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REGA'S AWESOME RP6 TURNTABLE



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Rega RP6 Turntable and Exact 2 Moving-Magnet Cartridge

By Wayne Garcia

In *The Absolute Sound* last year, I more or less gushed over Rega's RP3 turntable. With its freshly minted RB303 'arm, new-ish 24-volt low-noise motor, and, most dramatically, 'double-brace' plinth technology, the RP3 presented the most significant overall improvements yet experienced by this long-time Rega fan. But as any smart reviewer should know, sometimes it's best to hold back a bit, because you can surely count on today's latest and greatest being bested day after tomorrow. I do, however, find consolation in the fact that the RP6 being reviewed here is not a replacement for the RP3 but Rega's next model up, a somewhat hot-rodded, if you will, expression of Rega's latest evolutionary thinking on LP playback.

In that regard it takes nothing away from the excellent RP3. On the other hand, it's still a step up. Pricier, too, to be sure, the RP6 goes for £798 without cartridge versus the RP3's £475 base sticker. But here's an interesting rub: the RP6 price includes the outboard TT PSU Mk2 power supply, which I consider to be an essential option to get the most out of the RP3 and which adds £198 to its starting price. At that point you're within shouting distance of excellence—and whatever comes after excellence.

I described unpacking the RP3 as a *déjà vu* experience for anyone familiar with Rega turntables. But the RP6 brings a few "whoa!" moments to the "let's get acquainted" phase of new ownership. First, what's up with that platter? I'm used to Rega's signature glass-platter/felt-mat combo, but this one goes beyond the usual simple circular glass slab that rides atop a plastic hub of a

subplatter. Though it still sports a felt mat (now available in wools dyed bright blue, yellow, red, and violet) the RP6's design sports a new, two-piece, 16mm-thick flywheel platter made of float glass, a technique wherein molten glass is floated over molten tin in order to create the flattest possible surface as well as the highest uniformity of thickness. Two separate pieces of float glass are then joined, says Rega, "using a complex and labour-intensive invisible UV curing-bond technique, [by which] the secondary ring platter is permanently bonded to the underside of the main platter. The extra ring adds mass to the outer circumference which increases the natural flywheel effect of the platter, improving speed stability, accuracy, and consistency."

Moreover, rather than simply sitting atop the subplatter's hub a new aluminium "top hub adaptor" with six raised plateaus rests between the hub and platter, further ensuring the flattest possible surface for LPs to spin on. The feet, too, are a step up from Rega's standard rubber-cup-like units. Derived from the top-of-the line P9, these feet, still in tripod configuration, are created from a much more stable sandwich of aluminium and rubber. And though this may sound superficial, in addition to the sonic improvement, these feet are simply more attractive, more serious looking, and altogether increase a customer's pride of ownership. The plinth they support is a little higher in mass than that of the RP3, and the "double-brace" ▶



▶ technology found in that model is likewise employed here. To recap, the “double brace”—seen in photographs as the strip with the O-shaped cut-outs that bridges the main bearing hub and the arm mount—is made of a phenolic-resin. The idea is to create what Rega refers to as a “stressed beam” assembly to increase rigidity between these two points. One brace is fixed to the top of the plinth, the other to the bottom side.

The RP3 and RP6 share the same, newly refined RB303 arm, which, with the aid of 3D CAD and CAM technology, has redistributed mass to reduce the number of resonant points. In addition, a newly designed armtube increases rigidity. Rega’s TT PSU outboard power supply recently received a new housing, which is both more handsome than the original and also includes a new anti-vibration circuit as well as improved power-supply regulation. The TT PSU is a natural upgrade path that’s compatible with most recent Rega models that use a 24-volt motor. I highly recommend it for its lower noise, greater stability, and, given the plethora of 45rpm vinyl reissues, the convenience of electronic speed-switching. The £255 Exact 2 cartridge—you save £55 and a lot of time if you purchase the complete package for £998—is Rega’s best moving-magnet. Though it’s not widely known, Rega developed its own coil-winding

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machinery, and having greater control over the process allows Rega to use 33 percent less wire in the Exact, increasing efficiency. Unlike other Rega cartridges, which use elliptical styli, the Exact 2 uses a “Vital” stylus tip, and, like the Elys 2, the Exact mounts using the three-point system. If you wish to tweak, be my guest, but if you’re more music lover than audiophile, my advice would be to purchase the package as described. It was, after all, designed as such—setup is a snap— and that’s how I evaluated the sound.

As I reported in my piece on the RP3 in *TAS* Issue 224, Rega’s direction has been toward lowering noise and vibration by increasing rigidity, lowering mass, and improving its manufacturing techniques and tooling. The results are consistent, if not necessarily predictable, with increasingly audible improvements as you step through the line. To this end, the company’s flagship P9 was recently dropped in favour of the RP8, and its innovative ‘deck within a deck’ skeletal design... and there are strong rumours of more to come, developing a new top-end turntable to truly partner the Isis and Valve Isis CD players.

As it was with the RP3, the RP6 delivers qualities—and not surprisingly, with even greater success—that have not always been associated with Rega designs. Here I specifically mean a depth and forcefulness to the low frequencies, along with a macro-dynamic swing and heft we



▶ typically associate with more massive designs. You won't need some orchestral blockbuster or powerhouse rock LP to hear this. Even with a recording such as the *Mozart Sonatas for Piano and Violin* [London], the first notes tell you that the RP6 delivers an increased sense of power, depth of harmonic richness, and percussive force, all with notable ease and gracefulness.

Of course, when the time comes to play something with more demanding bass and dynamic extremes, say, the famed Mercury recording of Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite*, the RP6 reproduces the explosive orchestral climaxes in a way that, I suspect, will surprise listeners who appreciate Rega designs for their nimble musicality, but sometimes wish for a bit more muscle to balance things out. Rock fans take note. If you're in the mood for the sheer visceral power of Hendrix's *Band of Gypsies* [Classic/ Capitol], the RP6 allows "Machine Gun" to dip and soar and explode with the force of crashing waves, along with a fantastic palette of mind-twisting and speaker-shredding shrieks from Hendrix's Strat, stacked Marshall amps, and effects pedals, plus the rat-a-tat snare and pulsing bass that make this song such an emotional workout. With the decidedly more mellow strains of Cat Stevens, as heard on Analogue Productions' stellar reissue of *Tea for the Tillerman*, Stevens' voice is as rich as a newly tapped vein of gold, while instruments practically ooze layers of harmonic overtones, with warm surrounding halos of air. The RP6 also delivers in areas we audiophiles love to obsess over: During the *Firebird* it created an impressively large stage with terrific depth layering, instrumental focus, bloom, and air; *Tea for the Tillerman* revealed the Analogue Productions pressing as simply more

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Type: Belt drive, unsususpended turntable
Speeds: 33.3, 45 (operated from TT PSU Mk II box)

Dimensions (WxHxD): 44.5x14x 37cm
 (with dustcover)

Weight: 7.5kg.

Price: RP6, £798; with Exact 2, £998

Manufactured by: Rega Research

URL: www.rega.co.uk

detailed, dynamically nimble, and forceful than any other edition. The list goes on; the music spins...and spins. Because all these improvements aside—and yes, they are most certainly that, and easily heard above those of the very fine RP3—what the RP6 ultimately delivers is what Rega fans have always treasured above all else, a gateway to a highly involving, long-term musical relationship with our vinyl collections. +

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