



Review

Symphonic Line RG14 Edition

Integrated amplifier with remote control, high quality MM&MC phono inputs & high quality headphone socket

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When asked if I could review the Symphonic Line RG14 Edition integrated amplifier I have to admit to having not heard of the company before in all my years of listening to music and hi-fi equipment. Needless to say the brand hails from Germany, that land of countless companies making superb product we Brits are totally ignorant of. Ikon Audio who import and distribute Symphonic Line are obviously keen to let us in on this companies excellent product range and encouraged me to look at the manufacturers website, something I always do anyway to research a product and company.



Rolf Gemein the man behind Symphonic Line is a passionate designer and obvious lover of music in order to have designed so many items in his company's portfolio. There are simply too many to mention here but if you are interested have a look for yourselves. The site is informative but like many foreign companies the descriptions and details get lost in translation and read rather oddly. This is not a criticism of the company, just an observation I have noticed on many occasions when surfing manufactures websites. Being English we are lazy and don't speak foreign languages very well, expecting everyone else to be able to speak English. The sad fact is they often do, my friends in Germany speak excellent English and put us to shame. So it seems churlish to comment on the website other than to say don't be put off the companies descriptions due to poor translation, believe me the product is excellent.

The RG14 Edition is the baby in the companies range retailing here in the UK for £2850 and reminds me of the classic integrated amps of the 1980's when I was in retailing. It has three identically sized rotary switches, power, source select and tape monitor and a larger volume control. The bottom left hand corner of the front panel has a headphone socket near to the green power led. The front panel is substantial being hewn from thick aluminium and engraved with the company's name which is in a larger but different font style to the controls markings. This makes for a somewhat odd looking style of presentation. The controls are very solid and give one the confidence they will last forever. The volume is very smooth and motorised having a remote control for user convenience. There are three line inputs, Aux, CD and Tuner and a phono input with selectable mm/mc on the back panel. Not many amplifiers have this amount of comprehensive facilities these days due to changes in tastes and styles over the last 40 years, but I for one find it very welcome to have all that convenience in one box. The remote only controls the volume but will operate other functions from the Symphonic Line of units one may accompany with this amplifier.



The back panel comes with the usual gold plated solid single ended RCA sockets for the inputs and tape monitor and one pair of substantial speaker binding posts. The phono inputs are split for both mm and mc and selected by a toggle switch. This shows the phono stage is no afterthought and it performs very well in its own right. Finally there is an IEC power input socket so you can select your own favourite mains lead.



The RG14 Edition has been around some time, about 15 years and is highly regarded both in Germany and abroad. As a reviewer I am naturally curious to see what others think of a product but ultimately it is down to personal taste and system synergy as to whether I like a product or not. I'll not keep you in suspense or going to the end of this review to find out what I thought. It is very good and I can see why it has the reputation it has over such a long period of production. I guess the design may have been tweaked over time and improvements made as new components and ideas from experimenting came about, but I reckon Rolf Gemein got it pretty right to start with as his philosophy doesn't appear to be to make a product unless he is happy with it before selling it. Something all companies should strive for but don't always in my experience.

The amplifier is bomb proof and built like a German Tiger tank, solid and foreboding with a fearsome reputation. The quality of components inside is first class and chosen for their sound quality as well as reliability and the large toroidal power transformer is shielded in a mu metal case.

Output is 100 watts per channel into 8 ohms.

THE SOUND

Now to the sound. I let the amp warm up for a few days as recommended by the importer and then began serious listening. Symphonic Line recommend 200 hours burn in but I felt it had had a pretty good run in as other reviewers had had it before me. First impressions were promising. The sound stage was solid, wide and deep. I used mainly CD and turntable and listened mostly through the speaker outputs, but tried the headphone socket with my Beyer's to assess its capability. The headphone output is very good for an integrated amplifier and when you insert the headphone jack it mutes the loudspeaker output, an obvious thing you might think but not all amps do this. As I am not a great headphone listener I didn't spend hours using this facility but it impressed me and was quiet with no hum issues, a useful addition.



The phono input was also very good and as already mentioned has switchable mm/mc sockets so catering for enthusiasts with either cartridge or lucky enough to use both. I mainly tried it with a Clearaudio Performance DC I was also reviewing at the time which has an excellent mm cartridge and this worked very well. Like the cd input the sound was very musical and smooth so allowing long periods of fatigue free listening. Comparing the built in phono stage to an admittedly much dearer unit I had (Perreux VP3 (£1950)) showed the RG14 Edition's limitations in stage depth and ultimate detailing, but it was still very impressive and more than worthy of inclusion. This would suit anyone who didn't want to have more boxes and wires and were happy with the trade off for convenience. The built in phono stage I am sure would be as good as many separate alternatives available now at £500 to £600. Vinyl was first class and did not come a poor second to the CD input if one used a good turntable and cartridge. Hum was low and gain was not an issue with either mm or mc for the majority of cartridges people would use.



The CD input also impressed with its musicality, depth and detailing on a good recording like Kate Bush's last album '50 Words for Snow'. I loved the detail the amplifier could conjure up and depth of the recording making the music sound most lifelike. Even on older recordings like Chaka Khan's greatest hits which was variable in its quality, I could still appreciate the music and listen to the whole album without wanting to change it, not something I can always say about some systems I have had. The top end was clear, detailed and not harsh, but neither did it feel dull. Mid and vocals were very well portrayed and the overall balance seemed right. Bass was strong and powerful but not overblown.

One minor criticism was the gain on the volume control with my Triangle Titus EZ speakers. As they are quite efficient at 90 dB I found you only had to turn the volume control up by a small margin for the amp to go loud. I contacted Ikon about this and they confirmed the design of the volume potentiometer and its characteristics meant this was the case. It wasn't a major issue, but using the remote control was tricky at times due to small changes making a big difference in the output level, so fine control was best achieved manually. If you have less efficient speakers then it won't be a problem.

CONCLUSION

The RG14 Edition is an amplifier that wears its heart on its sleeve. It is not the prettiest amp out there but like a good woman /wife, beauty is only skin deep. I have found in life it is the person within that matters not the exterior appearance. Beauty fades with time and can be fickle. The RG14 Edition is similar. It might not win Miss World in a beauty competition but it sure has fantastic qualities under its skin that are timeless and don't



fade away. I felt it would be there for you years and years down the line just like a good marriage. If all the rest of Symphonic Lines products are as good as this, and I have no reason to doubt that, then they deserve to continue to do well, and the UK now has another fine product range to choose from.

Build Quality	8.5/10
Sound Quality	8.5/10
Value for money	8.0/10
Overall	8.33/10



Reviewed by Ian Ringstead

Original review at HiFi Pig: [Symphonic Line RG14 Edition Integrated Amplifier](#)

Manufacturer: www.symphonic-line.com