



[Ed Selley](#)
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AMPLIFIERS

Rega Brio Mk7

REGA'S MOST WELL-KNOWN AMPLIFIER, THE BRIO, RETURNS FROM A SABBATICAL WITH SOME NEW TRICKS UP ITS SLEEVE - ED SELLEY FINDS OUT IF IT STILL CUTS THE MUSTARD...

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REVIEW

Rega is best known as a manufacturer of turntables; this is, after all, what it started out producing and continues to enjoy a formidable run of form with. Since it began however, Rega's range has expanded to the point whereby it can sell you a complete system, from the tip of a stylus to the driver of a loudspeaker. Not so long ago, I tested a Rega setup that did just that (<https://www.sound-advice.online/product-reviews/reg-a-ya-elex-planar>).



The Brio is one of the most important steps on the path between Rega being a turntable manufacturer and a highly regarded electronics company. For years it was the most affordable amp in the range (the Io now fills this role), and it cemented a formidable reputation for combining a phono stage that would do justice to any roughly equivalent Rega turntable with an amplifier that had enough power and musicality to make any sensibly priced pair of speakers sing. It wasn't a complicated recipe, but it was an appealing one - and the Brio has been a strong seller ever since.

The Brio mk7 looks like more of the same - but all is not what it appears. Rega hasn't done anything crazy with the basics, but this Brio does more and does so with some extra flourishes over Brios of old. At its core is a class AB amplifier that provides 50 watts into 8 ohms and 72 ohms into 6 (Rega doesn't quote a 4 ohm figure, but my review sample hasn't melted on contact with a 4 ohm load). These aren't the sort of figures you can weld with, but they should be entirely sufficient for most domestic needs.

This power is made available to a moving magnet phono stage and three line inputs on RCA connections. In 2025, this is actually more analogue line inputs than some considerably more costly integrated amps offer and reflects that Rega still feels these connections matter. What you *don't* get is any form of preout or subwoofer out connection, which might make connecting up a 2.1 system tricky. There is a headphone output on the front panel though, which works via 3.5mm connection.

The big news for this Brio is that the analogue connections are, for the first time on a half-width Rega amplifier, joined by digital inputs. These comprise a single optical and coaxial connection and both of them support PCM to 24/192kHz (or 'to the point where on-demand streaming services stop working' if the business of sample rates has no particular point of reference to you). There are rivals at this sort of price that can do more than the Rega can but, this is a very flexible selection of inputs.

Internally, Rega has used all the experience garnered from upgrading other members of the amplifier range to squeeze more performance from the basic platform. Revisions to how the board is laid out, to the power supply, and better components in the signal path are all there to make this a Brio... but a Brio that sounds better than any Brio before it.

SOUND QUALITY

Some of you might have read the hardware bit of this review, thought of a selection of alternative products and gone 'well that has feature X or connection Y' and wondered why you might plump for the Brio instead. The simple answer is that it sounds absolutely sensational.

What the Rega does with an assurance that devices that cost many times more can struggle to match is deliver the emotional content of the music you are listening to in a way that means you ignore any technical limitations because the result is so compelling. Indie foursome putting it all on the record? Not a problem. Classical instrumentalist channelling decades of practice to deliver the performance of a lifetime? Sit down and enjoy. There is a fundamental *rightness* to what the Rega does that will have you questioning whether you really need to spend any more money.

What's also worth noting is that its technical limitations are hardly onerous either. The Rega doesn't have as much low extension as some larger and more

potent amplifiers, but the bass it generates is fast, tuneful and beautifully integrated to the rest of the frequency response. There are other amplifiers that can prise a little more space and three-dimensionality from a recording - but listen to the Rega via a remotely capable pair of speakers (I use the Q Acoustics 5020 and Neat's utterly spellbinding Petite Classic) and the performance will feel compellingly real.

And those digital inputs? The really clever bit about how Rega has built the Brio is that they are largely the same as the analogue connections - they go long on capturing the emotional content of what you are listening to. When you feed the Brio some really beautifully mastered hi-res, you can argue that there isn't the jump in quality that some relatively affordable digital solutions can offer - but this as much a reflection of the Rega's ability with bog-standard files. There isn't an especially dramatic jump to be experienced.

It's the phono stage that remains the star of the show, though. My Planar 3 RS sample has returned to base by the time the Brio arrives so I wind up using a turntable, arm and cartridge combination that was getting on ten times the price of the Brio - and the Rega was able to reflect the qualities of this hefty front edge. With all the basics covered, no unwanted noise and plenty of gain, there is the same effortless ability to engage and delight the listener.

LIVING WITH BRIO

In a word? Painless. The Rega is a half-width design, which means it takes up a commendably small amount of space - and if you have something like a Planar 3 RS with its external power supply, it could sit alongside the Brio on a normal width shelf and take up less room than a full-width amplifier. At a price where many of the devices competing with the Rega feel a bit on the lightweight side, the Brio mk7 is a hefty metal chassis that is finished to a very high standard.

You also benefit from Rega's other big innovation for the Brio mk7. Rega has included a remote control - but unlike any other Rega amp's remote, this has a remote standby, which means you can sink into your comfy chair at the end of the day and start the Rega from there. It's a little detail but it's a very welcome one.

At a price where some rivals have a distinctly lifestyle twist, the Brio also looks like a piece of hifi. It is a design that eschews of-the-moment styling flourishes to ensure it'll still look handsome and well thought-out (in a subtle and unobtrusive way) in a decade's time. Rega has now been trading for over half a century, and this expertise really shows.

CONCLUSION

There's nothing about the spec of the Rega that grabs you by the lapels, but the way it sounds will. This is an absolute masterclass in delivering the musical message - and partnered with any sympathy, very little else under a grand can get near it.

LISTENING NOTES

Slow Readers Club *Out of a Dream*

This immaculate Manchester indie is all about the sheer passion the band possesses in spades - and the Rega makes sure this is what you focus on above everything else.

Paul Brady *Spirits Colliding*

A journeyman singer/songwriter with a knack for writing the catchiest songs going is an excuse for the Rega to deliver an absolute helping of joy, while revelling in the superb tonal realism and immaculate mastering.

Hot Chip *Freakout/Release*

The vinyl copy of this album has a gently tweaked master to the digital file, and the Rega is good enough to get it to truly sing in a way that has you pleased you went with the sheer fuff of vinyl for these special moments.

WHY YOU SHOULD BUY IT

If you have selected one of the many fine turntables currently hitting the market at under a grand, this is about as good as it gets in terms of partnering equipment. Not only that, as well as excelling with vinyl, the Rega's breadth of all-round talent will keep you listening via its other inputs too.

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