



Network-attached storage/streamer
 Made by: Citech Co., Ltd, South Korea
 Supplied by: Henley Audio Ltd, UK
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 Price: £4299

AUDIO
FILE



HiFi Rose RS130

The Korean company's first model without a built-in DAC, but also its most expensive streaming component yet at £4299, the RS130 is described by HiFi Rose as the 'Ultimate Network Transport', and is therefore much more than a stripped-down version of one of its current existing network players.

The dominant visual feature, that touch-sensitive display across the front panel, is larger and brighter than ever (but can be dimmed!), and has large, responsive virtual buttons making setup and operation easy. Above, on the RS130's top

'Luminous piano, bass and drums recreated the "you are there" feel'

panel, are four little crystal buttons allowing access to favourite presets, play/pause, muting and power functions. So control can be via its mix of physical and virtual buttons, as well as a Bluetooth remote, or – as is most likely – the company's excellent Rose Connect app.

To the rear of HiFi Rose's transport, some things are familiar, and others less so. In the former category are the coaxial, AES/EBU and optical digital outputs, plus an HDMI out to feed audio and video to a suitable TV or AV receiver. Connections are also provided for an external third-party digital clock, and there's a further HDMI-type port used to deliver an I²S digital audio stream to a compatible DAC.

The RS130 also has a lot of USB ports – two for the connection of external storage, a Wi-Fi dongle or even an optical drive for disc-ripping, and one designated 'USB DAC' to output audio to your favoured device. There's also a 'USB Fibre' port, for use with a hub to isolate the unit from external noise, and the same applies to the 'Ethernet Fibre' port.

Considering it's 'only' a transport, the RS130 is a solid, hefty beast, the thick, high-quality aluminium casework contributing to the 12kg bodyweight. Inside, a new linear power supply layout has been implemented, including an over-sized transformer, while an oven-controlled master clock ensures the stability of the 'timing' and relocking of all streams. An SSD is fitted internally to cache data from

USB- or network-connected drives, and it's possible to insert a larger-capacity SSD (up to 4TB) to provide internal storage.

PERFECT PARTNER

The job of a digital transport is to allow the connected DAC to work to its full potential. But there's a sidebar to all this, in that *HFN* reviews have found that highly tuned digital transports will usually have the most effect with relatively modestly priced DACs. That was certainly the case here as the likes of the £699 iFi Audio NEO iDSD, the less expensive Chord Mojo 2 and the budget AudioQuest DragonFly Cobalt proved the most revelatory with the HiFi Rose RS130.

ABOVE: The 15.4in-wide TFT/LCD touchscreen duplicates the setup and music metadata functions seen via the Rose app while four 'crystal' control buttons are set into the top plate. The RS130 offers the option of wired and optical USB/Ethernet inputs alongside two USB-A ports for external media while a bay under the chassis accommodates users' own SSD/HDD hardware

With the NEO iDSD in harness and the RS130 streaming the crisp, dynamic Steven Wilson remix of ABC's *The Lexicon Of Love* [UMC] the ability of the combination to reveal levels of subtle detail in what is a familiar recording was impressive. Yes, the remastering has punched things up a bit, but even going back to the original 1983 CD copy showed the HiFi Rose/iFi Audio pairing was revealing nuances we'd not previously been aware of.

Similarly, crystalline detail was found on the Hoff Ensemble's *Polarity* [2L]. Here there was a luminous view of the piano, bass and drums, fully recreating the 'you are there' impression that 2L label boss Morten Lindberg strives to achieve. The RS130 also delivered the 'big band' sound of Matthias Bamert's *Stokowski's Symphonic Bach* [Chandos] in dramatic fashion, with authentic weight and scale.

This set was played from a USB drive, from an internal drive fitted into the transport, and streamed from a NAS – in each case the sound was indistinguishable, meaning the full flexibility of HiFi Rose's transport can be used without worry. And while it's heard at its best with high-resolution files (it supports files up to 768kHz/32-bit and DSD512, with downsampling and DoP transmission available for DACs unable to match those extremes), the RS130's clean feed made the most of the live Radio 3 streams of the 2023 BBC Proms.

VERDICT

Whether or not you 'need' the RS130 is a personal decision, but there's no denying it's a superior network streaming source. Excellent features and craftsmanship result in a device that makes the most of almost any DAC you might try – even inexpensive ones! ⬇️

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Digital inputs	1x Ethernet; 2x USB-A 3.0; 1x fibre USB
Digital outputs	1x USB-A; 1x coax/opt; 1xAES/EBU; 1xI ² S
Digital jitter (AQ DragonFly)	156psec (300psec via PC USB)
Digital jitter (iFi Audio NEO iDSD)	6psec (550psec via PC USB)
Digital jitter (Mytek Brooklyn)	7psec (8psec via PC USB)
Power consumption	18W (1W standby)
Dimensions (WHD) / Weight	430x125x317mm / 12kg