

## Rega Planar 6 Turntable Review

*If you judge quality by weight, look away now*

by Ed Selley Sep 14, 2017 at 6:21 AM



### What is the Rega Planar 6?

The Rega Planar 6 is an unsuspected, belt drive turntable. As a Rega, you would really expect nothing less – they are, after all, the building blocks of what the company has been doing practically from its inception. On the face of it, the Planar 6 looks like more of the same. There are some signs however that suggest that all is not as it seems.

First up, this turntable has been a surprisingly long time coming. The Planar 3 was launched over a year ago and was followed in a timely and orderly fashion by the Planar 2 and Planar 1. This left the RP6 to continue on – which it has done admirably thanks to being extremely good. The nature of the RP6 was very much an evolved version of the RP3 and if its replacement was going to be similar, it seemed odd that it would take the efficient development team at Rega a year to get it out the door. This delay suggested that something more than beefing up the Planar 3 was taking place.

Secondly, there is the nature of the turntables that occupy the upper echelons of the Rega portfolio. The RP8 and RP10 are both unsuspected plinth type devices but the nature of the plinth they

employ is different again. Was this hiatus in the appearance of the RP6 model because some of the lessons learned in creating the flagship models being adopted here? Well, the Planar 6 is now here so it's time to find out what has been going on and what's been happening behind closed doors.

## Specifications



Critical to the design and execution of the Planar 6 is the plinth. On first inspection, this looks like the rest of the Planar family. It is a single section that travels the full width of the turntable and unlike the more radical RP8 and RP10 doesn't have a skeletal inner section that can be left running on its own. The influence from these turntables is present though. The plinth of the Planar 6 is made from a foam material called Tan Cast 8. This is not something that has been developed for Rega – it has existed in the construction industry for some time – but there are some obstacles to using it in this fashion that have needed to be overcome.

The reasons why they have been worth overcoming are that the foam creates a strong and inert form that is extremely light. How light? A Planar 6 plinth less all the bits that usually hang off it weighs just 980 grams. This is less than half the weight of a Planar 3 plinth which is a huge saving. Why does this matter? Rega's design philosophy follows the principle that mass in turntables is welcome only in specific areas of the design and the plinth isn't one of them. Should science evolve to the point where Rega could suspend the bearing and arm mount in a completely inert forcefield (and the idea of vinyl surviving to the point where this is possible seems less insane than it once did), this would be ideal for them.

While Tan Cast 8 is impressively rigid for anything that can be described as a foam, it doesn't work as a plinth without a little help. Rega has coated it in a High Pressure Laminate (HPL). This creates the required stiffness for the object to become a complete plinth. In keeping with the Planar 3, there is a

visible brace between the bearing and the armboard which creates a stressed member between the two. This assembly is then suspended on three soft feet to impart a degree of isolation.



This plinth is then built up into a turntable via components that will be familiar to Rega users. A 24 volt motor acts on a sub platter that on the Planar 6 is made from metal rather than the plastic in the Planar 3. This then rotates the spindle which sits in a bearing assembly that is patent pending and acts upon a glass platter. Unlike the simpler Planar models, this is a two layer design that improves the resonant properties and adds to the overall mass of the player – in a manner that Rega finds acceptable.

The tonarm of the Planar 6 will be familiar enough to owners of the Planar 3. The RB330 arrives here almost unchanged from its application in the Planar 3. This ongoing evolution of the original RB300 is almost completely different from the original but retains the same overall characteristics of the design. The Planar 6 gains a high mass counterweight that is finished to a higher standard than the one attached to the Planar 3 (or versions sold alone for use on other turntables). Like other Rega arms, the 330 has three mounting points rather than the normal two and this means that any Rega cartridge mounted in this will be automatically correctly aligned. The Planar 6 can be ordered without cartridge for £998 or with the new Ania moving coil for £1,398, thus saving £100 when purchased together.

The last piece of the Planar 6 isn't part of the turntable itself but it is all new and it is extremely important. The Neo PSU is a development of the unit fitted to the flagship RP10 and uses a crystal controlled oscillator to create a perfectly stepped sine wave to deliver a perfect vibration free power supply to the motor. To help this along, each power supply is matched to a specific motor for optimal performance. Rega says that the supply is also unaffected by incoming voltage fluctuations. The Neo PSU gets a version of Rega's new casework and provides automatic speed adjustment as well as a manual fine tuning pot on the bottom.

## Design



The Planar 6 could only really be a Rega design from the moment that you clap eyes on it. The proportions, arm and general design is something that has gently evolved over time but is still recognisably similar to what was achieved in the early 1980s. In the particular case of the Planar 6 though, this 80s vibe is partly achieved due to some of the styling decisions that have been taken by Rega. The Planar 6 is at the time of writing (August 2017) only available in a grey finish. This is a function of the HPL used to finish the plinth off. It has a black gloss edge to add a little visual flair to it but it's still a little on the dull side.

Rega has combined this with a smoked plinth and a layer of smoked glass in the platter to create a turntable that has a little sniff of retro to it. Having spent a little time with it, I have to say it is growing on me but equally, in some respects, I don't think it looks as attractive or special as the rather less expensive Planar 3. In part, this is a problem of Rega's own creating and needs to be seen in context with how equipment from rival companies appears – judged against the completion and not its own family, the Rega feels absolutely competitive.

It's also extremely clever. With mass comes solidity and with solidity comes a feeling – conscious or otherwise – of quality. Rega doesn't have this heft to work with in the Planar 6 and yet it manages to feel extremely solid and well-engineered. All the points of contact convey a feeling of solidity that is more than up to the standard required of a device at this price. The RB330 arm in particular feels lovely to use and operate and while the VTA (the height of the arm above the platter is not adjustable on the arm itself, it can be altered by means of spacers available from Rega.



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### **How was the Planar 6 tested?**

The Rega was supplied with the Ania cartridge pre mounted and was connected to both a Cyrus Phono Signature Phono Stage and a Rega Fono MC – which has been developed and launched at the same time as the Ania. A small amount of testing has been carried out with a Goldring Legacy phono cartridge in substitution for the Ania. It has been connected to a Naim Supernait 2 integrated amplifier and Neat Momentum 4i speakers. All powered equipment has been placed on a Quadraspire QAVX equipment rack and connected to an IsoTek Evo 3 Sigmas mains conditioner. The test material has been vinyl.

## Sound Quality



Most importantly, the Planar 6 covers the basics of vinyl replay at this price admirably. It has a noise floor lower than that of the already extremely quiet Cyrus phono stage and well below what the overwhelming majority of records will be able to produce. The critical improvement that turntables over £1,000 should offer over less expensive models is this wholesale reduction in unwanted noise and the Planar 6 more than meets these requirements. Additionally, it offers superb pitch stability. Once the pause while the power supply performs its own checks finishes, the Rega spins up quickly and is utterly pitch stable. The review sample moved into the space previously occupied by the Technics SL-1200GR – pretty much the living embodiment of pitch stability – and it doesn't feel compromised.

More importantly and beyond the basics, the Rega delivers a performance that is unusually good for a turntable at the price. When listening to the Technics, there is a sense that some of the qualities of the turntable make their way into the audible experience. As these qualities are wholly positive, this doesn't matter – indeed, many listeners would actively seek them out. The Rega on the other hand, puts much less of itself into the presentation. Listening to Dead Can Dance's *Toward the Within* – a record I have heard on a variety of turntables including the biblically expensive – and the Rega is impressively free of an obvious sonic fingerprint.

There is one aspect of the Planar 6 which while not a trait as such, is still immediately noteworthy. For a turntable of such limited mass, the bass response is outstanding. The massive drum used in the

live performance of Sort of Revolution by Fink is delivered with a real weight and energy to it. No less important is the complete absence of overhang or sluggishness to this presentation. The high tempo impacts of Vitalic's Lightspeed is delivered with each beat being a deep, defined impact that doesn't interfere with the next one. It doesn't have quite the propulsive welly of the Technics but it's extremely close.



Where the Rega shows a skill over and above the SL-1200 (and a number of more conventional rivals) is that the space and three dimensionality of its presentation is utterly superb. The newly released Every Valley by Public Service Broadcasting opens out into a vast and complex piece with real instruments mingling with samples and electronics in a way that the band has come to make their own. The Naim Supernait2 I routinely use for review work is a truly magnificent amplifier but it isn't the most naturally spacious device around. The Rega manages to find a greater level of width and depth than I've come to expect from it but the effect is so natural it never fails to sound right.

The absolute tonality of a record player is heavily dependent on the cartridge. As such, at £998 less cart, the Planar 6 will then begin to take on the attributes of what you connect to it. There are some fine options available to you and some tests with the £700 Goldring Legacy suggest that the Rega is up to the job of working with some rather expensive options. I will be honest though and say if you can go for the factory installed Ania cartridge, you should. This is the latest member of Rega's moving coil family and a superb cartridge for £498. Selecting it on the Planar 6 saves you £100 and leaves you with a partnership that is clearly the result of some thought.

With the Ania in place, voices and instruments neatly balance realism and detail with a sweetness that is hard to get from sensible digital. The wonderful guitar work in Tamikrest's Kidal is delivered with a fantastic sense of presence and richness that has you stopping what you are doing and paying attention to it instead. It manages to sound clean and fast without ever being sterile and uninvolved and there is an effortless integration of the whole frequency response that ensures you don't find yourself picking out any particular part of the material over anything else. I've listened to the Ania on other turntables and it can sound fractionally warm which in turn suggests that its performance here is down to the Planar 6 being fractionally lean but as a pairing, they are almost untouchable at £1,398.



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OUT OF 10

### Pros

- Outstandingly lively and engaging performance
- Solid build considering lightweight materials
- Excellent value for money

### Cons

- Doesn't look terribly exciting
- Does its best work with isolation

## Conclusion

### Rega Planar 6 Turntable Review

You have to be committed to vinyl to want to break the four figure mark on it but, as we have seen with a few recent reviews, there are solid reasons for doing so. The Planar 6 is not the most immediately striking device you can buy at the price, so if you rate objects by their mass and eyecatching appearance, this might not be the obvious choice.

Listen to it with remotely capable supporting equipment though and the Rega shows it has been worth the wait. This is a startlingly good turntable and an elegant demonstration of Rega's design philosophy continuing to evolve and improve. It handles anything you throw at it with real ability and enjoyment and manages to balance technical ability with musical joy in a way that Rega has made their own of late. This is a magnificent turntable and while it is almost certainly the pick of the pack without its cartridge at £998, it is when combined with the Ania it truly excels. For turntable arm and cartridge combinations under £1,500, the Rega is truly outstanding and an unconditional best buy.



## The Rundown

