

£398 per pair ☎ 01702 333071 🌐 www.rega.co.uk

REGA RS1

A radical new tweeter lies at the heart of Rega's new RS range

Rega might have started out as a vinyl turntable specialist, beloved of those with limited means who put musical performance ahead of hype, but the company has moved steadily into all types of hi-fi components, usually with products that combine considerable innovation with affordable pricetags.

This £398 RS1 looks almost identical to the R1 we reviewed some four years ago (*HFC* 269) and as before, it's the smallest, the most conventional and the only standmount in the range. Indeed, this simple two-way can also be seen as a direct descendant of Rega's earlier Kyte and Ara models.

Although the new model has undergone other subtle changes, the RS1 differs from the R1 in two key areas: its gone up by £100; and it now incorporates Rega's radical new tweeter.

Coping with the rear radiation generated behind a tweeter's dome diaphragm has been an issue with speaker designers for years. Many drill a hole through the polepiece to avoid pressure build-up, but Rega has gone much further by drilling most of the polepiece out and leaving just a thin cylinder of metal instead of the usual thick rod. By using powerful magnets, Rega's 19mm tweeter now has a 16mm-diameter hole through its polepiece, so the fabric dome effectively operates in free air and the rearward radiation passes through the motor into a generous cavity, shaped to avoid reflections.

For the rest, this unusually slim speaker comes with decent-quality real-wood veneer on all six faces, as well as neatly rebated drivers and the grille removed. Bass and midrange

duties are handled by Rega's well-established RR125 main driver, a cast-alloy chassis 135mm unit with a solid central phase plug and a 90mm paper cone, driven from a 19mm voice coil. Though slim, the enclosure is quite deep, and is loaded by a rear port tuned to 63Hz.

SOUND QUALITY

The measurements had already demonstrated that the RS1 has a very good bass alignment for close-to-wall siting, though they also showed an associated mild lack of upper bass output. Combine this with quite strong output through the upper mid and treble and the net result emphasises the speaker's best features – it's lively, dynamic and exciting especially with vocals and higher register instruments.

The result is a beautifully coherent and exceptionally informative speaker, but with a rather lightweight character. It sounds wonderful with Alison Krauss, but a little under-nourished when playing bass-rich material like Fatboy Slim or The Prodigy. That said, it might be lightweight, but the RS1's bottom end is very clean and agile, delivering an impressive amount of musical detail.

Although the RS1 worked very well in our quite large room, it seems very likely that it might have delivered an even better overall balance in a rather smaller room, which would probably have imbued the sound with a bit more authority and warmth.

However, the mid and top have the sort of delicacy, dynamic vigour and expression that can put many far more costly speakers to shame and unquestionably ensure the RS1 deserves its Best Buy rating. **HFC**

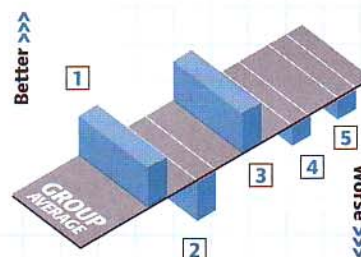


LAB REPORT

It's particularly interesting to compare the findings of the RS1 with those for its R1 predecessor, as there's actually not a lot of difference between the two. Indeed, the only real change in the far-field frequency balance is that the upper midband is rather stronger between 450Hz and 1.5kHz, which is all to the good as it means that the top end, above 2kHz, is no longer so obviously exposed.

With the port tuned to a relatively high 63Hz, the bass end is very well aligned for close-to-wall siting. Under our room conditions it delivers decent output down to around 45Hz, alongside a very easy amplifier load that stays mostly above 8 ohms. Rega quotes: "(Approx) 90dB" sensitivity; variations with frequency and measurement conditions mean it's never possible to be exact here, but our own approximation is just 88dB.

HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Sensitivity >> +20%
- 2] Bass extension >> -20%
- 3] Ease of drive >> +20%
- 4] Overall frequency balance >> -10%
- 5] Response smoothness >> -10%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	90dB	88dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	8/ns ohms	8/6 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	ns	23Hz

VERDICT

SOUND



PRACTICALITY



BUILD



VALUE



This clever close-to-wall speaker has fine coherence and good communication skills. It somehow manages to sound much bigger than it looks, although the bass can get a bit unruly and voices have some coloration.

HI-FI CHOICE
OVERALL SCORE
★★★★★

