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Ruark Award-winning labors on stylish new Revvo

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ALL-IN-ONE SYSTEMS

GORGEOUSLY MODERN, YET RETRO TOO

Ruark R2 Mk3 £400

FOR Excellent sound quality; stunning build and design

AGAINST There is no dedicated app

★★★★★

You don't get many all-in-one systems of this calibre. The Ruark R2 Mk3 system, now in its third iteration, remains a staunch favourite here at *What Hi-Fi?* It's not just that it's well designed, nor that it has an impressive set of features lurking beneath that sleek chassis. It's because the R2 Mk3 is a gorgeous-looking system packed with streaming features - and it also delivers an effortlessly musical and richly detailed performance.

For a unit that could fit on your kitchen counter or bedside table, this R2 sounds admirably big and wide. The spacious soundstage is populated by a satisfyingly meaty and warm bass, a soaring top end and a talented midrange that makes voices sound solid and intimate in the same breath.

Tension in the strings

It's a captivating presentation. The richness is dominating, but a snappy handling of rhythm and a good sense of when notes should start and stop prevents the R2 from ever sounding thick or sludgy.

The punchy way with rhythms gives a great deal of attack and wallop to songs. It also goes hand in hand with finesse and an agile delivery. Tom Waite's *God's Awful On Business* is handled with expertise, with the rasps and croaks in his deep, rumbling voice laid bare.

Play Richey Kozzner's *You Can't Save Me* and you can feel the tension in the plucked strings and the impact of drums being hit. The insight here is impressive once you get past that rich tone.

That full-bodied presentation will suit all kinds of songs, although it's worth noting that the 3.5mm wired connection sounds a touch more solid and definite compared with Bluetooth-streamed songs. Radio stations have a great deal of weight and dynamics to them, with voices clear and focused.

The R2 has a '3D sound' mode that makes the sound bigger and bolder while still keeping the tonal balance in check. We'd recommend keeping it on for maximum enjoyment.

Against competition such as the Revvo SuperSystem, the Ruark holds up well. The Ruark does not have the scale and authority promised by the larger Revvo - in fact, we'd go so far as to say that when played side by side, the Ruark's sound comes across as a smidge insubstantial.

Then again, the Ruark doesn't struggle with its treble as the Revvo does. It also does a better job playing in smaller rooms, never sounding overblown or imbalanced. We also admire the Ruark's delicacy with textures, which demonstrates a level of dexterity the Revvo is incapable of.

Modern, yet retro

Ruark is the master at designing products that harmoniously straddle the line between modern and retro. The handcrafted wooden cabinet and steel front panel fit together beautifully, with the crisp OLED display further adding to the elegant and classy design. The smooth, rounded edges of the R2's design look beautiful. It's every inch a premium-feeling product. You can get the R2 in three finishes: rich walnut, soft white and soft black.

There are two 9cm drivers on either side of the display, and two small ports underneath the unit. The large clock dominates the OLED display, but song

and station information underneath is sharp and easy to read.

The R2 comes with a tiny, slim remote control. Given the lush build quality of the machine itself, it's a little disappointing. But part of the system's charm is using the unit's Rotodial controller, which is lovely to fondle. Use it to change volume, switch between sources, control playback and more.

The dial and surrounding buttons respond swiftly to all presses (with satisfying clicks, we should add), and it becomes intuitive to use in just seconds.

Clever headphone port

Gene is the iPod dock found on top of the Award-winning R2; the R2 Mk3 is fully packed with the latest streaming features. Alongside FM, DAB and internet radio giving you access to hundreds of radio stations, the R2 features Spotify Connect.

"The smooth, rounded edges of the R2's elegant and classy design look beautiful. It feels every inch a premium product"



ALL-IN-ONE SYSTEMS

Underneath the elegant and classy design, the Ruark R2 has a lush, punchy sound that is fun to listen to



The R2's built-in wi-fi swiftly connects to your home network and, thanks to DLNA certification, it will recognise any other music stored on the same network, whether on laptops or NAS boxes. There's also Bluetooth with aptX, for higher quality streaming from a suitable smartphone like the new Samsung Galaxy S7 or Edge+.

Physical connections include a pair of analogue inputs, a USB type-A port for changing your smartphone and playing stick-stored files, and a 3.5mm jack for hardwiring music players.

Ruark gets clever with its 3.5mm headphone port, which registers the volume used for it, independently of the volume of the main speakers. That means you won't get deafened when you next plug in your headphones, as the R2 will remember the last set level. Considerate indeed.

Diving into the menus will give you tone and loudness levels, network settings, date and time settings, display

brightness control, and settings for two alarms. Simply twist the Rotodial to scroll through all options.

A recent software upgrade also gives the R2 multi-room powers: you can link up two R2s together using the instructions in the menu. Sadly we've seen no sign of the official Ruark app just yet, but in the meantime the third-party UNDOX app does a good job of organising the device's multitude of connections. Switching between them is as easy as changing channels on a radio. It's a lot nicer to use than that fiddly little remote control too.

Holding onto top spot

We'll be able to fully test the multi-room feature once the app is released, but even without that feature, the R2 Mk3 is one of the best all-in-one systems we've come across. We admit to being a little uncertain when the Revvo SuperSystem came on the scene, but reckon the Ruark

holds onto its spot as our favourite all-in-one system thanks to its lower price and superior audio performance.

The Ruark R2 Mk3 is a gorgeous-looking machine that will fit into any home, and that lush, punchy sound is just so much fun to listen to. We want one for ourselves.

WHAT HI-FI? says

RATING ★★★★★
SOUND + + + + +
FEATURES + + + + +
PICTURE + + + + +

VERDICT Beautifully designed, easy to use and a great sound performance, this all-in-one system is a delight