

REGA ELICIT-R

£1600 ★★★★★



We're excited about the Elicit-R. It's one of the best stereo amplifiers we've heard at this price, and we love a good fight.

We get started with David Bowie's *The Stars (Are Out Tonight)*. It's a tricky one, with assorted elements that can sound like a cluttered mess when thrown together on lesser systems.

It's no problem for the Elicit-R, which handles this with skill and panache. Layers are separated with eyebrow-raising clarity and put together with precision. Instruments are clearly identifiable and given space to perform. And the lead guitar riff weaves between Bowie's gravelly vocals, propelling the song but never hogging the spotlight.

Great detail and rhythm

It's also incredibly detailed. We switch to the *Buena Vista Social Club* album and the Rega makes light work of the subtle shifts between instruments. From the husky vocals to the wonderful percussion section, the level of texture is nothing short of stunning.

We're also impressed by the Rega's agility. Its surefooted timing really demands attention. It also helps that the Elicit-R has great dynamic reach, going from peak to trough without hesitation, all the while maintaining composure.

Downsides? There's a slight leanness (and a hint of brightness) compared with

the richer, smoother Roksan Caspian M2 (p88) or Heed Obelisk Si (p85). The Rega trades warmth for transparency – so material that's been subjected to an iffy recording session (or, indeed, low-bitrate files) won't fare very well. Some might also find the Rega a little too demanding of attention: it's not what we'd call a relaxed presentation.

There's a single rotary dial on the front, flanked by a handful of scattered buttons, and a mildly ominous red glow.

For some it looks very cool. For others, it's a bit like KITT from *Knightrider* (only without the sass). It's a bold appearance, at any rate – much like its sound.

The Rega Elicit-R really is a fantastic amp. It's easily one of the best in this

The Elicit-R presents music with skill and style. Its sound is transparent rather than warm, and that brings with it almost fanatical attention to detail – and, of course, stunning clarity

The same characteristics run through the built-in moving-magnet phono stage. We fire up our Rega RP6 turntable with a record of REM's classic *Automatic For the People*, and the Elicit-R responds with a performance containing plenty of insight, although it isn't the most relaxed listen.

Still, compared with the other built-in phono stages in this test, the Rega's is the best. It's worth a listen for anyone who loves the tactile fluidity of vinyl records.

Physically, the Rega Elicit-R has divided opinion in our office. It's a metal box with a black satin finish and a glossy, recessed front panel.

test. Far-reaching dynamics and staggering levels of detail and agility make this a tough one to beat.

Even the long-reigning Roksan Caspian M2 is beginning to look a little shaky on its lofty perch. This is going to be a close one come verdict time.

Rating ★★★★★

FOR Seriously impressive detail, dynamics and agility; good built-in phono stage

AGAINST Some might want a more easy-going presentation; revealing of poor recordings

VERDICT This is a fantastic stereo amp – and easily one of the best at this price