

It is all too easy to take for granted products that push forward the boundaries of performance, pricing and engineering excellence. We see it in many different areas of consumerism, automobiles, domestic appliances, telecommunications and home electronics. Leading edge products are conceived and created by teams of dedicated Engineers, researchers and money men before a product is released onto the market for consumers to read about, look at and in the case of audiophiles, listen to and compare with the competition before a sale can be made.



Every so often a company comes on to the market and takes the market by storm, take Tesla and Ninja for example. In the last couple of years HiFi Rose has launched itself worldwide and can arguably be said to have also taken the hifi industry by storm.

A few years ago, HiFi Rose launched a range of amplifiers and streamers that have set them apart from their competition, pushing the boundaries of what is possible.

The subject of this review is the RS520 is the newest product to come from HiFi Rose. An all in one streaming amplifier with 250W of power, running on the Rose OS system. A just add speakers solution.

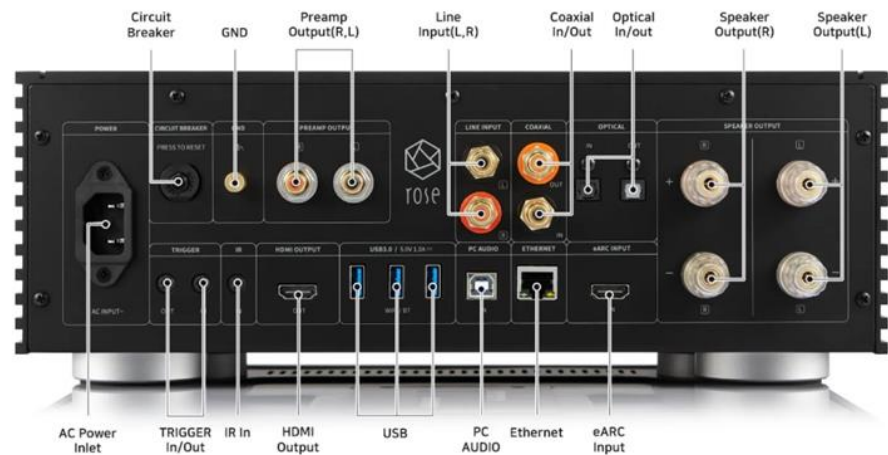
I brought the RS520 home after the 10th birthday celebrations at The HiFi Lounge. Paul Clark said a few weeks prior to the party that the new RS520 was due in soon, I think you will really like it. It's been in situ for a month and is to my ears now fully run in. Details of my system can be found at the end of this review.

Where to start. The key features are:

- Complete all-in-one streaming amplifier with 250W/8 ohms per-channel output
- Connect to audio and video streaming services such as Tidal, Qobuz, Apple Music, Spotify and is Roon Ready. Within the unit is a full MQA decoder for Tidal Masters music reproduction
- Listen to radio stations using Rose Radio or Rose FM
- Multiple digital, USB and HDMI and analogue connection options, HDMI eARC
- Play your own music and movies via USB, SD or internal storage, or over the local network
- Full Rose OS operating system (compatible with both Android and iOS platforms) with extensive functionality
- Built-in digital EQ, to help tailor your sounds
- Sophisticated DAC built around premium ES9038PRO DAC chip
- PCM resampling and digital filter options
- Next-generation Class AD (Advanced D) amplifier design
- Gallium Nitride FETs in the amplification stage deliver perfect linear output

- New HiFi Rose discrete op-amps ensure class-leading sound performance and low noise
- Expertly engineered aluminium housing and premium connection options
- Bluetooth remote control included, and free control apps available

A tidy rear of the unit shows the layout of a comprehensive set of high-quality inputs and outputs, (a nice touch being rubber caps on the open ended RCA sockets during transit).



Build quality is first class, the chassis being a single aluminium casting, no doubt designed with keeping vibrations within and from without to a minimum.

After connecting my speakers and ethernet cable I plugged in the unit and switched it on from the on/off switch on the top of the unit. Set up was straightforward and easy following the steps on the screen. I used my Android Samsung tablet and found Rose Connect. Adding this app was so simple. I selected ethernet connection from the front panel of the RS520 and connected the unit to my Sky hub - easy and straightforward. Speakers were connected and I was ready to rock and roll.

Tapping the Rose HiFi icon on my tablet the huge screen lit up providing everything I needed to start listening (and watching). I logged into my Tidal Masters account and immediately saw all my favourite albums and artists and the Tidal search functions appeared. I also used the Rose FM to listen to FM radio stations, Radio for MP3 stations and to Rose Radio for the online stations, in particular Radio Paradise (sadly not in MQA as with BluOS but nevertheless in 16bit/44.1kHz quality).

Other music/video functions included Qobuz, Rose Tube (YouTube), Video, Music (All of my ripped CDs on a memory stick or if preferred from an after-purchase SSD drive) Podcast, Bugs, Apple Music, CD (for connecting a CD player).

During this review I only listened to Tidal, Radio Paradise, BBC 3 and Classic FM.

There are also Home and Settings icons where functions and settings can be viewed and altered were available including a built-in graphic equaliser with a selection of pre-sets for different music genres.

So much to enjoy and enjoy the music I did. The unit was brand new. So after a few days on Radio Paradise Rock Mix, I settled in for some serious listening. Even after nearly a week the unit was still getting better, so I would say around a week to run in.

After the run in, the RS520 delivered superb music. Tight, detailed and sweet, no hint of harshness, just pure pleasure. I listen to an eclectic mix of music.

On tracks with plenty of drive and impact like DJ Nick Warren's powerhouse track *La Fabrica* (club mix) from his EP of the same name (Tidal red book 16/44.1) the bass was tight and low with plenty of articulation, especially after 1minute and 30 seconds, truly subterranean. Mids and highs were as sweet as you could want, there is plenty going on in the mix, all clearly heard at levels that were close to those in venues where Nick would be playing with no hint of strain, clean pure engagement with the listener, lucky I have good neighbours! The unit sounded much bigger than the specified 250 watts.

Softer more gentle music, for example from Cat Stevens' song *Into White* from his 1972 album *Tea For The Tillerman* (Tidal Master 24/192 MQA) was presented with such delicacy of detail, his voice floating between my Usher MD2s, the soundstage so precise, a small violin solo was so clear that I was aware of a slight movement by the violinist away from the microphone. This level of detail and micro dynamics I found remarkable.

With *Liberty* by Anette Askvic from her album of the same name (Tidal red book 16/44.1) the sound effects at the start of the track were clearly heard as if being added to the mix by the Engineer. With her double tracked voice it was as if there were two singers one standing behind the other. The air around the saxophone was palpable, the sounds made by the saxophonist with the mouthpiece adding to the performance.

Radio 3 via Rose FM was crystal clear bearing in mind it was MP3. Radio Paradise via Rose Radio at 16/44.1 FLAC was very enjoyable.

Watching acts playing on the video screen was pleasurable, I have a friend who has connected his HiFi Rose RS 150 to a 4K Samsung TV and the pictures are superb in sync with the music through his HiFi.

I was unable to review any of the analogue or optical connections at this time, or the USB connection from a laptop. I was able to use an external USB hard drive via the Music function with over 20,000 ripped tracks easily accessible.

I toyed with the graphic equaliser function and tone controls but decided to leave both functions off.

I found the remote control very useful, but did not attempt to run the unit via wifi as I consider ethernet connection a better way to stream music.

In summary the HiFi Rose RS520 is capable of a delicacy of touch and where asked for in the music, considerable "slam" that gave me goose bumps! At no time did I become fatigued listening to music at high levels, such was the smoothness of the mids and treble, never any harshness or tiresome effects. Rose Connect is as good as Roon in my opinion, intuitive and flawless. Not once have I experienced a lock up. I noticed Rose Connect works better on my Samsung Android tablet, although my iPhone could connect, but some functions were not supported for example access to my tidal favourites. I am sure that the RS520 will also be favourably reviewed in the HiFi press.

The HiFi Rose is likely to worry a few of its competitors with the many facilities on offer (I have not used them all - yet) plus the power and sheer bravado this amazing streaming amplifier can provide. I liked it so much I bought it!

Review Equipment -

Sky full fibre Broadband (replaced fibre/copper hybrid)
 PS Audio Stellar P3 power regenerator
 Usher Mini Dancer 2 loudspeakers
 Townshend Audio Seismic Podiums
 Three tier Atacama Vogue bamboo equipment stand
 ADOT MC02 Fibre Network Kit
 (Former streaming amplifier – NAD M10)

Cables:

Route	Manufacturer/Model	Termination
Incoming fibre to Sky hub (replaced copper/hybrid/ADSL cable)	3m Audioquest Cinnamon (directional)	RJ45
Sky Hub to ADOT MC02	1m Audioquest Vodka (directional)	RJ45
ADOT media converter to media converter (black box to black box)	ADOT Fibre Optic (non-directional)	Single Mode Duplex Fibre Optic Adapter
ADOT media converter to HiFi Rose RS520	0.8m Curious Ethernet Cable (directional)	RJ45
Speaker cables – main single wire	Black Rhodium Proto 3200 complete with ferrite RF reduction	Locking bananas
Speaker cables – jumpers	Black Rhodium Proto 3200	Locking bananas/spade
Power cables	Nanotec Strada 309 (custom made)	Furutech gold plated both ends with gold plated fuses