

Rotel RA-1062 Integrated Amp

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How would you describe your ideal mate? Someone who shares your undeniable good looks (and maybe, Mick and Bianca style, even looks *like* you)? Perhaps he or she possesses strengths where you suffer weaknesses, and vice versa. A shared socio-economic background often facilitates compatibility. And it helps if you're equally accomplished in your respective fields. Then there is the all-important, less tangible, element of chemistry: do the two of you together create passion?

Audio components, too, are looking to hook up with an ideal companion, for only then can they fulfill their sonic potential. As with humans, though, perfect audio partnerships can be elusive. Consider, for instance, the plight of a high-value, high-performance CD player like the Rotel RCD-1072, our 2003 Overall Product of the Year. There aren't many similarly able, affordable integrated amps (or receivers) worthy of sharing shelf space with such a gem.

Fortunately, Rotel, with clairvoyance as accurate as a spotting scope, foresaw the problem and created the RA-1062 integrated amp. By any and all of the above criteria, it is the RCD-1072's ideal match. The new amp shares the CD player's attractive satin silver finish (a ho-hum black is also available) and supremely magnanimous \$699 price

tag. Most importantly, this amp's stand-out performance is fully the equal of the stunning RCD-1072. And although the 1062 was literally made for that CD player—the two were “voiced” together before their respective designs were finalized—its copious charms are evident with a wide variety of source equipment and speakers.

So while the Rotel can't quite match the reference in specific areas such as high-frequency extension or dynamic scale, overall the two units sound remarkably alike and deliver a similar listening experience.

Within its handsome chassis, the RA-1062 is a comprehensive upgrade of Rotel's popular RA-1060 integrated amp. Unlike the older unit, the 1062 boasts exclusive use of instrument-grade internal parts. Similarly, the previous model's plastic speaker terminals have morphed into classy metal multiways. A completely redesigned phonostage is

included, as are important new features such as A/B speaker-switching, a headphone jack, 12-volt and remote-IR triggers, and a remote that will also control Rotel source components (such as the aforementioned CD player).

The 1062 serves up 60 watts per channel, and that's across the entire frequency band at rated distortion. As in the earlier-generation unit, this ample power emerges from a circuit topology that features oversized transformers and expensive slit-foil capacitors, just like the ones used by Meridian and other upmarket brands. The big transformers promise high dynamic headroom and the ability to support rapid, wide current swings, while the fancy caps are meant to enable dynamic peaks that can be sustained longer than less exotic alternatives can manage.

In practice, the confluence of these upgrades and carry-over techniques results in an amp capable of both towering dynamic gestures and spellbinding nuance. Listen, for instance, to the Speakers Corner/Decca LP of Mahler's First Symphony, whose brass-fueled fireworks finale constitutes a challenge for any amp. The Rotel is not even a little intimidated by this piece. It *does* slightly reduce Mahler's grand scale, but within that still-expansive physical and dynamic scope, the 1062 precisely tracks every spatial cue, crescendo, and



decrecendo. Attacks, such as the exclamatory cymbal crashes, are vividly delivered. The overall effect is thrilling.

Adding to the RA-1062's impact is its neutral, uncolored, and surprisingly transparent balance. On the LP of Sonny Rollins' *Way Out West* [Analogue Productions], the level of realism is startling for an amp of this price. Percussion instruments possess incisive initial transients and well-controlled decays. Like the horns on the Mahler, Sonny's sax has the warmth and burnish of real brass.

The fact that I can compare this closely a \$700 integrated amp to equipment that tops fifty large speaks volumes about the former's prowess and value.

Although I obviously enjoyed playing LPs through the 1062, I was not able to test its new phonostage. The module supports only moving-magnet cartridges, and I had only a moving coil on hand. As a workaround, I played records by connecting my own MC phonostage to one of the amp's five line-level inputs. This combination, as I've described, yielded stirring results. The amp was equally happy being driven by my reference CD player. However, the sparks really began to fly when I connected the 1062 to its intended mate, the RCD-1072 CD player.

Even on a short listen, the compatibility and complementary nature of these two devices is immediately obvious. The amp's dynamic eagerness perfectly compensates for the CD player's slight tendency to be polite. But beyond such analytical observations, the union of these components results in a synergy that can only be chalked up to that intangible called chemistry. Together, they create an open conduit to the full measure of music's sound and emotions.

With the 1072 in the system, several of the RA-1062's strengths become


more prominent. In addition to its stellar dynamics and uncolored sound, the 1062's soundstaging is exemplary. I was also more than a little pleased with its bass performance. Don't let the 60-watt rating temper your expectations in this area; this amp's bass is both robust and tuneful. The 1062's low-end power and precise transients conspire to create seductive rhythms at every musical turn.

So where are the compromises necessitated by a \$700 price point? On the Sonny Rollins LP, and in other recordings as well, it is evident that the 1062 somewhat reduces the "body" of instruments. Too, there is less air around those instruments and less sense of the recording space than can be conjured by reference gear. In addition, the 1062 imparts a minor gloss to high frequencies. Along with being rolled off at the very extremes, any upper-frequency roughness is polished smooth. This is not at all unpleasant, mind you, and it is certainly preferable to the added glare that's so common in less expensive gear. Nevertheless, the truth is not always quite as pretty as the RA-1062 would have you believe.

The amp's final concession to being built to a price point becomes evident during dense musical passages. Here, the 1062 congests, and the soundstage collapses. As an example, audition "A Sorta Fairytale" from Tori Amos' *Scarlet's Walk* CD [Epic]. All is splendid during the opening drum/piano parlay—lustrous instrumental tone, a great sense of pace—and the presentation continues to woo the listener as Tori's voice enters. But when the multilayered band kicks in a few measures later, spatial width shrinks noticeably and it becomes difficult to discern individual instruments. Through my reference amp, no such muddle occurs.

Yet, in reality the 1062 is more similar to than different from my reference. The disparities are a matter of degree, not of a fundamental nature. So while the Rotel can't quite match the reference in specific areas such as high-frequency extension or dynamic scale, overall the two units sound remarkably

alike and deliver a similar listening experience. Both amps are commendably fast, neutral, dynamic, and tonally realistic. And they both engross the listener by capturing the sonority and expressive gestures—both large of small—of real music.

The fact that I can compare this closely a \$700 integrated amp to functionally equivalent equipment that tops fifty large speaks volumes about the former's prowess and value. Clearly, the RA-1062's plethora of sonic attributes isn't remotely offset by its meager deficiencies. In addition, the 1062 is a fully featured, smoothly operating control unit with sufficient flexibility to comfortably ensconce itself in a wide variety of installations. Indeed, the RA-1062 is the ideal centerpiece for serious yet modestly budgeted systems. And if you were persuaded by our review of the RCD-1072 to entertain the purchase of that CD player, look no further for a worthy companion. The 1062 is in every way its perfect mate. 

SPECIFICATIONS

Power: 60 watts per channel, continuous, 20Hz–20 kHz, <0.03% distortion, 8 ohms
Inputs: Five line-level, one moving-magnet phono
Dimensions: 17" x 5.6" x 14"
Weight: 17.2 lbs.

ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT

Goldmund Studietto turntable, Graham 2.2 tonearm, Clearaudio Insider Gold cartridge; Goldmund Mimesis 36 CD Transport & Mimesis 12++ DAC; Goldmund Mimesis 22 preamp & Mimesis 29.4 amps; Metaphor 1, Metaphor 2, and B&W 703 speakers; Empirical Design RM-1 speaker cables & Omniwire II interconnects; Goldmund cones, ASC Tube Traps; Empirical Design power cords

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