

Oh No, Not Another LS3/5a...

THE BBC-LICENSED LS3/5A HELPED MAKE ROGERS INTO A GLOBAL BRAND. ITS CURRENT FAR EAST OWNERS HAVE WORKED WITH UK DESIGNERS AND MANUFACTURERS TO CREATE THIS BBC-LICENSED 11OHM 'REVIVAL'

MARTIN COLLOMS

We won't labour the *LS3/5a* story, which began in the BBC in early 1970s, as this was covered in depth in *Vol 11 No 3* (May-June 2007). The fit and finish of this 'official' £1499/pair Rogers revival was excellent. It certainly looks the part with its fine matched rosewood veneer, though the repro Tygan grille material might be a little softer and more open than the original. As expected, these speakers use a 5in (138mm) polymer cone bass/mid drive unit partnered by a nominally 19mm dome tweeter, mounted in a sealed-box enclosure. Build detail includes thick felt absorption around the tweeter, to ameliorate reflection effects from the integral grille frame. (The *LS3/5a* is meant to be used with its grille in place.)

This new example has a glued on back, as were most *3/5as*. The bass/mid driver has a 110mm pressed steel chassis with a flared, talc-filled polypropylene cone, powered by a double-wound voice-coil (the windings series connected), and a large ferrite magnet. A fine 19mm tweeter with recessed soft dome and sophisticated rear loading is fitted, while that unnecessary perforated metal cover completes the original look. Built of birch plywood according to the original recipe, the panels are well damped by traditional bitumen loaded pads, and the interior is lined with thick, absorbent polyurethane foam. This model is bi-wired (unlike the original) with average quality gold plate brass binding posts and brass link pins (preferably replaced by copper wire on installation). The crossover is built on the usual epoxy glass reinforced PCB, securely bolted to the panel area around the tweeter. It uses normal film capacitors, ferrite core inductors, and an array of resistors forming a calibrated attenuator to achieve the essential close tolerance matching of mid and treble levels. (The original 15ohm model used mu-metal cored transformer inductors and ratio matching of driver sensitivity levels.)

Sound quality

With references assembled, and memory not too dimmed from the pleasant experience of that other, Derek Hughes guided 11ohm *3/5a* for Stirling Broadcast (*Vol 11 No 3*), I set to. Location as ever, was free space with little toe-in, and copper links fitted to the terminals.

From the very start that genuine *3/5a* magic was there, though inevitably at modest loudness levels. Shut your eyes and coloration is really low, and the soundstage is spacious, deep and focused. The



natural timbre and the elegant, surprisingly deep image perspective reminds one of much larger and more costly designs. If a listener doesn't demand higher volume levels or need cracking dynamics, it might not be necessary to go further than this in the quest for genuine high fidelity.

In my opinion this is the best of the modern *3/5a* clones I've heard to date. It has quite good coloration in the low midrange – a weakness of many – though it is a little 'boxier' than the best 15ohm examples. It is also a little 'sweet', not quite as crisp and open as is possible, though one would not want it as bright as some later original Rogers 15ohm examples. This new contender is self-effacing, clean, even, smooth and well balanced, with a particularly seamless transition from midrange to treble, albeit a tad dynamically reticent in the piano's middle register. Spacious, transparent and detailed, if a touch 'darker' (and therefore not quite a dynamic, expressive, transparent or 'powerful'), this new version of that old trouper just sounds bigger than the original, with a touch more realism.

This new Rogers certainly has a good percentage of the better drive and timing of the earliest models. We should remember that middle period 15ohm models often sounded hard and 'forward' in the midband, only just meeting the BBC spec. This new version actually bests a huge number of the less good 15ohm models, never mind the more boring 11ohm examples and most of the *3/5* 'clones' (which were never proper *3/5as* anyway). In reality this Rogers is