

Planar speaking

hi-finews
EDITOR'S
CHOICE

REGA P9 TURNTABLE PACKAGE

Rega has combined its P9 turntable and RB1000 arm with a flagship MC cartridge and dedicated phono stage for one of the ultimate vinyl rides



This is the completion of the P9 package with Rega's long-awaited Apheta MC cartridge and the recently released Ios moving-coil phono stage.

A key feature of the P9 is its ceramic platter, as hard as ruby or sapphire, but very expensive to make as it has to be diamond-machined all over after firing.

Rega believes a turntable motor should be rigidly mounted and must produce as little vibration as possible. So each P9 mains-regenerator power supply (which provides 33.3 and 45rpm speeds) is individually tuned to the motor of its turntable.

The RB1000 arm is Rega's top model, a derivative of the original RB300. The famous silicon-aluminium arm tube casting is highly polished, with no coating of any kind. Bearings are selected and assembled to the highest standard, while other parts use better materials than in Rega's lower-cost arms. Wiring is in one continuous run from cartridge tags to phono plugs.

The handbuilt Apheta MC was designed to eliminate the usual tie-wire, which positions the moving-coil assembly and has to be critically tensioned and damped. To do this, Rega adopted a structure similar to its moving-magnet designs.

Having spent four years developing a moving-coil cartridge, Rega had gained some pretty firm ideas about phono stages. The Ios combines a 1:10 transformer with further stages of amplification. It is adjustable to suit most MCs (not moving-magnets), with switching for loading, DC resistance and

gain. Unusually, there's an adjustable 'notch' filter, centred on 8.5kHz, adjustable from 0 to -6.5dB and said to be useful for older pressings with higher surface noise.

PUTS YOU THERE

The very first record to go on to the P9's felt mat was a cheap-label LP of Lester Young, recorded live at a club in 1948, *Prez* [Summit]. This recording, terrible in so many ways, contains great performances and the Rega just allowed you to imagine yourself right into that long-vanished nightspot.

Rega's own Christine Collister recording *Love* [ENS 002] sounded crisp and fresh throughout. There was a fine clarity and immediacy to the atmospheric wind effects and delicate cloud of background vocals as Collister navigated the airy lyrics and never-landing melody of Joni Mitchell's 'Amelia'.

In contrast, the compressed, processed, even muffled 'Motherless Children', from Eric Clapton's *461 Ocean Boulevard* [RSO], burst out from the loudspeakers in all its fuzzy glory, the overdriven guitars really sizzling, the whole thing alive with great energy.

Turning to a more civilized kind of recording, Rob Wasserman's *Duets* [MCA 42131], and the inevitable 'Ballad Of The Runaway Horse', I could really sense his close rapport with Jennifer Warnes, feeling a subtle lilt in the rhythm as the two of them shaped each phrase.

In Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia On Greensleeves* with Barbirolli [EMI],

the strings and even the ambience of the hall itself seemed drenched in a woody quality, the acoustic huge and deep. The Ios filter was arguably an improvement on the old 1967 favourite Barenboim/ECO Mozart Concerto, K467 [EMI], taming the strings a little; and it could help some bright-sounding 1950s/1960s American recordings.

The sonic penalty for using the lid – which stays open in the vertical position – is small, but it does rob the sound of the last ounce of delicacy and dynamic rightness.

'The solo was reproduced with all the spiky attack of a real trumpet, yet with absolute confidence'

VERDICT

Rega's top player combination really delivers a sound that makes you want to go on listening, and allows you to find your way further into the music. It responds to care in siting and sounds better with the lid off, but is spectacularly good value. Ⓞ

AUDIO FILE

Turntable, arm and moving-coil cartridge with phono stage

Made and supplied by: Rega

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HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Turntable speed error (re. 33.33rpm)	33.31rpm (-0.08%)
Time to audible stabilisation	4.5 secs
Peak wow & flutter	0.09% / 0.02%
Rumble (silent groove, DIN B wtd)	-69.1dB
Rumble (through bearing, DIN B wtd)	-71.4dB
Hum & noise (unwtd, rel. to 5cm/sec)	-59.6dB