

Product review

Components:

Rotel RMB-1095

Rotel offers a home theater lineup of components known for their high quality and modest price tag. While using separate components may not be on cheap side of the tracks, Rotel's products often outperform or equal competing products costing more, giving Rotel's products a high "value" rating.

"...knockdown performance that separate components offer, without such a knockdown price..."

Rotel's flagship RMB-1095 5-channel amp comes with a \$2,000 price tag in an industry where amplifiers of this caliber often demand a \$4,000 minimum for entry. It's this price vs performance comparison where the practicality of the RMB-1095 shines through by delivering the knockdown performance that separate components offer, without such a knockdown price for those who want in the door.

Specs

Weighing in at 75 pounds this monster 5-channel amp is not to be taken lightly. And for those who're still skeptical, it packs 1000 Watts of power behind its punch to let you know otherwise. This amp pumps 200 watts of power to each speaker, and features two, custom made, oversized power transformers that all but ensure you'll have enough reserve power to play the most demanding audio passages you can throw at it.

The amp is mounted on 3 rubberized insulated feet with two caster wheels (that's right,

wheels!) where the back feet would usually go. Resting this amp in its final location simply requires lifting the front and rolling it around.

Another option the RMB-1095 provides is a 12volt toggle switch that allows the amp to be powered up by receivers or preamps that have this option. If your preamp or receiver lacks this option you'll have to press the power button manually to turn the unit on.

"...the RMB-1095 relies on air-cooling thus eliminating fan noise altogether."

Heatsinks flank both sides of the RMB-1095, which are hidden within the casing. The front of the unit provides another set of exposed heatsinks creating a very industrial look. Rather than using a fan, the RMB-1095 relies on air-cooling thus eliminating fan noise altogether. Proof the convection cooling works lies with the fact that the amp only feels warm rather than burning hot when driven to extreme levels for extended periods of time.

Connections

Input connections offered to connect your pre-amp or receiver to the Rotel are: 5 Composite RCA unbalanced inputs, 5 XLR balanced inputs, and a DB-25 connection. Speaker connections are terminated with 5-way binding posts that accept banana, lug or bare wire connections. (Note: since the product sells in Europe too, it will not accept dual-banana plugs). You'll need individual banana plugs).



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XLR inputs provide a better audio connection, but are usually only available in more high-end preamps, (which is why most people have never heard of them). The DB-25 connector can take the place of all 5 RCA input connections, but it too is mainly used for only high-end custom applications. Most people will use the five RCA composite inputs, just be sure to buy high quality interconnect cable to make the connection. Look to spend at least \$30-\$50 on each cable.



Hardware Performance

The Rotel turns on via the power button on the front of the unit. On startup, fault protection light indicators for each speaker light up briefly and turn off as the amp cycles through each line. If

the amp is pushed too loud for too long the protection circuit for each speaker will trigger and turn off whichever channel needs a rest. This is an extremely nice feature, as the Rotel doesn't allow the amp or the speaker to be driven to their limits. Resetting the circuit simply involves turning the unit off and on again.

During playback the Rotel doesn't heat up to the extreme levels that many receivers and amplifiers suffer from. Providing a nice calm after the storm, rather than leaving you with the idea that you may be pushing your amp or receiver too hard. The Rotel's enormous heatsinks allow the RMB-1095 to dissipate heat at an efficient enough level without a fan. Which is good news as the last thing you want to hear during a silent audio passage is a whirring fan. The RMB-1095 uses the air around it for cooling purposes so you will need to have plenty of breathing room around it.

The Rotel is solidly designed with rubber footings and rubber insulators placed in the inside cas-

ing providing a resonant free enclosure. The short: you won't hear this amp vibrate from your subwoofer's bass, which is a good thing.

"...any component will perform better if it's dedicated to doing one task extremely well instead of performing multiple tasks..."

The Separate Advantage

Using a separate amp instead of a receiver offers flexibility, better sound quality, and usually higher wattage output. The simplest reasoning for using a separate amp is that any component will perform better if it's dedicated to doing one task extremely well instead of performing multiple tasks as good as possible. In the case of an amplifier, its task is to power the speakers.

"...what do you get by pumping 200 watts of power through your speakers?"

The RMB-1095 is not a little amp nor is it just adequately sup-

plied. So what do you get by pumping 200 watts of power through your speakers? Just the some of the most clean effortless sound you've ever heard. Audio details stand out with separation and clarity that needs to be experienced to be believed.

Effortless

The "effortless" cry chimes in during any loud passage. The RMB-1095 provides enough backup power to supply clean sound and retain detail during loud or soft audio passages. Movies rip open with beautifully thunderous explosions and surround effects fly around in articulate detail. Loud scenes play out in greater contrast from quiet scenes due to the excess power the Rotel holds in (this contrast is called "dynamic sound quality"). This allows loud passages to be immediately rendered by your speakers without hesitation, offering a spark of excitement during the rollercoaster ride a movie takes you on.

"...musical transitions happen with sparkeling crispness, immediacy, and in high contrast."

"...quiet audio passages are displayed with crisp airlike quality free from distortion.."

"Effortless" also details how quiet and subtle this amp can be as well. With no audible hiss, hum, or fan noise (due to not having a fan), quiet audio passages are displayed with crisp airlike quality free from distortion that could otherwise distract from the purity of silence's subtleties. The sound of silence can truly be appreciated with the Rotel RMB-1095.

"Offering a detailed and transparent soundstage, the Rotel brings stereo recordings to life."

Stereo Sound

Music gains an advantage when using a separate amp, and the Rotel RMB-1095 shines through under this criteria as well. Offering a detailed and transparent soundstage, the Rotel brings stereo recordings to life. Bass is rendered tightly with such control that musical nuances within the

bass frequencies are revealed. The Rotel handles high frequencies smoothly without coloration. This creates a soundstage that is not only wide and natural, but offers a great sense of depth as well.

The dynamic power the RMB-1095 supplies adds to the musical impact as well. Presenting music that not only gains in clarity and detail, but also chimes in with abundant excitement as musical transitions happen with sparkling crispness, immediacy, and in high contrast.

Music has more frequent ups and downs, which demand more from an amplifier than most movie soundtracks. It is for that reason that how an amp portrays music recordings is a good indication and how well it can handle movie soundtracks.

Home Theater Sound

There are definitely great rewards listening to movie's through the Rotel RMB-1095. The last battle scene in *Saving Private*

"The amp simply delivers a knockdown performance without strain or hesitation, rendering the movie's vicious audio as if were a walk in the park."

Ryan is a perfect example of the greater detail and depth this amp provides. On an equally priced receiver the sound of soldiers walking through debris offers nice detail, but with the Rotel you can tell the difference in whether the soldier is walking on wood or brick. A subtlety that is not to be taken for granted, as this provides much more realism to the space the audio is trying to convey.

“Only one thing can be said after experiencing movies with the RMB-1095... ‘more please’.”

Sound effects ring out with

great impact, immediacy, and realism. The award winning sound in *Saving Private Ryan* is rendered beautifully through the Rotel. The amp simply delivers a knockdown performance without strain or hesitation, rendering the movie’s vicious audio as if were a walk in the park. Only one thing can be said after experiencing movies with the RMB-1095... “more please”.

This type of detailed and effortless reproduction of sound holds true on every well-mixed movie. The thrill and pace this amp offers adds tremendously to

a movie’s overall presentation, and pulls you into the action much more.

Value

At \$2000 Rotel’s RMB-1095 5-channel amp is for those that demand the most from their system, and wish to enjoy the sound qualities high-end audio offers. This amp provides a tremendous value to these types of people by offering extremely neutral sound, abundant detail, and solid control over the speakers. The RMB-1095 is a rock solid performer for both music and movies, and should definitely be on the a-list for those in

desire to step up to the power a separate amp provides.

Availability

Rotel only sells through select dealers it believes to have the knowledge and capabilities to inform customers correctly and competently. You can find out where the closest Rotel dealer in your area is via Rotel’s dealer locator @ <http://www.rotel.com/html/dealers.htm>.

QuickTake

Product: Components: Rotel RMB-1095

Price: \$2000

| | Low ▶ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | ▶ High |
|-----------------------|-------|---|---|---|---|---|--------|
| Performance: | | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | |
| Build Quality: | | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | |
| Value: | | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | |

Pros:

1. Detailed and open soundstage
2. Tight control over speakers
3. Excess power allows superb handling of dynamic audio passages
4. Multiple connection types allows for versatile connectivity
5. Outperforms other amps costing much more
6. Provides a clean and effortless sound quality

Cons:

1. Extremely heavy which may be a strain on many racks
2. Doesn't accept dual banana plugs



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