

STABILITY IN CHANGING TIMES

Rega Planar 1 £250

FOR Good detail; rhythmic and expressive; easy assembly

AGAINST Nothing particularly at this price



Not even Rega's best-selling turntable is immune to the desire for a fresh approach. But, despite a considerable list of tweaks to the Planar 1, the company's signature sound definitely remains.

In this case, change is unquestionably positive. It begins with the new RB110 tonearm, with precision bearings and automatic bias adjustment and the ideal tracking weight already marked for you.

Sleek design

In fact, pretty much everything has undergone some form of modification, including the Thermoset, gloss-laminated plinth. Our test sample is a sleek white, but the black finish is equally tidy, with sharp lines and an ergonomic design. Even the platter has a higher mass and enhanced flywheel effect for improved speed stability.

There are also hand-me-downs from higher up the range. The Rega Carbon cartridge is fitted as standard, and this is the first of Rega's entry-level turntables to house a 24v synchronous AC motor with an aluminium pulley, for example. The company claims it offers low noise and, again, better speed stability.

We play The Tallest Man On Earth's *Dark Bird Is Home* and the Rega's spry presentation welcomes us like an old friend as Kristian Matsson waves his hand over the album's opening chords. This is not an entry-level amount of detail; the roomy-sounding acoustic guitar is complemented by the reverb in

Matsson's first vocal line; the distinction in treatment of each part is clearly audible, setting the vocal apart.

Some turntable manufacturers could be said to have a tendency to play up to what you might describe as analogue warmth, but not Rega. If you can render a record as faithfully as the Planar 1 does, that warmth begins to feel like the sonic counterpart of dousing your Christmas dinner in tomato ketchup.

When the record receives its adrenaline shot with *Darkness Of The Dream*, the Planar 1 is more than capable of snapping at its heels. The combination of energy and solidity resonates superbly with the drive of this track, as it does when supporting the album's more delicate numbers.

But it takes a comparison with its rivals to truly appreciate this turntable. We enjoy the warmth the Award-winning Pro-Ject Essential II brings to our copy of Django Reinhardt's *Djangology*. Yet the Rega Planar 1 makes its competitor's rendition sound like a rehearsal.

Despite many tweaks to the Planar 1, the company's signature sound has remained



It is only when heard on the Planar 1 that we discover the album's true intensity. Finally, we are able to hear the distinction between those notes stroked and those punished with a firm hand. It is hard to come to any other conclusion than that Rega has raised the bar in almost every respect.

KEY FEATURES



Speeds
33½ & 45rpm



24v, synchronous AC motor



Rega Carbon cartridge fitted as standard

In a nutshell

Even as an entry-level product, this is the kind of turntable that could feasibly be the last of your system's components you'd feel necessary to upgrade.

However, the availability of a Performance Pack add-on for £85, comprising Rega's Bias 2 moving-magnet cartridge, upgrade drive belt and natural wool turntable mat, means that, when the time does come to upgrade, you needn't immediately shell out half a grand for something else.

In these times bereft of certainty, there is far worse you could do than to close the curtains, settle in your favourite armchair and spin a few records on the new Rega Planar 1.

IN DETAIL...



A Rega Carbon cartridge – a hand-me-down from higher up the range – is fitted



The new RB110 tonearm has the ideal tracking weight already marked on it

WHAT HI-FI? says

Rating ★★★★★

SOUND ★★★★★

FEATURES ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VERDICT Despite a few modifications, the Planar 1 remains a sprightly, entertaining turntable with no obvious flaws