



# Rega Apollo £629



The most eccentric machine here by a mile, there's no doubting that some will love it while others won't

## DETAILS

**PRODUCT**  
Rega Apollo

**ORIGIN**  
UK

**TYPE**  
CD player

**WEIGHT**  
4.3kg

**DIMENSIONS**  
(WxHxD)  
220 x 90 x 342mm

**FEATURES**  
• Top-loading mech  
• Digital outputs: 1x optical; 1x coaxial  
• Analogue output: 1x stereo RCAs

**DISTRIBUTOR**  
Rega Research Ltd.

**TELEPHONE**  
01702 333071

**WEBSITE**  
rega.co.uk

**A**lthough cheaper than the other machines, this player is included in the group because it punches above its weight. Basically a reskin of Rega's popular Apollo-R, it is housed in a distinctive aluminium case to match its Brio amplifier sibling. The only top-loader here, the cantilevered disc door is a pleasure to use – seventies throwbacks like me who grew up using vinyl will love the tactility of placing the disc in the machine. The large red central display is both easily readable and – complete with its nineties-tastic 'music calendar' – retro looking. The mech itself is a little noisy as it reads the disc's table of contents; very old-school. The control buttons make ergonomic sense, but being small are a tad fiddly.

The Apollo's Wolfson WM8742 DAC chip is venerable now; it has been around for a while so is no longer flavour of the month (see box). In itself this means nothing because – in hi-fi as in life – it ain't what you do, but the way that you do it. Rega says it has paid careful attention to the

power supplies, especially the feed to the CD processor, optical block and laser diode amplifier. The operating system is bespoke, coded by Rega for the best disc reading, says the company. Lacking frills like streaming or Bluetooth, it works in a simple yet effective way – and the result is a player that's surprisingly nice to use.

## Sound quality

If the Marantz is very neutral, open and detailed, the Rega sounds in some ways the diametric opposite – flawed but fabulous, you might say. Inner City's *Good Life* is such a contrast on these two players; the lead vocal line becomes the whole point of the song on the Apollo. It's rich, mellifluous, dreamy and wonderfully rhythmic, almost a percussion instrument in itself. Against a backdrop of busy drum machine fills and the keyboard arpeggiating up and down, it soars. Bass isn't particularly strong, yet modulates up and down in an almost demented way. This is an exuberantly musical performer, make no mistake.

## DAC TALK

Around 10 years ago, the Wolfson Microelectronics WM8740 was the industry's DAC chip of choice, and is still used today – in the YBA overleaf for example. Then came the pricier ESS Sabre32, which still powers many CD players and DACs. Wolfson's WM8742 duly followed in 2012, and this is the digital converter that the Rega Apollo uses. Whether you're talking Philips, Burr-Brown, Crystal Semiconductors, Texas Instruments or AKM DACs, designers have their own personal favourites; Wolfson has its devotees too and its admirers are particularly enthusiastic about its bass performance. The popular WM8742 is a dual-mode design that can work in either PCM or DSD mode, and has multi-bit Sigma-Delta architecture. It's claimed to have a high tolerance of clock jitter, plus an excellent signal-to-noise ratio.

It's not perfect though; although the soundstage stretches wide left to right, depth perspective is nothing to write home about. Things are pushed out towards the listener, giving an enjoyably immediate sound that's not strictly accurate. Tonally it's a warmish sounding machine with a slightly over smooth top end that lacks the bite or finesse of the Marantz and Musical Fidelity. There's also a slight cloudiness to instruments at the back of the mix; *Primitive Painters* isn't quite as detailed as most here, but the handling of rhythms more than makes up for it; the snare drum playing and the ride cymbals are pleasures to behold. Indeed, it's excellent at conveying microdynamics; the accenting of Steve Hackett's acoustic guitar on *Star Of Sirius* is brilliantly carried. Hugely enjoyable but far from flawless, the charismatic Rega is all the more impressive considering its relatively low price ●



## Hi-Fi Choice

### OUR VERDICT

**SOUND QUALITY**  
★★★★★

**LIKE:** Bouncy, musical and fun sound; top-loading mechanism

**VALUE FOR MONEY**  
★★★★★

**DISLIKE:** Lacks some depth perspective and detail resolution

**BUILD QUALITY**  
★★★★★

**WE SAY:** A characterful player with a charming musical style

**FEATURES**  
★★★★★

### OVERALL

★★★★★