

hardware review

Rega Planar 6 RS Edition locks down the groove

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Rega Planar 6 RS Edition turntable, arm & cartridge

Rega RS Edition turntables are beginning to become a thing, two years ago we had the Planar 3 RS, a version of their most successful design that took elements from the Planar 6 and also had a brushed aluminium satin finish, albeit in black rather than the silver of the new Planar 6 RS Edition. This time around the company has taken elements from the Planar 8 to enhance a Planar 6. A pattern has emerged and one wonders which turntable will get the treatment in another two years.

The Planar 6 is the most extreme of Rega's relatively conventional looking turntables, it has the classic rectangular plinth and hinged dustcover that Regas have had since time immemorial, or at least the seventies. It's a deceptive look however as the plinth is not a wooden composite but a sandwich of phenolic resin skins with a foam core, the same material that the company uses for all of its skeletal turntables. This means that it is lighter and stiffer than the vast majority of turntables which is a good thing when it comes to keeping vibration under control. Rega published a book a few years ago called *A Vibration Measuring Machine* because that is exactly what a record player is, it traces or measures tiny modulations or vibrations in the groove of a vinyl record. If you want this to be done with the minimum of distortion then it's critical that external vibrations be kept away from the stylus/vinyl interface. Having a stiff, lightweight plinth is therefore fundamentally good.

What differentiates the Planar 6 RS Edition from the regular P6 goes beyond the fancy aluminium skin, the most fundamental difference is that it has the RB880 tonearm from the Planar 8, the next model up in the range and the least expensive of Rega's skeletal plinth designs. This looks very similar to the arm normally found on a P6 but has a stainless steel

rather than plastic main bearing, providing enhanced rigidity, it also has the stainless balance weight from that arm. At the end of that arm you get an Nd9, Rega's top moving magnet cartridge which normally retails for £695. Given that a standard P6 costs £1,280 without cartridge the package price here of £2,000 means that you are getting the RB880 arm for a mere £25, if you bought one alone it would set you back £765. It's easy to see why the Planar 6 RS Edition is a hot potato on the value front.

The rest of the turntable is as per the regular P6 which is an exceptionally capable turntable in its own right, the key elements are the Tancast foam core plinth mentioned above, braces above and below the plinth connecting main bearing and arm base, a 24V synchronous motor and twin EBLT drive belts which connect the motor pulley to the subplatter (the standard P6 has only one belt). A dual layer float glass platter sits atop this and the whole thing is controlled by a Neo Mk2 power supply which provides on/off and speed switching.



It's worth mentioning that Rega turntables, unlike many budget and some distinctly pricey alternatives, have the motor underneath the platter where it drives a subplatter with a relatively short belt (or two in this case). There are two good reasons for this, one is that any imperfections in the motor will have a greater effect on the stability of the platter if it is driven from the perimeter, and two that the flywheel effect which helps maintain consistent speed is much greater when a central hub is driven instead of the periphery of the platter.

We reviewed the Nd9 cartridge recently and got an excellent result, its boron cantilever is not something you will find on many MMs and this combined with Rega's redesign of the generator in the Nd models combines with a fine line stylus to produce a very capable cartridge.

Sound quality

I used the Planar 6 RS Edition with a Rega Aria phono stage and put the turntable on the same Townshend Seismic platform that supports my reference turntable. An isolating support is not essential for Rega turntables but I have found that they deliver clearly superior results when such things are used. Set up is very straightforward on this turntable, the cartridge is ready fitted so all you need to do is balance the arm by sliding the counterweight until arm is floating then use the spring downforce adjuster to set this to the desired 1.75 grammes. You do however need some form of gauge to do this accurately, the markings on the downforce dial are fairly crude, if you don't have one then set it to a point halfway between the 1.5g and 2g settings and tweak by ear. You should do the latter even if you have a gauge as variations in manufacture mean that no two cartridges track well at exactly the same downforce. Finally set the bias or anti-skate to about the same figure as the downforce, this is even less precisely marked and Rega suggests "Using the centre of the the slider as the reference".



The sound that the Planar 6 RS Edition produced with familiar records under these circumstances reinforced the 'looks can be deceptive' image of this model. This is a remarkably sophisticated turntable, it sounds extremely stable yet has the lightest of touches on the music it reproduces, delivering an extremely clean and coherent signal that wouldn't be amiss on alternatives at considerably higher prices. The Nd9 is a significant factor in this yet it won't deliver the same result on any old turntable – more than half of the calm, composed transparency of the sound here is down to the Planar 6 RS Edition. The Planar 6 is a very fine turntable but I don't recall it having this degree of assurance, it's like an SME with vitality.

I really enjoyed the way that it brought out the shine on Herbie Hancock's piano behind Norah Jones singing Court and Spark, as well as the singer's dusky voice which had a purity that no digital system I've tried can match. I particularly like the way that the Planar 6 RS Edition delivers the musical goods in such a calm, controlled fashion, giving you all the time in the world to appreciate what the musicians are doing. There's no exaggeration of highs, mids or lows as is often the case with turntables even at this price, this Rega sounds totally even handed with nice weight to the bass but no excess to slow it down. It digs down in the mix very effectively, revealing the brushed snare and the acoustic on piano and voice, with lots of space on the former which takes centre stage towards the end of the track.

I contrasted this track on the Planar 6 RS Edition against a considerably more expensive streaming set up and found that the turntable though not as silent in the backgrounds sounded less thin, better timed and more natural. The digital had the advantage of scale but when it came to emotional engagement the turntable clearly had the upper hand. While digital bass is solid it doesn't have the roundness and temporal coherence offered by this turntable, it's also weighty, tuneful and locks down a groove to the extent that you can't keep your feet still. I got rather carried away with the assorted trap drums and congas on *The Files of Agent 22* from Conjure's underrated *Music for the Texts of Ishmael Reed*, as that poet puts it "Rhythm makes everything move/the seasons swing".

In an effort to drill down into the Planar 6 RS Edition's low end capabilities I put on some dub, Scientist's Step It Up to be precise, and was once again inspired to note that nothing seems to faze this turntable. It remains as stable as a rock under the bass onslaught from this track, delivering a powerful, controlled sound with serious low end energy of the sort that you expect from high mass designs yet with the ability to turn on a dime that you do not. This encouraged me to put on the Black Star Liner mix of the same piece which isn't so heavy but does force the listener to get up out of the chair and move when rendered so well.

I also explored the Rega's upper ranges with Mari Samuelsen's *Mari* album of violin pieces,

Rega Planar 6 RS Edition

here things were even more impressive. The Planar 6 RS Edition made it clear that this is a fabulous recording of an inspired musician, the timbre she gets out of her instrument is incredible as is the scale and openness of the sound, it almost like the sun is suddenly shining into the room. Only a turntable with good control of high frequencies could deliver this recording so powerfully without sounding forward or thin, the Rega does so in such a natural, expansive fashion that you can't help but be carried away by the music.



Conclusion

The differences between the Planar 6 and Planar 6 RS Edition might look cosmetic but they add up to a distinctly more capable record player that should frighten anyone making turntables at up to twice the price. Rarely have I heard a more assured and capable turntable and the fact that Rega have assembled a package that makes such a significant saving over the elements when purchased separately make it even better value.

Some might prefer the delicacy of a moving coil in such a turntable and that would be the most obvious upgrade, but the fact that decent MM phono stages are half the price of their MC alternatives make the Planar 6 RS Edition something of a high end bargain when considered in a system context. This turntable combines the control of a high mass design with the speed and musicality that is the Rega hallmark, from here it looks like phenomenal value.

Pros

Outstanding value for money: the package (RB880 arm + Nd9 cartridge) represents exceptional savings compared to buying components separately.

Significantly upgraded performance over standard Planar 6: Improvements from the higher-end tonearm and twin-belt drive deliver noticeably greater stability and assurance.

Highly sophisticated, composed sound: presents music with calm control, excellent coherence, and a refined, "effortless" character.

Excellent timing and musical engagement: strong rhythmic drive and natural flow make music feel lively and emotionally involving.

Superb bass performance: deep, weighty, and controlled low end with impressive agility—combining mass-like authority with speed.

Clean, neutral tonal balance: even-handed presentation across frequencies with no artificial emphasis.

Impressive detail retrieval and transparency: reveals subtle textures and layers in recordings

without sounding analytical.

Strong performance from Nd9 cartridge: high-end MM design with boron cantilever and fine line stylus contributes to clarity and refinement.

Lightweight, rigid plinth design: effectively minimises unwanted vibration, aiding clarity and precision.

Easy setup: pre-fitted cartridge and straightforward adjustment make installation relatively simple.

Cons

Crude tracking force and bias adjustments: markings are imprecise, requiring a gauge and fine-tuning by ear for optimal setup.

Cosmetic changes may seem minor at first glance: improvements are not visually dramatic, which may underwhelm some buyers initially.

Still benefits from external isolation: performance improves noticeably with a dedicated isolation platform.

MM cartridge may not suit all tastes: Some listeners may prefer the delicacy and detail of a moving coil alternative.

Limited upgrade flexibility within package: pre-selected cartridge and arm may not appeal to those who prefer to customise components.

Dustcover and traditional design feel dated to some: conservative styling may lack the visual excitement of more modern or skeletal designs.

Not the last word in absolute scale: compared to high-end digital or more expensive analogue setups, it may lack ultimate soundstage size.

