



Rega Planar 1 Plus £385

Is the fact you have to remove the platter to change the speed enough to put newcomers off?

After decades of selling its Planar 2 and 3 models, Rega began to expand its range of popular budget turntables 20 or so years ago. The Planar 1 gives much of the quality of the 2 for less money and with a bundled cartridge. And now the Planar 1 Plus adds a built-in MM phono stage. As a fully manual turntable that requires cueing, it's not as easy as the Rekkord to operate.

This is the second-best made turntable in the group after the Kestrel, and just above the Pro-Ject. Rega is a master of using inexpensive materials intelligently to give a high-quality feel – and more importantly, sound. The base is MDF, with holes cut out for the motor, bearing and tonearm. Black, white and 'walnut effect' finishes are offered. The styling and ergonomics are such that the deck appears more 'high-end' than many here. The 24V AC synchronous motor drives the small sub-platter using Rega's latest type of belt. The deck comes supplied

mostly assembled, with the phenolic resin platter fitted over the sub-platter.

The RB110 tonearm is fitted with a pre-aligned Rega Carbon cartridge, which is a rebadged version of the familiar Audio-Technica AT3600L. When setting up the deck you need to fit the counterweight to the arm and

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twist it fully towards you to set the tracking weight. This tonearm is a descendent of the legendary Rega RB300 that first appeared on the Planar 3 in 1983. Although visibly cost-cut compared with pricier Rega arms, it's still a great design that is clearly better than all the others here – except perhaps the Kestrel's. Overall, then, the Planar 1 Plus is an impressive little package considering the asking price.

► DETAILS

PRODUCT
Rega Planar 1 Plus
ORIGIN
UK
TYPE
Belt-drive turntable
WEIGHT
4.35kg
DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
447 x 117 x 360mm
FEATURES
• 33, 45rpm
• Rega RB110 tonearm
• Rega Carbon cartridge
DISTRIBUTOR
Rega Research Ltd.

Sound quality

The second-best sounding turntable here, the Planar 1 Plus' sound is clean and accurate but a tad clinical. Music is delivered in a neat and orderly way, never sounding harsh or rough – and there are no vinyl 'nasties' such as speed instability or hum that afflict cheaper rivals. This is a fine-sounding design that fools you into thinking it's far more expensive than it is.

Change's *A Lover's Holiday* sounds superb; there's lots of detail and atmosphere to this brooding, soulful disco production. The fine pitch accuracy lets you enjoy the sumptuous piano to full effect, along with the soaring strings. The midband is cleaner than most decks here; this puts you in close contact with the gorgeous vocal work that's quite mesmeric. Although the Rega Carbon cartridge works well, there's a sense that the deck will perform even better with a more expensive moving magnet, such is its excellent focus.

R.E.M.'s *Welcome To The Occupation* is cracklingly well rendered, considering how inexpensive this turntable is. It's a dense mix with intense Rickenbacker guitar work, overlaid with Michael Stipe's haunting vocal – and the Rega catches the mood perfectly. All the instrumentation is packaged up in a neat way and delivered with delicacy. Cymbal work is smooth yet clear; there's a slight lack of bite in the treble compared with the Kestrel, but it doesn't detract from the listening experience.

The Planar 1 Plus is such a good all-rounder that it doesn't favour any music – even the Beethoven classical work sounds convincing. Here we see the deck's fine stereo imaging coming into its own, with an expansive recorded acoustic with lots of detail blossoming forth inside. Tonally it's a tad bass-light, but the bottom end is very taut – there's less bass boom than the JBL, for example. An excellent performer at the price ●



HI-FI Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



LIKE: Expressive, engaging sound

VALUE FOR MONEY



DISLIKE: Slightly opaque midband

BUILD QUALITY



WESAY: Quirky yet enjoyable performer

EASE OF USE



OVERALL

