section took on great emotional poignancy.

Randy Crawford also sounded like she was singing from the heart, the Rega pulling the listener's attention from the rich texture of her lovely voice to the emotions it was conveying. 4hero seemed less technically accomplished, but suddenly the sound was painting an amazing picture in my mind with the music. Dynamics were excellent, and the song gelled together beautifully. Yet you couldn't excuse that imprecise stereo imaging and slightly tizzy upper treble.

Sound Quality: 80%

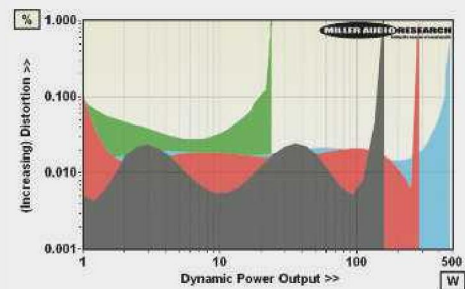


ABOVE: Rear panel sports five line inputs, one switchable between line and MM phono. Rec out, preamp out and a pair of speaker terminals complete the picture

ABOVE: Beautiful finished alloy fascia shows nice use of LEDs, but is spoilt by the volume control knob's imprecise action; silver source buttons are rather fiddly too

HI-FI NEWS LAB REPORT

Ostensibly a combination of Rega's 50W Brio-R power amp and Elicit II FET preamp circuits, the integrated Elicit-R achieves a substantially higher output of 2x125W/8ohm and 2x200W/4ohm (Rega's rated specification is 105W and 167W, respectively). The revised PSU offers a decent headroom too, allowing the Elicit-R to deliver a full 155W, 285W and 480W into 8, 4 and 2ohm loads [see Graph below]. Maximum current is 15.5A but Rega limits the amplifier's output to just 25W into 1ohm by way of short-circuit protection. Distortion is very uniform at 0.005-0.006% from 1W up to the rated 105W at 1kHz, increasing with frequency from 0.0009%/20Hz through to 0.050%/20kHz. The frequency response is flat from 20Hz-20kHz within ±0.2dB and only rolls away to -2dB/100kHz. Overall gain is high at +43.7dB and the A-wtd S/N ratio just fractionally below average at 84dB (re. 0dBW) but hum and noise is usefully suppressed at just -73dBV (0.2mV). PM



ABOVE: Dynamic power output versus distortion into 8ohm (black trace), 4ohm (red), 2ohm (blue) and 1ohm loads (green)

Power output (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	125W 200W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	155W 285W 480W 25W
Output impedance (20Hz-20kHz)	0.024-0.082ohm
Frequency response (20Hz-100kHz)	-0.2dB to -1.95dB
Input sensitivity (for 0dBW/105W)	26mV 272mV
A-wtd S/N ratio (re. 0dBW/105W)	83.7dB 103.9dB
Distortion (20Hz-20kHz, 10W/8ohm)	0.0009-0.050%
Power consumption (Idle/Rated o/p)	37W 270W
Dimensions (WHD)	432x82x340mm