



The joy of Six

Ed Selley gets his groove on for this UK-exclusive first review of Rega's latest Planar turntable to be finessed, the 6

From the moment Rega revived its Planar name with the introduction of the Planar 1, Planar 2 (HFC 415) and Planar 3 (HFC 411) turntables in 2016, it was logical that the RP6 would be in line to join the new order. Rumours of an RP6 successor have been circulating for some time since the Planar 3 arrived over a year ago and anticipation was finally broken with the official announcement of the imminent release of the new Planar 6 in mid-

July, much to the excitement of both dealers and Rega enthusiasts alike. On the face of it, the similarities between the Planar 6 and the more affordable models in Rega's range look to outweigh the differences, but rest assured that the £998 (without cartridge) Planar 6 is rather more than a beefed-up version of its Planar 3 sibling. The new turntable is still an unsuspended, belt-driven design that uses a single-piece plinth instead of the distinctive two-piece design of the continuing RP8 and RP10 flagship

DETAILS
PRODUCT
Rega Planar 6
ORIGIN
UK
TYPE
Belt-drive turntable
WEIGHT
5.2kg
DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
448 x 120 x 365mm
FEATURES
• 33 & 45rpm
• Lightweight foam core plinth
• RB330 tonearm fitted with Ania MC cartridge
• Neo PSU
DISTRIBUTOR
Rega Research Ltd
TELEPHONE
01702 333071
WEBSITE
rega.co.uk

decks. This plinth is rather different from anything that Rega has produced before and is constructed from a polyurethane foam called Tan-Cast 8, which is an extremely lightweight and rigid material. The foam is then sandwiched between a High Pressure Laminate (HPL), which Rega says is exceptionally thin but increases the plinth's stiffness and rigidity. It's finished in matt grey with high-gloss polymer black-edge trim.

The new plinth construction results in a weight of just 980g, which is less than half that of the model it replaces. It uses Rega's existing double brace technology that anchors the main bearing and the arm mount together to further increase the overall rigidity and a patent pending brass hub into which an aluminium sub-platter is placed and fitted with a new drive belt that links to the drive motor. The platter is a two-piece design similar in construction to the outgoing RP6, but now with a distinctive smoked layer.

The Neo PSU is a completely new power supply design that borrows from Rega's flagship RP10. It uses a DSP generator that's built around a

high-stability crystal that generates an extremely accurate sinusoidal wave form to ensure exceptional pitch stability regardless of fluctuations in the mains supply. For optimal performance, each PSU is matched to the 24V motor when pairing with a particular Planar 6 to ensure the closest relationship between the two. The Neo PSU also provides 33 and 45rpm speed control on the unit, removing the need to adjust the belt on the motor pulley or for any physical controls on the plinth itself.

An RB330 tonearm is fitted as standard and this is materially identical to the Planar 3, save for the inclusion of a custom stainless-steel weight that looks and feels a little more superior. As previously mentioned, the Planar 6 is available without a cartridge or as reviewed here fitted with Rega's Ania moving-coil cartridge (HFC 426) for a total package cost of £1,398. This gives a near £100 saving on the cost of an Ania and equips the Planar 6 with a cartridge that has clearly been designed with this deck in mind. Of course, the tonearm works with a

wide selection of other cartridge designs too, and VTA can be altered via spacers available from Rega.

The result of the studious application of engineering and material science used in this deck makes it feel a little different to any other Rega turntable I have used before. One aspect I find genuinely impressive is that despite the relative lack of mass, it never feels lightweight or insubstantial in any way. All points of contact are finished to a remarkably high standard and it comes across as an extremely solid device, despite being made from

It seems clear that the Neo PSU has a significant part to play in its abilities

lightweight materials. Like other members of the Planar family, it additionally comes with a Perspex dust cover as standard – in this case in a smoked finish. I am less sold on the overall look of the Planar 6, though. The grey finish is a function of the HPL process and the black gloss edging is nicely done. While the attention to detail is undoubtedly high, in some regards the Planar 6 looks less special than its high-gloss siblings. It still has an effortless sense of proportion and an elegance borne of its simplicity that is very appealing, but it's fair to say there are more visually arresting rivals at a similar price point (see How It Compares box).

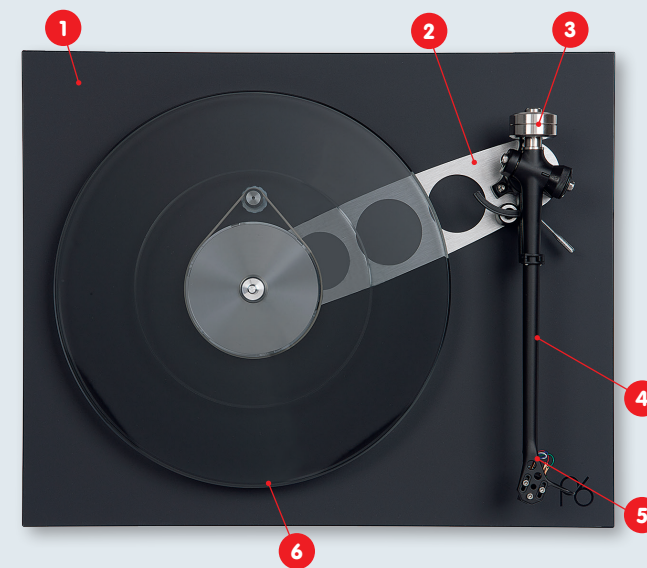
Sound quality

We don't choose our audio sources purely on their looks, however, and the Planar 6 makes a lot more sense once you hear it. Initially connected to a Cyrus Phono Signature (HFC 408) Naim Supernait 2 and Neat Momentum 4i speaker, the feel of the Rega does seem to give a steer to its audio performance. For anyone that associates bass extension with mass, the Planar 6 will swiftly dispel that way of thinking. The opening swell of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in the live rendition of *Berlin Sunrise* is a huge force that is captured with absolute authority. This isn't just good bass from what could be considered a lightweight turntable, it delivers superb low-end extension full stop!

The speed and sense of togetherness that I'd expect from a turntable that's wearing a Rega badge is all there. With My Baby's *Love Dance*, it captures the funky, loping rhythm in a way that seems perfectly self-explanatory and in a way that others struggle to capture. There's no trace of overhang and this lends the performance an immediacy that is truly invigorating. What's important about how the Planar 6 manages this is that when the tempo of the music is much slower, the immediacy remains so that Nick Drake's *Things Behind The Sun* never feels forced or unnatural.

While the Ania is indisputably a fine cartridge in its own right, it finds a natural home here. That slightly full-bodied quality that I heard on the Technics SL-1200GR (HFC 426) is much less apparent on the Planar 6 ▶

IN SIGHT



- 1 Tan-Cast 8 plinth
- 2 Aluminum sub-platter
- 3 New custom stainless weight
- 4 RB330 tonearm
- 5 Ania moving-coil cartridge
- 6 Clear float glass platter

Q&A

Simon Webster

Sales and marketing coordinator, Rega



ES: Is the reduced weight of the plinth a by-product of the material or did Rega look to achieve this?

SW: Reducing the weight of the plinth was key to making the new Planar 6 viable and was a key design goal from the start. Lightweight high rigidity plinths are key to the design of all Rega turntable products.

Will we see the plinth material on more expensive players?

We use a different polyolefin foam core on the RP8 and RP10. Also, the foam edge on the 8 and 10 is seen on both models by the customer, so has to be visually appealing. The Tan-Cast material used on the 6 is edged so the visual appearance (colour) is not an issue. Currently only the 6 will use this material, however, it may appear on future models if we can reduce the manufacturing cost.

Were the Planar 6 and Ania developed to go together?

They were developed separately but very much with each other in mind. Knowing what we had learnt from the Apheta 2 MC cartridge and the RP8 combination, we knew we could effectively cost engineer the two products to have a direct synergy offering a level of performance at a price we have never achieved before.

Is the smoked Perspex lid and glass platter layer a nod to the original Planar or a request from dealers?

In truth, the smoked dustcover looked better with the 'stealthy' look of the Planar 6. We work closely with all our suppliers and sampled two or three different shades of tint. We unanimously decided on the level of tint you now see, which is in fact a little lighter than that seen on older Planar models. The glass platter is a big evolution from the original Planar. The Planar 6 sports a dual-layer float glass platter. The top is a Pilkington-grade tinted layer and the bottom is manufactured from opti-white glass. Having a second layer with the mass towards the outer edge creates a flywheel effect, which naturally aids rotational stability and directly improves sonic performance.

A ninja among turntables, the new finish is highly distinctive



Without the Ania cartridge, the Planar 6 offers exceptional value for money. The Funk Firm Flamenca (HFC 391) has similar design attributes, but the Rega sounds slightly more forward, has better bass and wonderful speed to its presentation, while the Funk Firm is blessed with a transparent and airy sound that's very inviting. Gold Note's lovely Valore 425 Plus (HFC 424) keeps things honest, but costs £1,942 fitted with Vasari Gold Cartridge and the Technics SL-1200GR (HFC 426) at £1,299 without a cartridge fitted has a powerful and propulsive sound and some attributes that the Rega is unable to match easily.



and the result is a very even handed and potent-sounding partnership. The dense instrumentation of the Hidden Orchestra's *Spoken* is gently unpicked and opened into a vast and understandable soundstage.

This isn't a cossetting performance – anyone looking for vinyl warmth might be left wanting – but it is unquestionably believable. Briefly switching to a Goldring Legacy moving-coil cartridge suggests that the absolute balance of the Planar 6 is fractionally on the lean side but not unmanageably so and while the supplied Ania cartridge represents an excellent and cost-effective partner, other designs work well and demonstrate the deck's flexibility and possible future upgrade potential. Of course, if you do opt for the pre-mounted Ania, it follows that the logical partner would be the supremely talented Fono MC (also reviewed in HFC 426).

Picking apart the roles that the different parts of the Planar 6 play isn't especially easy, but it seems abundantly clear that the Neo PSU has a significant part to play in its abilities. Even following the Technics SL-1200GR with its exceptional pitch stability as a function of its direct-drive system, the Rega is still very impressive. Standard torture tests of sustained notes show no sign of any instability and the Planar 6 is also exceptionally quiet in operation. Running it through the notably silent Cyrus Phono Signature phono stage, there is no sign of any induced noise from the deck itself and for me at least, this is the biggest characteristic that sets it apart from other more affordable alternatives.

The overall presentation is aided in no small part by the tonal realism that the Planar 6 possesses. Voices in particular manage to sound

consistently believable and there is never any trouble differentiating between different vocalists in the same piece. Crucially, when you play something that you know extremely well, like Little Feat's *Rock And Roll Doctor*, the Rega doesn't mess with any of the basics of the track instead effortlessly bringing its own abilities to your attention. The piano is detailed and weighty and has a wonderful sense of speed and finesse to it, making a piece of music that has often been described as infectiously groovy, sound even more so.

Conclusion

There are aspects to the Planar 6's design that point to new approaches from Rega. The jury may still be out on the Polaris grey finish, but the good news is that once you start listening, any reservations on its looks quickly fade away. Partnered with Rega's Ania moving-coil cartridge it delivers a level of performance that is pretty much untouchable for less than £1,500. It may have seemed as though it took forever to arrive, but the resulting Planar 6 is a simply outstanding turntable that's well worth the wait ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



VALUE FOR MONEY



BUILD QUALITY



FEATURES



OVERALL



LIKE: Fast, powerful and immediate presentation; great tonality; useful features
DISLIKE: We're not completely sold on the matt grey finish
WE SAY: Raises the bar on what we can expect from turntables at this price point