



A smart Korea move

THE STREAMING MUSIC TREND HAS OPENED UP THE HI-FI MARKET TO NEW NAMES, AND THE RS 250 IS JUST ONE OF SEVERAL MODELS FROM SOUTH KOREA'S HIFI ROSE. IT'S FAR FROM BEING JUST ANOTHER 'ME TOO' DESIGN, ANDREW EVERARD DISCOVERS, THANKS TO A UNIQUE ANDROID-BASED OPERATING SYSTEM

There are two ways for a manufacturer to build a network audio product: the easy one is to buy in a complete streaming solution from a third party, and feed its digital output into in-house audio circuitry. By doing that, adding such a product to one's range is really not much trickier than designing a CD player, especially if you also avoid the complexities of a display and leave all the control to the user's smartphone or tablet running an app: the streaming 'kit' will handle everything from network interface to control and digital out, and will probably even offer the app to operate it all.

Then there's the hard way, which involves designing an in-house streaming platform as well as the audio hardware, and perhaps even building one's own custom app: yes, there's more work involved, but it not only allows the creation of a more integrated product, but also enables a wider range of customisation and upgrade potential, not least to encompass new streaming services and file formats. After all, a manufacturer buying a third-party streaming solution 'off the shelf' is very much in the

hands of its creator when it comes to futureproofing the product in which it's used, and the supply of any ongoing updates.

Based in Seoul, South Korea, HiFi Rose clearly thinks the hard path is the one to take, and is proving the wisdom of its decision by making its in-house Android-based operating system, Rose OS, the heart of a range of network audio products designed to fill a variety of market niches. The RS250 we have here, at £1949, is its entry-level source component,