



Rotel RCD-1070 | £525 ★★★★★

FOR

A well-balanced and informative presentation; fine build and finish

AGAINST

Grab-handles and functional appearance may not suit all tastes

VERDICT

The RCD-1070 is a terrific machine, and puts Rotel back on the middle-market CD player map

IT'S IMMEDIATELY CLEAR that Rotel's RCD-1070 is a great CD player for the money. Its grab-handles suggest serious intent and the build quality backs it up. The casework feels rigid and the front-panel controls work with a slickness few rivals can match.

Sensibly, Rotel hasn't played the numbers game and gone for the most highly specified DAC it could find. In the world of hi-fi, specifications are a poor guide to sonic performance, as the superb sound from certain valve amplifiers and record players proves.

Instead, the RCD-1070 uses a new Burr-Brown Delta-Sigma DAC, which has the equivalent resolution of an 18-bit device rather than using the 24-bit-rated devices that most competitors at this level feature. But CD is only 16-bit, so that's no loss.

A few days of running-in gets the Rotel in fighting form, dispatching an initial hint of treble forwardness. Once it hits full stride, this player delivers a

formidable performance full of fire and finesse. Play the likes of Mr Mathers' *The Eminem Show* and the RCD-1070 responds with plenty of enthusiasm. Basslines are taut and precisely defined, while transients are solid and fast.

It can dig up a great deal of detail too. Subtle background sounds are easy to hear, and the leading edges of notes are beautifully resolved. The result is that the player doesn't sound stressed even when the music gets demanding.

What's more, the Rotel can rock hard when required, yet put on something more soothing, such as the *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* soundtrack, and it responds with a delicate

The Rotel is an excellent option if you can't stretch to the £600 models here

touch. Importantly, the RCD 1070's impressive handling of low-level dynamics also keeps gentler styles of music involving.

Is it good enough to take top spot in this test? Almost, but not quite. This is without doubt a superb player, but both the Arcam and Exposure give the listener a touch more insight into the recording. Then again, they do cost almost £100 more.

If you can't stretch beyond the price of this Rotel, don't worry. This is probably the best way of spending around £500 on CD replay right now.