The X factor

The RX1 pitches into a competitive sector of the loudspeaker market, but Ed Selley thinks it has what it takes to succeed.

n the wake of the consistently strong performance of pretty much every piece of Rega electronics we’ve looked at over the last few years, it can be easy to overlook that the company also produces loudspeakers. Neither is this a recent development – the first Rega speaker broke cover in 1980, so the manufacturer has been at it longer than many dedicated rivals.

The RX Series is the latest range of speakers from the company and represents a small but noticeable move upmarket in pricing terms over its predecessors. There are three models in total, of which the RX1 is the smallest. This is a two-way, rear-ported standmount that at first glance looks pretty conventional, although it hides some interesting features behind that outwardly normal appearance.

Chief among these is Rega’s Zero Rear Reflection (ZRR) tweeter technology. In order to minimise the problem of reflected energy from the rear of the tweeter enclosure being radiated back out of the front of the speaker with sufficient delay to be an irritant, many companies build tweeters with a hole in the pole piece to reduce these reflections, but Rega takes the process a stage further and uses a hollow cylinder for the pole piece. This means that any energy from the rear of the tweeter is radiated into a specially designed enclosure from where it is unable to escape out again.

The mid/bass driver is more conventional, but is still built specifically for the RX speakers. Called the DX-125, it is a doped-paper type driver with fixed-phase plug. Although notionally a 5in driver, the measurement is edge to edge, which means that the radiating area is a little smaller – more in the 4.75in range. In keeping with many recent Rega speakers, the RX1 mounts the mid/bass driver above the tweeter. The cabinet is an internally braced MDF design that is relatively narrow, but fairly deep. It is augmented by a rear bass port, but this doesn’t seem to produce much in the way of air movement and the cabinet seems content to be placed in close proximity to rear walls if you need to do so, and Rega makes a wall bracket for it, which is usually a good sign that walls aren’t much of an issue.

A single set of speaker terminals completes the lineup. Externally, this is a clean and relatively simply designed, but undoubtedly a handsome one. Rega has taken the decision to forego a full-size grille and instead places the tweeter behind a rather delicate-looking guard and the mid/bass driver behind a magnetic cover. This is at least an impressively stout piece of protection, which requires a substantial amount of effort to remove as it attaches magnetically to the bolts that surround the driver. The RX1 is well assembled and feels solid and perfectly in keeping with what you would expect from a high-quality loudspeaker.

Where it stands out is the effortless sense of joy that it brings to any music. While it hides some interesting features behind that outwardly normal appearance.

The combination of soft-dome tweeter and doped-paper mid/bass driver is not an especially radical one, but it imbues the speaker with effortlessly believable tonality. Listening to Radiohead’s Burn The Witch, it captures the sawing strings and Thom Yorke’s soaring vocals in a way that is both unfallingly believable and yet impressively intense.

The balancing act of ensuring that the listener hears everything that’s in a recording, but without losing the sense of the piece as a whole is another area where it is extremely assured. For a fairly compact speaker it never struggles to create a reasonable sense of scale and within that places voices and instruments together in such a way as to sound entirely convincing. As you might expect, with a relatively small driver in a compact cabinet, the bass extension is adequate although there are similarly priced standmounts that can better its low end (see How It Compares). The bass that is there has detail and the same consistently believable tonality as the upper registers, but the RX1 won’t plumb the absolute depths of a track. Perhaps as a result it has
REVIEWS

REGA RX1 £795

Q&A
Roy Gandy
Director, Rega Research Ltd

ES: What were the key areas Rega sought to improve with the RX Series over its predecessors?
RG: The loudspeaker world contains literally hundreds of competitors. Retailers who sell Rega loudspeakers generally ask us not to change the sound quality, but to try and produce a better-looking product with small cosmetic details improved. This was the main aim of the RX Series.

Is the RX Series specifically voiced to work with Rega electronics or is there a broader process to this?
Our practical aim when designing loudspeakers or amplifiers is to produce something that they are presented with and to distort the signal as little as possible. The improvements come from new materials, techniques, hard work and innovative ideas. With a loudspeaker there can be a small choice regarding quantity of bass or treble. However, even in this area competent designers will agree that for any design there is usually a sweet spot where a given loudspeaker will perform at its optimum level.

The RX1 is impressively sensitive, is this a considered part of the design or a happy product of the design choices?
Sensitivity can be a design brief. However, at Rega we generally try to keep moving parts as light as possible to reproduce more of the musical signal that they are presented with and to distort the signal as little as possible. The improvements come from new materials, techniques, hard work and innovative ideas. With a loudspeaker there can be a small choice regarding quantity of bass or treble. However, even in this area competent designers will agree that for any design there is usually a sweet spot where a given loudspeaker will perform at its optimum level.

The RX1 is impressively sensitive, is this a considered part of the design or a happy product of the design choices?
Sensitivity can be a design brief. However, at Rega we generally try to keep moving parts as light as possible to reproduce more of the musical signal that they are presented with and to distort the signal as little as possible. The improvements come from new materials, techniques, hard work and innovative ideas. With a loudspeaker there can be a small choice regarding quantity of bass or treble. However, even in this area competent designers will agree that for any design there is usually a sweet spot where a given loudspeaker will perform at its optimum level.

The RX1 is impressively sensitive, is this a considered part of the design or a happy product of the design choices?
Sensitivity can be a design brief. However, at Rega we generally try to keep moving parts as light as possible to reproduce more of the musical signal that they are presented with and to distort the signal as little as possible. The improvements come from new materials, techniques, hard work and innovative ideas. With a loudspeaker there can be a small choice regarding quantity of bass or treble. However, even in this area competent designers will agree that for any design there is usually a sweet spot where a given loudspeaker will perform at its optimum level.

The RX1 is impressively sensitive, is this a considered part of the design or a happy product of the design choices?
Sensitivity can be a design brief. However, at Rega we generally try to keep moving parts as light as possible to reproduce more of the musical signal that they are presented with and to distort the signal as little as possible. The improvements come from new materials, techniques, hard work and innovative ideas. With a loudspeaker there can be a small choice regarding quantity of bass or treble. However, even in this area competent designers will agree that for any design there is usually a sweet spot where a given loudspeaker will perform at its optimum level.

The RX1 is impressively sensitive, is this a considered part of the design or a happy product of the design choices?
Sensitivity can be a design brief. However, at Rega we generally try to keep moving parts as light as possible to reproduce more of the musical signal that they are presented with and to distort the signal as little as possible. The improvements come from new materials, techniques, hard work and innovative ideas. With a loudspeaker there can be a small choice regarding quantity of bass or treble. However, even in this area competent designers will agree that for any design there is usually a sweet spot where a given loudspeaker will perform at its optimum level.

The RX1 is impressively sensitive, is this a considered part of the design or a happy product of the design choices?
Sensitivity can be a design brief. However, at Rega we generally try to keep moving parts as light as possible to reproduce more of the musical signal that they are presented with and to distort the signal as little as possible. The improvements come from new materials, techniques, hard work and innovative ideas. With a loudspeaker there can be a small choice regarding quantity of bass or treble. However, even in this area competent designers will agree that for any design there is usually a sweet spot where a given loudspeaker will perform at its optimum level.

The RX1 is impressively sensitive, is this a considered part of the design or a happy product of the design choices?
Sensitivity can be a design brief. However, at Rega we generally try to keep moving parts as light as possible to reproduce more of the musical signal that they are presented with and to distort the signal as little as possible. The improvements come from new materials, techniques, hard work and innovative ideas. With a loudspeaker there can be a small choice regarding quantity of bass or treble. However, even in this area competent designers will agree that for any design there is usually a sweet spot where a given loudspeaker will perform at its optimum level.

The RX1 is impressively sensitive, is this a considered part of the design or a happy product of the design choices?
Sensitivity can be a design brief. However, at Rega we generally try to keep moving parts as light as possible to reproduce more of the musical signal that they are presented with and to distort the signal as little as possible. The improvements come from new materials, techniques, hard work and innovative ideas. With a loudspeaker there can be a small choice regarding quantity of bass or treble. However, even in this area competent designers will agree that for any design there is usually a sweet spot where a given loudspeaker will perform at its optimum level.

The RX1 is impressively sensitive, is this a considered part of the design or a happy product of the design choices?
Sensitivity can be a design brief. However, at Rega we generally try to keep moving parts as light as possible to reproduce more of the musical signal that they are presented with and to distort the signal as little as possible. The improvements come from new materials, techniques, hard work and innovative ideas. With a loudspeaker there can be a small choice regarding quantity of bass or treble. However, even in this area competent designers will agree that for any design there is usually a sweet spot where a given loudspeaker will perform at its optimum level.

The RX1 is impressively sensitive, is this a considered part of the design or a happy product of the design choices?
Sensitivity can be a design brief. However, at Rega we generally try to keep moving parts as light as possible to reproduce more of the musical signal that they are presented with and to distort the signal as little as possible. The improvements come from new materials, techniques, hard work and innovative ideas. With a loudspeaker there can be a small choice regarding quantity of bass or treble. However, even in this area competent designers will agree that for any design there is usually a sweet spot where a given loudspeaker will perform at its optimum level.

The RX1 is impressively sensitive, is this a considered part of the design or a happy product of the design choices?
Sensitivity can be a design brief. However, at Rega we generally try to keep moving parts as light as possible to reproduce more of the musical signal that they are presented with and to distort the signal as little as possible. The improvements come from new materials, techniques, hard work and innovative ideas. With a loudspeaker there can be a small choice regarding quantity of bass or treble. However, even in this area competent designers will agree that for any design there is usually a sweet spot where a given loudspeaker will perform at its optimum level.

The RX1 is impressively sensitive, is this a considered part of the design or a happy product of the design choices?
Sensitivity can be a design brief. However, at Rega we generally try to keep moving parts as light as possible to reproduce more of the musical signal that they are presented with and to distort the signal as little as possible. The improvements come from new materials, techniques, hard work and innovative ideas. With a loudspeaker there can be a small choice regarding quantity of bass or treble. However, even in this area competent designers will agree that for any design there is usually a sweet spot where a given loudspeaker will perform at its optimum level.