



Rega Mira 3 stereo amp £548

> The Mira 3 is the more expensive of Rega's latest brace of integrated amplifiers. It features many of the innovations developed in the Cursa 3 preamp and Exon 3 power amp.

It's a well-constructed 60-watt model with a built-in adjustable phono stage and enough line stages to keep you in stereo sources practically forever. Its design is strictly minimalist – even volume and channel switching are controlled via the same clever rotary control (see box). A tape loop and a mute button are the 'frivolous' extras, but you soon feel guilty when using them. Even the remote control is a £25 optional extra, although it's an option well worth taking if you value convenience.

Time passes pleasantly in front of the Mira 3. It makes a lovely, neat and slightly dry sound that will probably leave some cold, but the rest of us can relish the tidy, close-knit presentation. And, although Linkin Park fans would most likely get fed up with having to turn the volume dial through about 20 revolutions to get the right sound

KEY FEATURES

- ◉ Integrated preamplifier
- ◉ 60 watts per channel
- ◉ Adjustable MM/MC phono stage
- ◉ Optional remote control
- ◉ Five inputs + one tape loop
- ◉ One amplifier output/one preamplifier input
- ◉ Adjustable preamplifier gain

pressure levels, there's a lot to like about the Mira 3.

It seems to cut through the chaff to get at the music buried beneath, so you get a coherent, tightly focused sound that gently persuades you listen to the whole of the Norah Jones album instead of being tempted to pick out 'reviewer' tracks.

It's a distinctly un-audiophile sound, but in all the right ways. This makes it a bit of a pig for a reviewer though – the track is selected, pencil is cued up to hit the pad and then you drift off into the music for another half an hour of entertainment.

It's not perfect however. Its ability to play complex and challenging pieces of music at high volumes is at best unconvincing, so that full-on *Rachmaninov's Symphonic Dances* seems to overawe it. But on the other hand, the sound of the latest ABKCO hybrid CD/SACD reissue of the Rolling Stones' *Let It Bleed* album makes it all worthwhile. You find yourself nodding along to *Midnight Rambler* like it was recorded yesterday.

On the whole, the Rega Mira 3 has

an ability to captivate in the long term. A quick five-minute blast might make it seem like the kind of amplifier that would be more suited for background music replay, but that laid-back, slightly close-knit approach rarely gets in the way of the music and is in fact what makes it so good. Not for everyone, then, but those who like the Mira 3 will love it above any competition at the price.

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DIGITAL VOLUME CONTROL

Like its cousin, the Cursa 3 preamp, the Mira 3 features a microprocessor-controlled switched resistor network (in place of the more commonplace potentiometer) for volume control. This stepped resistive network is extremely precise, giving 1dB steps across the amp's volume range, and it also makes for a constant input impedance in the preamp circuit, thereby overcoming subtle changes in sound quality relative to volume. (See *HFC 238* for more info).

What this means in practical terms is that it delivers a crisper and slightly more direct sound, especially in the midrange and high frequencies. However, it is expensive to produce and implement, and this inevitably adds to the amp's price.

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