

# HI-FI CHOICE

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## REGA RADIO 3 FM/MW



**It's a digital-free zone, but this tuner handles analogue FM exceptionally well**

The name seems destined to appeal to classical music lovers - the aesthetics will appeal to some but perhaps not others. A classic bit of iconoclastic Rega design, in fact. Not so unusual inside though, with more of the usual radio bits doing the business. Still, you get a more impressive power supply, and a considerably more substantial case, than electronically similar models from the Far East can offer. True, you also get less features, but really the only thing one might miss is RDS and if Rega wishes to counter that very few people really use RDS in the home we can only agree.

Talking of features, though, they could perhaps be a bit easier to use. There's always a compromise between clutter on the front panel and ease of use, but it could be argued that Rega has worried a little too much about the first. There also seems to be an operational oddity in that when 'preset' mode is activated stations sometimes play at reduced volume. But if you keep the manual handy, or simply don't retune much, you'll get by happily enough. Tuning is achieved in half steps (25kHz) which can sometimes help in avoiding interference from nearby stations. Rather unusually for a specialist tuner there's also AM reception - and it's relatively good too.

Don't be alarmed if the tonal balance of this tuner seems a little bright at first. Ever so slightly, it is. Sometimes that's the first symptom of more worrying things like roughness, harshness or even shrillness. In this case it's simply a very slightly uptilted response, something one gets used to after a minute or three. And once that's accounted for, the sound overall is extremely tasty.

Given, as usual, that not all of what one receives on any radio is of decent quality, this tuner can always make the best of a bad job, and with good programmes it really shines. On Radios 2, 3 and 4 it proved a dab (no pun intended) hand at coaxing uncommon levels of detail from the ether. It does like to be fed a pretty strong radio signal, and under marginal conditions it will tend to be slightly noisier than some of the competition, but it's not easily upset by having too much level so, as usual, a good FM aerial is highly recommended.

You'll be rewarded with a very pleasingly clean sound, with good bass extension that never overreaches into plumminess, a commendably open and neutral midrange and just a little coloration in the higher frequencies, really nothing to get upset over. Speech is handled gracefully with minimal spit and stereo imaging is about as good as it gets via radio. Classical music is suitably civilised, while energetic rock drives along with great vigour, perhaps losing the smallest degree of 'foottappingness' but only by comparison with considerably more expensive reference devices.

Because of this tuner's slightly bright character, modern synth-based pop can sound a bit too much in direct comparisons with other models, but in the longer run the lack of roughness further down the band more than compensates for this. Incidentally, output levels are lower than with many other tuners, making careless comparisons misleading!

In short, this is a very capable and satisfying tuner which should certainly be auditioned by anyone seeking to maximise the pleasure of FM radio.

## **FEATURES**

**CONTROLS:** The buttons feel cheap and plasticky, some modes are a bit idiosyncratic and manual tuning is slow and tiresome. But if you make use of the presets that will seldom bother you, and it can't detract from the sonic performance. **CONNECTIONS:** Absolutely just the basics! Like practically all FM tuners, this one has a male UHF connector so you may need a gender-changer to connect a standard antenna downlead. Don't be tempted to take a feed from your TV antenna - it won't help!

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Hi-Fi Choice, Future Publishing Ltd., 30 Monmouth Street, BATH, BA1 2BW.  
hifichoice@futurenet.co.uk Tel: +44 1225 442244 Fax: +44 1225 732248