



Band aid

Nick Tate samples a deservedly popular accessory for Rega turntables

One of the greatest strengths – and most serious weaknesses – of belt-drive turntables, is of course the belt. On one hand, it decouples the motor drive pulley from the deck’s platter, damping down extraneous noise coming from the motor. On the other, it’s an imperfect link between the motor and platter, prone to stretching, ageing and collecting dirt and shredding rubber – all of which impedes smooth torque transfer to the platter. This in turn results in wow and flutter.

All Rega turntables have well-designed belt-drive systems – the motor pulley drives the inner platter via a short rubber belt that’s thick enough to not stretch on start up. Sometimes an aluminium sub-platter and/or motor pulley are used, at other times it’s plastic – depending on price. Until fairly recently, the company used a conventional but precisely made rubber drive belt. However, the arrival of the new ‘premium reference’ EBLT belt five years ago changed that. Since then, it has been fitted as standard to Rega’s more high-end Planar turntables and is an aftermarket

option for owners of Rega decks of all different types and vintages. Drive belt quality has a major effect on speed stability, so it must be perfectly round and uniform in diameter. This is easier said than done, so duly prompted Rega to work with CNC technology to produce tools to make belts with an accuracy measured in microns. The rubber has been refined to be equally elastic around its circumference. The EBLT is made using Rega’s “unique secret blend” of materials and then cryogenically frozen and barrelled to create perfect cross sectional roundness. A special curing process further seals in the quality – it’s said to last twice as long as conventional polychloroprene Rega belts.

Sound quality

Rega claims its Reference EBLT belt doubles the speed accuracy of its entry-level Planar 1 turntable, which is no small boast. I try it on an ageing Planar 3 fitted with a standard black belt and hear a meaningful difference. The improvement in sound is more profound than you might expect. Pitch stability is a vital aspect of any turntable’s performance and, even if

it’s slightly sub-par, it will spoil every other aspect of the sound.

The EBLT makes a subtle but meaningful improvement. There’s a greater sense of focus to the sound, and slightly more assured way in which music is reproduced. Bass in particular is audibly tighter and tauter with greater purpose and flow. It doesn’t increase bass weight, but rather the grip seems more secure. Moving up to the midrange, there’s more precision, with the soundstage snapping into view in a more positive way. Up top, treble is fractionally smoother and more delicate.

The improvement is more profound, the better your cartridge is, also cleaning the path of the belt before

The improvement in sound is more profound than you might expect

fitting it helps lock in the improvement. Take a cotton bud dipped in all-purpose cleaner and gently push it onto the motor drive spindle as it rotates and you’ll see some black goo come off. This is residue from the old belt, which has shed rubber particles over the years. Likewise, cleaning the periphery of the inner platter can really help speed stability.

Conclusion

The EBLT belt makes a subtle but positive difference to sound. Given that it’s good practice to renew turntable drive belts regularly, it’s a great value-for-money upgrade for any Rega record player owner. And this is even more the case if, as the company claims, the belt now lasts twice as long. Highly recommended then, and yet another nice thing that adds to the pleasurable user experience of having a Rega Planar turntable of any vintage ●

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Rega Reference EBLT Drive Belt
ORIGIN
UK
TYPE
Turntable belt
FEATURES
● Advancer polymer formulation
● Improved cross-sectional roundness
● Suits all Rega turntables
DISTRIBUTOR
Rega Research Ltd.
WEBSITE
rega.co.uk

Hi-FiChoice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★
BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★
EASE OF FIT
★★★★★

LIKE: Improved clarity, pace and space
DISLIKE: It’s expensive for a drive belt
WE SAY: A quick and easy upgrade for Regas

OVERALL

