



GENERATIONS RS151 VS RS150

Bad weather was forecast for Easter 2025, and that's why I asked my dear dealer ([Akustik Studio Huber](#), Waldshut, OFFICIAL HIFI ROSE DEALER) whether I could borrow the freshly delivered RS151 streamer/DAC for the next few days. No sooner said than done, I was allowed to pick up the RS151 and test it at home in peace.

At the end of the test, a comparison with my RS150 (without B) was planned to see how the Hifi Rose streamer had developed in the 2nd generation and to what extent an upgrade would be possible.

Below is the connection terminal with its extensive options. Please refer to the details [here](#).





Test-Setup

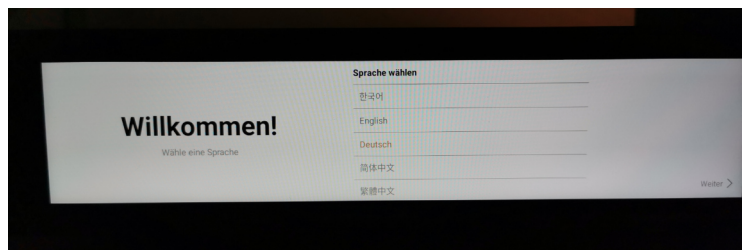
The HiFi Rose **RS151** (black) top left,

the HiFi Rose RS150 (silver) in the middle right compartment.

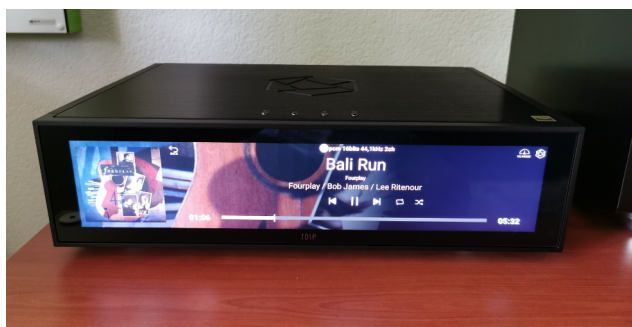
This included the Soulution Audio 330 INT, which served as the amplifier.

The listening was done on Magico A5 speakers.

First, I had to unpack the brand-new RS151, connect it, and run through the basic setup. I'd rather not go into a detailed list of the technical changes compared to the previous one. But because a comparison is also planned, the following change is relevant (for me):



The RS151 has a 9039 PRO DAC from ESS while my RS150 has the AKM 4499EQ in it.



Furthermore, the display has grown slightly from 14.9" to 15.4" and is also a bit sharper. The RS151 now has the control buttons on top of the device, as is the case with the RS130, for example. However, the RS151 does not have the small diamond design.

The RS151's signal-to-noise ratio, dynamic range, stereo crosstalk, and output frequency response have also been significantly improved – we'll test the acoustic impact later. The processor (octa-core), RAM (8 GB LPDDR4X), and cache memory (32 GB eMMC) have also been improved. This was already noticeable during the initial setup, which was very quick and intuitive.

The connections now include 12V triggers (in/out), and an HDMI interface is now used for I²S. The remaining connections remain identical to the RS150.

Another feature is the new remote control, which now comes in aluminum and works with infrared. My RS150 came with a black plastic remote control that works via Bluetooth, but I replaced that with an aluminum remote control a while ago.



But enough of the technical babble – let's get down to what the device was designed for: playing music.

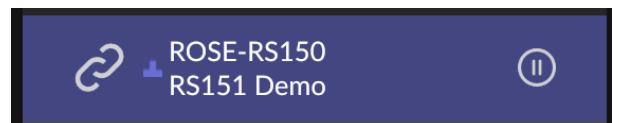


On the first day, I simply let the RS151 run for 6 hours, essentially playing background music or warming up, without paying much attention to what I was listening to.

On the second day, I also only played music for a few hours before preparing the setup for monitoring.

The two devices were each connected to a source on the 331 INT. I then integrated the RS151 into Roon, which worked right away.

I then grouped the two devices in Roon, so that I only had to switch the source on the amplifier during a track. The prerequisite for this is that the devices have identical settings. This didn't always work right away with USB and AES/EBU. But it worked fine with Analog OUT, which is what I used for the test. To avoid distortion in the evaluation, I connected the devices sometimes via XLR/RCA and sometimes via RCA/XLR. I didn't have a second identical RCA on hand, and I didn't want to remove the second XLR on the Soulution from the home theater.



In the evening, I finally had the peace and quiet I needed and started my music program with the RS151. As always, I used my test playlist (also available as a [Qobuz Playlist](#)) and listened through my entire catalog. From electronic and acoustic to jazz and classical, there really was everything, and it was a lot of fun.

I won't bother you with the details of individual songs. However, it should also be mentioned that the following sonic observations or assessments are merely my subjective opinion and reflect the results as I perceived or heard them on my system, in my acoustically very well-treated room.



My conclusion on the RS151

A very well-designed and high-quality device, both visually and haptically. The software has improved significantly compared to four years ago. The app for PC/tablet or mobile also works flawlessly. And even though I actually only control the devices via Roon, without all the apps on the device including the TV connection, the app for configuring and adjusting the connections is always very useful.

I also decided not to import my music collection from the NAS into the RS151 because it still took quite a long time (approx. 6,500 albums). As a Roon user, this is unnecessary anyway.

Now let's move on to the sound characteristics. The resolution is excellent, every detail is clearly audible, vocals are very present and perfectly centered.

The bass range is contoured and plays as deep and precise as the music warrants. Keyboard instruments are reproduced quite authentically, wind instruments are of a high standard and not annoying or shrill. The stage lighting and depth layering are good, but not very good for me. The whole thing is very centered for my taste. Nothing's missing, and it's probably just a matter of getting used to it after years of using the same device.

It's a lot of fun for jazz or acoustic recordings, but tends to get a bit confusing for orchestral recordings. I find it difficult to really distinguish individual sections. The layering seems a bit too overloaded for me, especially in the middle, but maybe that's just a matter of habit or taste.

If I didn't already own a Hifi Rose, I would want to buy the device as a complete package because it simply delivers top performance in many respects. Price and performance are very good for me, and some unique selling points, such as the company's own RoseTube, which lets you watch ad-free YouTube™ videos on your TV, can definitely make a difference compared to other manufacturers. The high-quality and solid build quality, the touch panel, and many other features also have their appeal.

I think you really get a lot for the not-so-cheap price. You should listen to a Rose in a specialist store or at home, even if you're more likely to consider similar, cheaper devices.

My comparison rating is on the last page for those interested.



Second conclusion - The comparison with the RS150

I would like to say in advance that I normally operate my RS150 via USB on the DAC board of my Soulution 330, and I first had to get used to the RS150's internal AKM DAC for the listening comparison. It was the first time I'd used analog since switching from the Soulution 330 to the 331. But it was immediately enjoyable.

As I wrote before, I switched between the tracks while listening – a very exciting experience that also allows the listener to play music without knowing which streamer is currently active. This is because the music is shown simultaneously on both displays. But let's get to the heart of the test.

In direct comparison, the overall sound of the RS150 is a bit airier; instruments and tones have a bit more contour, but are somewhat less present in the center of the stage, and sometimes a bit less forward than the RS151. However, both devices score highly with a very fine and structured representation of individual instruments or voices. And the result isn't the same for every piece of music. Sometimes the RS151 has the edge, sometimes the RS150. Jazz and acoustic lovers will find the RS151 just right.

For complex recordings, however, I tend to prefer the RS150, simply because my taste prefers the wider and deeper soundstage, and it's easier or more pleasant to follow individual passages. The RS151 really does a great job, as the soundstage extends beyond the speaker position.

However, a little criticism is permitted. The improvements listed on the Hifi Rose website, the highly praised adjustments that came from the RD160 DAC, the NRA, and all the other technical details described in magazines—I didn't notice much of any of this in a direct comparison. Perhaps this raised my expectations higher, or perhaps it's simply difficult to achieve a true day & night effect in a class comparison. For me, the devices are on par, and my girlfriend, who always serves as the clear conscience for purchase decisions at the end of such tests, felt the same way.

So I have to disappoint those of you who already have an RS150. You simply have to find other good reasons that justify a change. For me, this is ultimately too little EXTRA of what I expected to justify such an investment. It would certainly be interesting to compare it to an RS150B with an ESS DAC, but unfortunately I haven't listened to one yet and can't comment on that.

For my part, I'll probably stick with my RS150 with the Soulution DAC combo for now and save up for other purchases. And as I mentioned at the beginning, this is my subjective opinion. Thank you for reading, and I'd also like to recommend the other blog posts on my website.

Yours, Adi

Rear

