

Sexy & Serious

ROTEL'S NEW 15 SERIES INTEGRATED AMP AND CD PLAYER

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It's been a while since I've laid my hands on some new Rotel products. Fact is, I was beginning to wonder what was up since the line was getting a little long in the tooth in the last couple of years or so. But worry no longer. At CES they debuted the 15 Series, an impressive soup-to-nuts range of components that includes a 7.1-channel receiver, a surround processor, stereo and multichannel amps, custom install amps,... well you get the picture. It's a BIG line. And a sexy one. And one that is considered the summation of five decades of audio design. And it's all the more impressive in the flesh. From the sumptuous brushed metal cabinet finish, to the refreshed remote controls, software and connectivity the 15 Series definitely is raising the bar in this segment. NAD are you watching? For the budget minded enthusiast there is also a couple 15

Series "Classic" models (I prefer purist, but that's me)– the RCD1520 CD player and RA-1520 integrated amplifier. And gorgeous they are with a combination of brushed and polished metal surfaces, smoothly radiussed end caps on the front panel and a wonderful tactile feel to the gently rounded buttons and knobs. The Rotel name is richly engraved into the front panel further emphasizing the panel's depth and mass.

At first I was a little perplexed that I didn't see a USB input on the front panel of the RA-1520 but quickly noticed the media-jack suitable for any pocket MP3 style player (there's a separate headphone jack as well). I've recently reviewed so many CD-receivers with USB like the April Music Aura Note or Arcam Solo Mini that I'd come to expect it every time. But when I took a moment to think about it I

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remembered that like much of the high-end Rotel is a fairly conservative company (that's why the RA-1520 is part of the Classic line in the first place) with a primary emphasis on sonics and construction integrity. They may not be the first to embrace every nascent technology but you know that when they do, it will be done right.

This discrete and common sense approach is embodied in the new integrated and CD player. You can feel it right away as you unpack them; the integrity of the fit and finish, particularly the edge details, the heavy toroid power transformer of the RA-1520, a Rotel trademark. There's a solid and most probably conservatively rated 60Wpc under the hood and for the old school vinyl-addicts like myself, preamp outs, a moving magnet phono output which I'll be putting through its paces shortly. Like wise, the RCD-1520 CD player, a slot-loaded unit, provides a high performance Wolf-

son DAC to handle the conversion duties, a sweet digital output for an outboard DAC, an intelligible and comprehensive display and excellent disc handling. They list for \$999 each and I'll be writing about them in depth in TAS in a Start Me Up feature in the near future. Meanwhile, where's that new Green Day, "21st Century Breakdown" CD??
rotel.com

