

Power Corrupts Absolutely

...and who wants it any other way?
by Max Christoffersen

Rotel RMB-1075 five-channel power amplifier. \$2999.

There is no substitute for power. I just wanted to get that out of the way early. Because this is what this Rotel amp is all about. Power.

Lots of it, all wrapped up in a heavy-duty, industrial looking black box. The Rotel 1075 is all heat sinks and air vents with a nice touch of finesse about its otherwise sheet-metal look.

And as heavy metal as this rig looks, on first sight, I simply loved the cosmetics. The big heat sink fins down the front fascia interrupted only by a sculptured front panel is high audio art-design.

Look I admit it: the Rotel had pushed my buttons before I'd pushed any of its.

And through it all, there is no mistaking what this black box is designed to do: provide lots of clean power (120 watts) across five channels. That's it. Nothing more - nothing less.

And here is Rotel's design philosophy: It's a good idea to get as much power in a home theatre system as possible. And it's a particularly great idea for those using an AV receiver as the amp stages are always likely to be the

weakest link in these units performance.

Ironically the reason for more power in any audio system is not necessarily for loudness. If you want greater perceived loudness buy more efficient speakers.

Increasing amp power via the Rotel is akin

to increasing engine torque rather than gaining more RPM. Power increases the sense of ease even at low volume. And that is what makes audio more realistic. The sense of ease particularly when dynamics are reproduced with no sense of compression or strain is the hallmark of a realistic home theatre or musical

experience. And that's what this amp did.

And part of that ease can be attributed to a Class A/B power supply that may strain your household power circuits! The Rotel owner's manual makes it clear that

your house power supply might not be sufficient to keep this Rotel well fed with juice (just think about that for a minute) so a dedicated circuit might be in order. Now that is serious amplifying!

Keep in mind that this a THX Ultra certified product and it also features 12 volt triggers for simple on-off from other 12 volt equipped pre-amps or receivers. There is also a DB25 connector and through amplifier protection circuits.

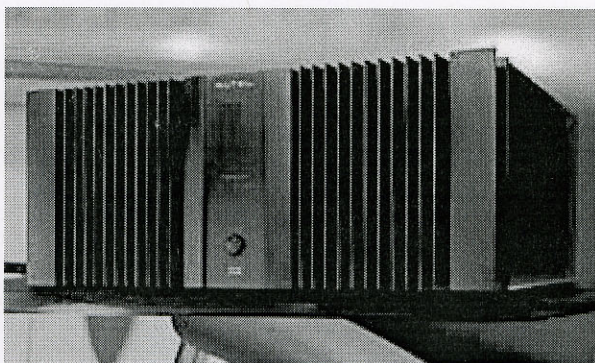
So onto the listening.

Full of anticipation and connections from my Yamaha A-1 made in under 5 minutes, I was struck by a very tame (some might even suggest boring) sonic balance. It wasn't that the sound was lifeless, simply that it didn't grab my attention immediately.

But what started out as a luke-warm introduction, slowly blossomed into audio bliss.

I admit most of these changes came from the listener's human software changing over time, rather than the Rotel undergoing some radical transformation. But the bottom line is I changed in response to the Rotel's otherwise neutral sound balance and the Rotel soon found an ally in its attitude of the 'music and nothing but the music.'

And this is where the Rotel's magic lies. Watch it creep up on you. In short



this amp grows on you. And then grows on you some more and just when you think it can't grow any more, it does. It keeps growing and growing until you find that the subtle sonics have caught your musical sensibilities and wrapped them around its heat sinks like a climbing vine around a fence post.

Its neutrality has a powerful seductive quality about it. Be warned! A highlight was the beautifully presented acoustic guitar strings on Paul Simon's *Old Friends (You're the One)* DVD the pristine crystalline sound of Simon's strings sounded extraordinarily realistic in attack and decay - such small detail replayed beautifully!

And then to the other extreme. Don't tell the importers, but I did my best to shut this unit down. I fed it everything I had that previously caused problems (most notably *Independence Day* DVD) and *The Blue Nile* on CD. I gave up before it did. The Rotel must have been nearing the amp red line, but the 1075 seemingly kept taunting me, asking if that was the best I could do. Well it was. The lesson learned is you will approach your red line on music and home theatre before the Rotel passes its.

And in an audio world fuelled by synthesised soundfields, and aural candy designed to titillate the senses the Rotel stands as a throw-back to solid honest audio.

But you have to say Rotel have got about as close to the perfect beast as possible, with the exception of the Rotel 1075's bigger brother - the 1095!

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