



# Rega Aura £4,000

In any analogue arena, Rega always has skin in the game, and posh phono preamps are no exception



## ► DETAILS

**PRODUCT**  
Rega Aura  
**ORIGIN**  
UK  
**TYPE**  
MC phono preamp  
**WEIGHT**  
13kg  
**DIMENSIONS**  
(WxHxD)  
350 x 88 x 435mm  
**FEATURES**  
● MC input  
● RCA input  
● XLR/RCA output  
**DISTRIBUTOR**  
Rega Research Ltd.

**A** little deeper and heavier than the Essex-based company's meaty Elex-R (HFC 420) integrated amplifier, the Aura is second only to Musical Fidelity's Nu-Vista Vinyl in respect of the surprising number of calories that are required to lift it from its carton to the equipment rack shelf. An understated (almost inscrutable) solid black slab, then, with minimal fascia décor save for a couple of small rotary controls to set impedance and capacitance and some small buttons addressing gain, mono and mute. And that signature red backlit logo, of course. All very Rega. Oh, despite the

## The Aura prosecutes the musical message with supreme clarity and pristine timing

Aura being a moving-coil-only preamp, Rega contends capacitance settings can subtly alter the sound – which is why it provides a wide range to experiment with, even if no value is directly quoted by the cartridge manufacturer.

Sat at the core of the Aura is a symmetrical complementary Class A amplifier using parallel connected Linear Systems ultra-low noise FET (Field Effect Transistor) transistors configured as a compound pair input stage. The main circuit board is furnished with top-flight components and driven by a beefy power supply. As is the ambition of all these phono preamps, the target is a clean, unsullied signal path to squeeze every last drop of

music from the groove. Rega has form in this endeavour, of course, and if the Aura floats all that experience on a generous budget, it surely bodes well.

Round the back, Rega has assumed you're a one deck, one arm, one (MC) cartridge type of vinyl lover as there's just a single input for your finest RCA interconnect. At the output end, the choice extends to single-ended RCA or balanced XLR. Naturally, those who run more than one turntable or a turntable with more than one tonearm/cartridge might be more tempted by the convenience of the multi-input designs from Leema Acoustics and Musical Fidelity.

## Sound quality

If the valve-based contenders in the group bring a certain warmth, openness and airy magic to the table, the Aura counters with rock-solid rhythmic drive and attack, a more physical style of music making brimming with verve and colour. Consequently, The Oscar Peterson Trio sounds remarkably planted and surefooted, Peterson's playing in particular imbued with an inner energy and impetus that's more powerful and percussive.

There seems to be a subtle trade-off as a result. What the Rega gains in palpable impact, it gives away in the kind of wide-open soundstage perspectives that the tube trio are so good at. The result is that Stanley Clarke's *Journey To Love*'s languid opening moments are set in a less spacious, slightly opaque acoustic. But when Beck gets going, the attack is sharper, the dynamic span broader.

Meanwhile, Lunatraktors' cover of *Lover, Lover, Lover* sounds a little darker tonally but more organic and propulsive. It might not necessarily be the deepest soundstage I've heard in the group, but Clair and Carli are much more 'in the room' and harmonising with greater conviction, as if there's more air in their lungs. In short, the performance seems more powerful and fully fleshed out.

The Amy Winehouse vocal on *You Sent Me Flying (Cherry)* is undeniably pushed forward in the mix, but she holds your attention throughout. There's nothing approximate or benignly impressionistic about the Aura's MO. It prosecutes the musical message with unambiguous clarity and pristine timing.

Whatever I play, the full-blooded presentation is precise, articulate, ordered and assured. Tempo and rhythm are nailed. You never doubt what you've just heard. Typical Rega at its considerable best. Compelling stuff ●

**Hi-Fi Choice**

**OUR VERDICT**

**SOUND QUALITY** ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Sonic muscle, momentum and timing; design and build quality

**VALUE FOR MONEY** ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Not the airiest sound

**BUILD QUALITY** ★★★★★ **WE SAY:** A phono preamp powerhouse with rhythm, resolution and all the right moves

**FEATURES** ★★★★★

**OVERALL** ★★★★★