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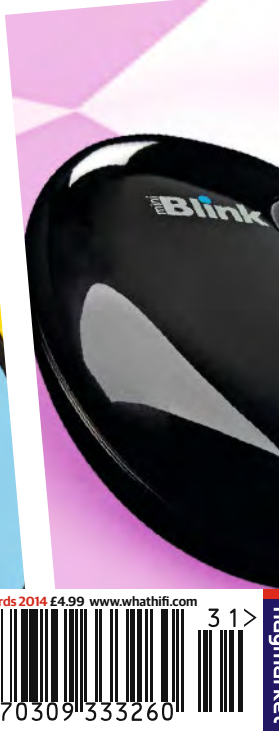
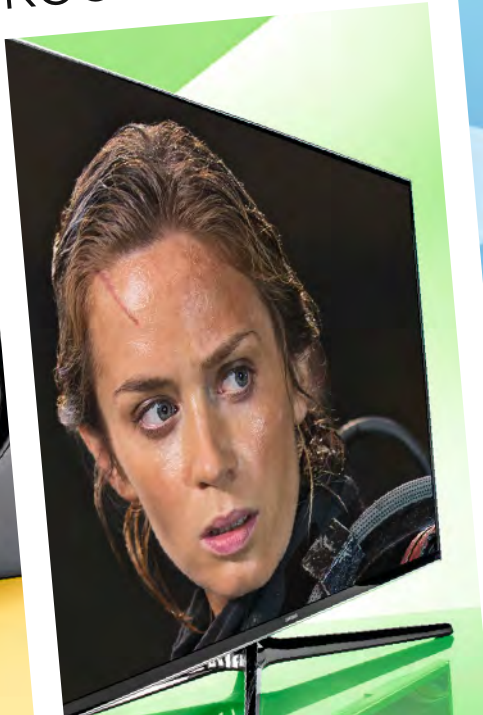
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Best stereo amplifier £800-£1500

Rega Elex-R £900



It takes a supremely talented amplifier to knock the terrific Naim Nait 5si off its perch, and that's what the Rega Elex-R is.

By using the much-admired Brio-R amp as a base and adding circuit elements from the unquestionably talented Elicit-R (£1600, see right) into the mix, Rega has created one of the most talented sub-£1000 amplifiers we've heard.

One of the family

Anyone familiar with Rega's current amplifier range will recognise the Elex-R's sonic character. It delivers a fast, agile sound that's as rhythmically surefooted as we've heard at this level. Play a piece of music such as alt-J's *Breezblocks* and the Rega is right at home. It's happy to deliver that thickly layered bassline with power and has no trouble rendering

dynamic shifts and changes of pace with enthusiasm. There's an addictive sense of liveliness and energy, something rivals tend to tone down in the search for greater refinement.

Tonally the Rega edges towards leanness, though if partnered with care (avoiding sources and speakers that err too far towards brightness) all will be fine. We used a range of speakers from Dali's lively Zensor 3s and B&W's 685s right the

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way to PMC's mighty Twenty 26s, and at no point did the Rega fail to shine.

Of course, a power output of around 70W-per-channel isn't enough to make the floor shake in really large rooms, but we think this Rega is capable of decent levels in most set-ups.

Switching to Tchaikovsky's *Marché Slave Op.31* shows that this amplifier can keep track of complex instrumental arrangements and deliver scale with authority. We're pleased with the resolution on offer too.

Traditional approach

Move away from sound and the Rega remains on sure ground, as long as all you want is a traditional stereo amplifier. There are no digital inputs, though we think Rega would direct you to its talented DAC for number-crunching duties. Instead, you get a good-quality MM phono stage, one that's talented enough to make the most of £1000 turntable packages such as Rega's own RP6 (that's a surprise).

We ended our First Test of the Elex-R by suggesting rival products from class leaders such as Naim, Cyrus and Roksan would have plenty of worry about from this unassuming compact amplifier. It turns out we were right.