

Rotel RMB-1585 Multichannel Amplifier Review

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Rotel RMB-1585 Multichannel Amplifier

If you are assembling a home theater system, you must have an amplifier that feeds at least five channels. In fact, for the vast majority of HT enthusiasts, five channels plus a powered subwoofer *will be all* that they need. The basic question is how much power is needed to drive a center, two front, and two surround channels. The answer will depend on many factors, including room size, listener position distance, efficiency of the speakers, the customary listening level, and the sticky one...future-proofing if some of these variables change.

I have always believed that you should buy a multichannel amplifier as if it was your last multichannel amplifier, or at least your last for a decade, (actually, I have had my Pass Labs X-5 for more than 10 years). That considered, the answer to the power question is easier to answer than you might think. Home theater amplifiers should provide effortless delivery of some demanding sounds (and sound effects). So, my response is, get as much power as you can afford in as big a package as you can fit in your room.

Case in point is the **Rotel RMB-1585**, the most powerful multichannel amplifier in their current lineup. A heavyweight out of the box, the RMB-1585 is not only a heavyweight contender but, perhaps, the next heavyweight champion. Even better, this MC amplifier replaces the previous Rotel offering that offered Class D amplifier power while the successor to the throne is the more traditional A/B mode.



The Rotel RMB-1585 Rear Panel

A New Beast From The East

Perhaps, newbies need not apply. Just getting the RMB-1585 out of its box is a two-man deal. The 79 -pound net weight is way short of the snatch-and-grab Olympic finals but prospective buyers will either need to work out or hire a muscle man to get things started. As my perceptive better half pointed out, "why doesn't this amp have rear handles like your other ones?" That aside, setting up the RMB 1585 was very simple. In fact, the only decisions that need to be made are mode of operation (balanced or unbalanced) and the internal fans on or off.

With the Lexicon MC-12 HD EQ surround processor as the front end, and, in all balanced mode, we introduced the Rotel amp to my Martin Logan ESL surround system. As they say in the business world, no problem, and, for once, this overused expression was absolutely correct. Plug and play at its best. The nice thing about having 200 watts per channel is having 200 watts per channel. Once in the system, this MC amplifier was a sheer delight to operate. Part of the magic is due to Rotel's massive proprietary transformer and power supply, along with Rotel's Slit-Foil capacitors. Regardless of specs, this is one helluva amplifier.



The Rotel RMB-1585 Open Top

It's a Power Play Goal

Listening to [Blu-ray](#) video or audio discs, streaming content or multichannel SACDs, gave this MC amplifier a major work out. For a front-end source, I went to my Oppo BD-105, a stellar [universal](#) player. Not being at all bashful, I began with one of those amazing Pure Audio Blu-rays from Sono Luminus, [Sprung Rhythm](#) (a 2013 Grammy nominee). This is 21st century uptempo classical music that employs relatively spare scoring for the Inscape ensemble. That notwithstanding, without the requisite wattage you will never get the varying textures of Nathan Lincoln-DeCusatis's *Collection of Sand*. The Rotel allowed me a penetrating look into this complex work with everything just crystal clear. Keeping things at a "higher" level, I went to an *Sacred Feast* (dmp Records), the first surround DSD ever released, and featuring the group Gaudeamus under Paul Halley's direction. This ethereal music for unaccompanied chorus would not seem to need much power, but, begging to differ, to get the hall effect in Trinity College (Hartford, Connecticut) you need to crank up the gain. Again, there was headroom to spare and I was on location with all of those fabulous voices. Every disc that I popped into the player got a revealing presentation thanks to the Rotel amp.

Most folks in the multichannel home theater world get their rigs to see *and* hear [Blu-ray](#) discs so this was my next stop. Do you ever get tired of the Blue Diva scene from *The Fifth Element*? Well I don't, and it does take a lot of oomph to keep those rhythms pulsating as the images shift at the speed of light between the Diva and Leeloo. I was impressed how effortless these transitions were with the RMB-1585. Of course, any multichannel amp worth its salt should be able to crank out the "Ride of the Valkyries" from the marvelous *MetOpera* Ring Cycle, and this the Rotel delivered with the full sonic impact. Numerous Blu-rays that followed sustained my initial impressions of what this amplifier added to the recreation of space and dynamics on well-recorded [Blu-ray](#) soundtracks. .

So Rotel Me the Answer

Basically, you do not know what real power is unless you have witnessed the kind of power that this amplifier has. Listening to a very wide range of video and audio sources, this is one behemoth of a power generator. None of the audio or video sources that I auditioned presented the slightest problem for the Rotel multichannel amplifier.

As a note of caution, this amplifier does tend to run warm (although never too hot to touch). This makes its dual fans a good addition, particularly if it will be housed in an equipment cabinet. In the open, the fans did not need to be engaged (actually, they are not very audible when turned to maximum). As noted in the manual, there is a thermal shut-down protection circuit to avoid product damage should overheating occurs. During many long and hard evaluation sessions, listening often at much louder than I usually do, I simply could not make this amplifier shut down. This speaks to the "overdesign" of the Rotel's circuits and should ensure it a very long life.

The Good

- Built like a tank
- Simple installation
- Plenty of power
- Inboard fans

The Bad

- Heavy (no handles)

The Scorecard:

Design/Ergonomics:



Performance:



Value:



Overall:



The Definitive Word

The price of admission to this black beauty (silver chassis is also available) should not put off those home theater enthusiasts who want to take their listening experience to the next level. Heck, this might be the last multichannel that you will ever need to buy (and in my experience, Rotel products seem to last forever). The Rotel RMB-1585 may not be everyone's multichannel amplifier, but if I were starting my MC system all over again, this one would be a serious contender.

Specifications:

Continuous power/5-channels driven	200 watts/ch (20-20kHz, 8 Ohms)
Total Harmonic Distortion	<0.03% (20-20kHz, 8 Ohms)
Intermodulation Distortion	<0.03% (60 Hz: 7kHz)
Frequency Respose	20Hz-20kHz \pm 3 dB
Damping Factor (20Hz-20kHz, 8 Ohms)	260
Input Sensitivity/Impedance	
Unbalanced	1.9/12k Ohms
Balanced	3.8 mV/50k Ohms
Gain	26.5 dB
Phono Input	30 mV
Line Level Inputs	4V
Preamp Output Level/Output Impedance	1.5V/ 470 Ohms
General	
Power Consumption	800 watts
Power Requirements	120 volts, 60 Hz (USA version)
	230 volts, 50 Hz (EC version)
Weight	36 kg (79.3 lbs)
Dimensions (W x H x D)	431 x 237 x 454 mm
	17 x 9.375 x 17.875 in

More Information:

Rotel RMB-1585 Multichannel Amplifier (SRP \$2999)

www.rotel.com