



## ROTEL RCD-02 £379 ☎ 01903 750750 🌐 www.rotel.com

*A strong all-rounder from a new range for 2002*

In the house of Rotel, continuity is prized over innovation for its own sake, and completely new ranges are something of a rarity. But the 02 series is just that, and coincidentally comes at the same time as a change in UK distribution which will see the brand restricted mainly to more specialist dealerships.

The 02 series includes three amplifiers and a tuner as well as the subject of this test (see last month's *Incoming*), a slimline CD player available in silver or black. The controls and display are all on the right-hand side of the player, leaving the left side looking underpopulated, but the mechanism is quick at loading discs and finding tracks, and the large, clear display is excellent, though it would have been better had it been partnered with a display dim feature.

The player uses an 18-bit Delta Sigma DAC from Burr-Brown, and jitter reduction has been a major design priority. It is HDCD compatible, a useful bonus when dealing with the still limited number of encoded discs, and is also equipped for the dawning age of custom install, with a trigger input, and one for an external IR remote sender. It is compatible with CD-R/RW discs, but not CD Text.

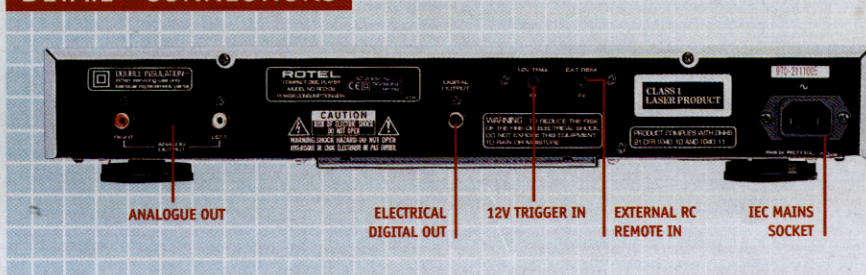
### PERFORMANCE

The Rotel's main strengths are its impressive fine detail resolving power, its firm and stable way of projecting an image, and its strong, on the ball timing. This is a player that paints a very precise, clean and articulate picture. At least with straightforward, not too densely packed recordings, you will be left in no doubt about how many instruments are playing and where they are positioned, but there may be some ambiguity about more subtle matters of musical intonation, and tonally the Rotel is a tad on the lean, lightweight side of neutral.

The Rotel's Waterloo came with more complex, difficult material, for example the famous *Viennese Musical Clock* movement from Kodály's *Háry János* suite, which sounded messy and confused at times. The Rotel's strong analysis made it easy enough to hear through the mix, but the music did not escape without the occasional hint of edginess and grain, and similar observations were

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### DETAIL - CONNECTIONS



VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
Sharp, precise and articulate sounding player only suffers slightly with very difficult recordings.	
CHECKLIST	
OPTICAL DIG OUT	✗
ELECTRICAL DIG OUT	✓
CD-RW PLAYBACK	✓
CD TEXT	✗
CALENDAR DISPLAY	✓

made with some other recordings, for example the *Mahler Six*.

But most discs did not suffer in this way. Marc Cohn's album is a full-blooded affair, and the Rotel's ability to cut through the musical undergrowth results in a clean, propulsive and compelling performance. The Brahms chamber test piece sounded a little lightweight, but its concise, open feel was extremely enjoyable on test, and the Eels *Electro-shock Blues* album was no less so, with good bass definition and precise articulation helping drive the music along. It's well priced too. ☺

### LAB REPORT

▶ Rotel's new budget CD player uses the same PCM1732 HDCD-compatible DAC as the NAD, but with a gentler analogue filter. As a result, there's more ultrasonic noise (which infers some unpredictability with different amplifiers) but lower 0.02% high frequency distortion.

▶ The S/N ratio matches NAD's player at just 99.4dB, but there's not a trace of interference from the power supply on either noise or jitter spectra, the latter comprising just 180psec of data-induced jitter courtesy of the DAC substrate.

▶ The RCD-02 has a steeper response cut than others in this test at -0.75dB/20kHz but this also confers a superior 110dB rejection of digital images.

▶ Low-level resolution is very good indeed, with errors of just -0.2dB at -90dBfs.

▶ Distortion is low, but not exceptionally so, at 0.002% through the midrange (increasing by a factor of 10x at 20kHz) but this is largely down to the choice of DAC rather than Rotel's own engineering.

▶ **LAB CONCLUSION:** Compatibility with CD-RW remains moot, but the RCD-02 is otherwise a cut above Rotel's previous budget CD players.