

£448 per pair ☎ 01702 333071 🌐 www.rega.com

REGA R3

This British-made baby floorstander offers superb value for money

Essex-based Rega is one of Britain's most successful and long established hi-fi companies. Known first and foremost for vinyl turntables, it managed the transition to CD and steadily expanded its range of activities to encompass a full line of electronics products and an extensive range of loudspeakers, all of which are manufactured in its Southend factories.

Back last summer (in HFC 256), we reviewed the company's new flagship loudspeaker called the R9, which employed a new and innovative bass driver technology. This technique was so effective that Rega quickly adapted it to suit smaller and less expensive models in its range, including this entry-level R3. Considering it's a three-driver floorstander with a proper plinth, good-quality real wood finish and, of course, no need to purchase additional stands, the price of £448 per pair looks a very reasonable prospect indeed.

It's one of the smallest floorstanders *Hi-Fi Choice* has ever encountered, standing just

75cm tall and looking notably slim when viewed from the front, so it appears just about as discreet as any speaker can be. A possible downside is that the drive units will be placed somewhat below seated ear height.

Both the open-frame drivers are small units with 125mm frames and 90mm paper cones, each loaded by part of the total enclosure. The front-mounted bass/mid driver is a type R125, similar to that used in a number of other Rega models, and this is placed above the 19mm soft dome tweeter, and loaded by a small sealed chamber. The bass-only driver is mounted on the side here, and is unusual in featuring a multi-layer voice coil, whose inherently high inductance provides an automatic low-pass roll-off, without the need for additional crossover network components. This bass driver is loaded by most of the enclosure, and a large front port close to the floor. The whole thing sits on a solid, spiked MDF plinth, which ensures good physical stability, and is fed via a single terminal pair.

SOUND QUALITY

Some time was spent experimenting with positioning. Obviously rather bass light when sited well clear of walls, it became a little too heavy and bassy when moved up close. Best balance in our room was found with the speakers around 15-25cm from the nearest rearward wall, so the R3 should be easily adapted to a good range of room sizes and types. As ever, one should experiment *in situ*.

The R3 has an engagingly 'busy' sound, generating and transmitting to listeners a considerable amount of musical information and detail. Essentially neutral and even-handed right across the band, with unusually good all-round coherence, it remains a somewhat lightweight affair in tonal balance and dynamic terms. The sound could be warmer and 'fuller' in the bass region too, but is also clean, lively and notably agile. It has an impressive ability to sort out complex bass interplay and distinguish between different instrumental textures, for example in Mari Boine's remarkable live album *Eallin*.

The treble might be stronger than average, but it's also very clean and smooth, avoiding any harshness or harshness even when the volume is turned up high. This has the added bonus that fine detail is well maintained even at very low listening levels. As a speaker that's discreet, involving and also very cost effective, the R3 will take some beating – a very fine package with music at its core. **HFC**

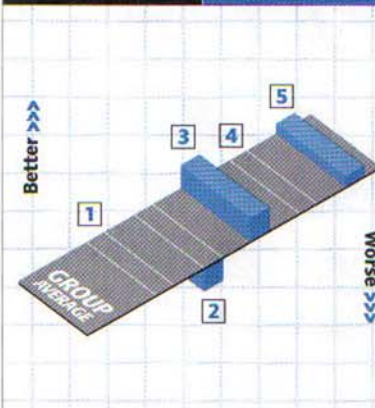


LAB REPORT

The R3 registered a sensitivity of 88dB on our measure, which is as near as dammit to the "approx 89dB" that Rega claims. This average value is not too seriously compromised by an impedance characteristic that stays comfortably above four ohms throughout. Free space siting found the bass distinctly lacking, but this became a slight excess if the speakers were close up top the wall – best results were obtained with a 10 to 25cm gap.

The overall frequency balance is impressively well-ordered right across the band, and smoother than average too for the most part. However, it does display some obvious individual characteristics, and this particularly tends to emphasise the top end of the frequency band. Although there's an isolated peak at around 200Hz, more significant is a forward plateau 1.5-3kHz, and a rising trend thereafter to a further plateau 8-14kHz.

HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Sensitivity >> 0%
- 2] Bass extension >> -20%
- 3] Ease of drive >> +20%
- 4] Overall frequency balance >> 0%
- 5] Response smoothness >> +10%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	89dB	88dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	6/- ohms	6/4.5 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	-	42Hz

VERDICT

SOUND >> 86%

PRACTICALITY >> 88%

BUILD >> 86%

VALUE >> 94%

This discreet little floorstander offers fine material value for money. The sound is lightweight but also beautifully balanced and open, delivering bags of musical detail with fine poise and great agility.

HI-FI CHOICE
OVERALL SCORE **90%**

