

# WHAT HI★FI? SOUND AND VISION

THE HOME ENTERTAINMENT BUYER'S GUIDE

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER ★ First Test

## Rotel amp could be a champ

Rotel  
RA-03 £499

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

### ↑ FOR

Even-handed, dynamic and insightful sound; good range of features; build

### ↓ AGAINST

At this price we can't point to anything of major negative significance

### ◆◆◆◆◆ VERDICT

Rotel has come through with a real winner: the RA-03 is good enough to worry the very best in its class



THIS PRICE POINT in the amplifier market has been a black hole of late. Spend a hundred or so pounds more and you could buy Cyrus' 6vs or the Roksan Kandy MkIII. For a similar amount less NAD will happily sell you an Award-winning 352CT. Rotel's new



RA-03 amp may, however, just be the stick of dynamite to blow this market sector wide open.

Its internals are based on the design of the cheaper RA-02 model, but the engineers have gone to town on power supply and component quality. The result is a crisp, clean and powerful amplifier that can stand toe-to-toe with the very best at this sort of cost.

The RA-03 isn't an integrated that dazzles with sonic fireworks. There are competitors that produce extra bass weight, and those that respond to a fast-moving signal with superior agility. But the Rotel's strength is that its talents are more broad-based. It has a taut, precise bass performance that

works excellently with the Chemical Brothers' latest album and has enough power – 70 watts per channel – to keep a firm grip on any price-compatible speaker. Higher frequencies are sharp and insightful without ever straying into the sort of excessive brashness that some rivals suffer from, and vocals are delivered with crispness.

This blend of talents makes the RA-03 as comfortable reproducing the soundtrack from *The Village* as it is hammering out the latest Eminem set. Few other amps in its category display such a wide range of skills.

Add into the equation sturdy build, a well laid-out remote handset and a decent feature count, and the RA-03

Rotel's RA-03 is an amplifier that scores most highly for its balance of capabilities

emerges as a formidable contender. Best mid-priced stereo amp around? Our *Group Test* in the next issue will answer that question...

ALSO CONSIDER

Roksan Kandy Mk III  
£650 ★★★★★ May 2003  
Real powerhouse that delivers a massive dose of quality, too

Cyrus 6vs  
£600 ★★★★★ October 2004  
'Shoobox' amp with fine sound and fantastic upgrade potential