

## Rega Planar 10 Turntable Review

*A truly 21st century way of playing a 20th century medium*

by Ed Selley Yesterday at 8:13 AM

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REGA PLANAR 10 TURNTABLE (2019)

SRP: £3,599.00

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## What is the Rega Planar 10?

The Rega Planar 10 is an unsuspending, belt drive turntable. This shouldn't be a surprise because all Rega turntables are unsuspending belt drive designs. In fact, if these are the only descriptive points by which you wish to describe a turntable, the Planar 10 is functionally identical to the £250 Planar 1 except for the notable detail that you can have 18 Planar 1s for the price of a Planar 10 as it sits here. It is perhaps just as well that there are other areas by which we differentiate turntables.

More pertinently though, the Planar 10 looks very similar to the [Planar 8](#) which has just been placed in the Editor's Choice Awards for our best turntable over £2,000. Why does the Planar 10 cost rather more than the Planar 8 and does it do enough to justify it? Once again, it is perhaps as well that the little visual differences here are not cosmetic ones.

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In fact, like a very specific version of the Marvel films, Rega's efforts over the last three years - dating all the way back to the [Planar 3](#) in 2016 - have been directed at this moment. The Planar 10 is *Endgame*; the culmination of everything they have been working on wrapped up in a single record player (at least it might be - Rega has never gone higher than 10 before). Can the Planar 10 possibly be that much better than the 8 and really deliver the ultimate expression of the Rega philosophy?

## Specification and Design

First up, the Planar 10 doesn't merely look similar to the Planar 8, in some key regards, it is functionally identical. This is because they are both designed with a view to taking design elements from the Naiad. This is the only 'non Planar' turntable that Rega makes - a thirty grand combination of flagship, technical testbed and legend that is built in tiny numbers to order. The plinth of both Planar 8 and Planar 10 is Rega's take on making the Naiad at an affordable price. It is made of Tan Cast 8 foam that is sandwiched between two layers of high pressure laminate. It represents the minimum amount of plinth needed to get the job done and nothing more. They are not interchangeable though - the Planar 10 has a different bearing housing which, amazingly enough, accommodates a different bearing.

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The key difference is what the Planar 10 adds to this plinth. There is still a stiffening brace between the bearing and arm but here it is made from ceramic. Rega says that the use of it makes the Planar 10 considerably stiffer than the Planar 8 without increasing the dimensions. Neither is it the only use of the material. The Planar 10 is the only Rega turntable (except, ironically, the Planar 1 for different



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reasons) not to use glass for the platter material. Instead, ceramic of a slightly different makeup to the brace is used. Rega says that doing so makes for a completely inert playing surface and has been using ceramic for platters for some time now on their flagship turntables.



This is rotated by a pair of belts that are made from a specially developed rubber and that act on a combined spindle and bearing that ships in place onto which you simply place the platter. The Motor is also integrated into the plinth and, like the Planar 8, it is secured from the bottom and done so in a manner that moves any unwanted vibration away from the playing surface. The power supply is mounted offboard and connects to the motor via an XLR cable. This is almost identical in design to the preceding RP10 as Rega hasn't been able to improve on its rather sophisticated crystal locked circuit. It does get new casework though, which is intended to more closely match the new Aethos integrated amplifier that is likely to partner more than a few Planar 10s.

The last major upgrade on the Planar 10 is the arm and (if specified) the cartridge. The RB3000 arm is an evolution of the earlier RB2000 and it doesn't have a great deal in common with lesser Rega arms. The most notable aspect of its construction is that the build tolerances are such that no additional form of fixing or adhesive is needed to keep it together. As standard, it is supplied with a fairly compact counterweight that is designed around Rega cartridges but a heavier variant is also available.



Rega is hoping you'll go 'all in' with their cartridge though and to this end has launched the Apheta 3 at the same time. This isn't specific to the Planar 10, it replaces the Apheta 2 and will be available for the Planar 8 too as well as being sold on its own. Like the Apheta 2, it makes use of

a suspension free design which in turn requires the generator to be light but extremely powerful. The Apheta 2 improved this generator and it is retained for the Apheta 3. Where the new model differs is a new stylus profile that is more efficient than the 'Vital' type on the Apheta 2 (and if all this seems a bit mysterious, we covered the differences at the same time as reviewing the [VM-95 series](#) of carts). Something that has no bearing on the performance but is still welcome is that the Apheta 3 is genuinely beautiful to look at too - easily the prettiest cartridge Rega has ever made.

*BB There is still a stiffening brace between the bearing and arm but here it is made from ceramic ...it makes the Planar 10 considerably stiffer than the Planar 8 without increasing the dimensions*

The result of all this applied tinkering is that the Planar 10 feels similar to the Planar 8 but still different in a number of ways. The feeling of 'lightweight solidity' (probably an oxymoron, almost certainly garbled) has been amplified. The Planar 10 is a world away in design and execution from the [VPI Prime](#) (it weighs less all up than the platter of the Prime does) but it still feels like a piece of high end equipment because the points of contact are exquisitely finished.



You can buy turntables for the same price that have more theatre to them - my own resident Michell Gyrodec and SME arm in 2019 spec would be £4,041 and it's a more eye popping thing than the Rega... but it isn't better made. It's also a joy to assemble and use. There aren't many turntables at this price that go together as easily and if you understand the basics of how a Planar 2 or 3 works, you could almost certainly do the honours with the Planar 10. Like the Planar 8, there is no hinged lid but you do get a dust cover included in the price that has the same secured arrangement as the Planar 8 making it very easy to use.

Related: [VM95 cartridges review](#)

# How was the Planar 10 tested?

The Rega has been supplied with its Apheta 3 cartridge fitted and this has remained attached for the duration of testing. It has been connected to an IsoTek Evo 3 Aquarius mains conditioner and used with a Cyrus Phono Signature into a Naim Supernait 3, Rega Aethos, Luxman L590 AX MkII and Prima Luna Evo 200 integrated amp and [Focal Kanta No1](#) and Dali Epicon 2 speakers. The test medium has been lots and lots of vinyl.

## Sound Quality

Specified with identical Apheta 3 cartridges (we'll ignore for a moment that I tend to prefer the Planar 8 with the cheaper Ania cartridge), the Planar 10 is, as near as make no difference, two thousand pounds more than the Planar 8 - a reflection that ceramic and tonearms that hang together by tolerance alone are not cheap things to do. The question, therefore, is not whether the Planar 10 is better than its superbly accomplished little brother but is it sufficiently better to justify the cost difference?

First up; there have been no retrograde steps. This is still a muscular and rhythmic turntable that gives nothing away to heavier rivals in terms of its ability to deliver music that has all the scale and impact required of it. The Planar 10 is able to work a little more magic even so. The absolute bass weight - in the test system at least - doesn't show any significant increase to the Planar 8 but the detail and definition have taken another step forward. I've mentioned in the past that great analogue bass is neither cheap nor easy to do but the Planar 10 is rather magical at it.



And from this solid foundation, the Planar 10 simply builds on what went before. The three dimensionality on offer here is truly outstanding. The astonishingly enveloping 3-D Kraftwerk mixes truly live up to their name here with a performance that extends far beyond the confines of the speakers in all directions. What is no less important is that

when you need the scale to be absent, such as when you switch to Nick Drake's wonderful *Pink Moon*, the Rega never overcooks it. It's just Drake and his guitar in a space that feels emphatically correct.

*BB ...a muscular and rhythmic turntable that gives nothing away to heavier rivals in terms of its ability to deliver music that has all the scale and impact required of it*

There are boosts to the tonality on offer too. Some of this is down to the Apheta 3 which is now something that can be fitted to the Planar 8 too but as a combination with the other features of the Planar 10, the richness and vibrancy of voices and instruments are truly exceptional. The dense but tremendously exciting *Channel the Spirits* by The Comet is Coming is something that the Rega imperiously opens out into a wholly exciting and convincing performance. You don't need reference pressings either. The magnificent *The Desired Effect* by Brandon Flowers isn't a record for the ages but here, it's a great listen.



Perhaps the Rega's greatest attribute is that it doesn't ram home how talented it is. It's only when you switch back to something less determinedly radical in its design and construction that you begin to appreciate just how high a level of performance it is offering. Comparing it to my own much loved Gyrodec, the Rega just feels more dynamic without compromising on the factors that make a performance believable. It's an extremely neat balancing act and something that the Planar 10 does so effortlessly, you barely notice it in isolation.

And then, in part because it's a Rega, in part because of the attention to detail, it's fun. In the time the Rega was here, I took delivery of the Vinyl Me, Please repress of *Songs for the Deaf* by Queens of the Stone Age. Listening to this very high quality pressing of this slightly rough and

ready album on the Planar 10 is an unbridled joy. The bounce and swagger to *No One Knows* are such that you will air guitar, air bass and air drums depending on where you happen to be in the track at the time. You don't listen to stuff like this, you experience it and the Rega is exceptional at making this experience as visceral as possible.

*BB ...great analogue bass is neither cheap nor easy to do but the Planar 10 is rather magical at it*

Finally, the price (not the cost so much as the day to day requirements) that the Rega asks for this is impressively low. The Planar 10 takes up no more space than a Planar 1. It doesn't make unwanted noises and doesn't cause other devices to make unwanted noises. It demonstrated perfect pitch stability from the moment I got it running to the moment I had to put it back in the box. It's much better isolated than you might expect from just looking at it too. By the time you are spending this much money on a turntable, you can find yourself working with some very demanding devices indeed but the Planar 10 has no time for any of that. It simply works.



*BB The three dimensionality on offer here is truly outstanding*

## Verdict

### Rega Planar 10 Turntable Review

Let's return to the earlier questions. Is the Planar 10 better than the Planar 8? Yes. There's no ambiguity to that either. The Planar 10 can do everything that the 8 can and builds

on it so that to listen to it with decent records through a



OUT OF 10

### Pros

- Superlative performance
- Easy to set up and live with
- Extremely well made

### Cons

- Dust cover isn't truly childproof
- Some might prefer a more traditional looking turntable

commensurately capable system is to get a glimpse of what the Naiad can do. It's an unconstrained and endlessly compelling masterclass. In an 'overall ranking' sense, only the [Roksan Xerxes](#) I reviewed a few years ago can better the Planar 10 and it ought to because it's rather more expensive.

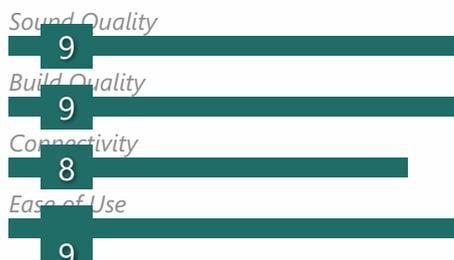
Is it worth the extra outlay? This is going to come down to what £2,000 means to you. A Planar 8 with an Ania and a Fono MC is a trio of components that add up to a genuine

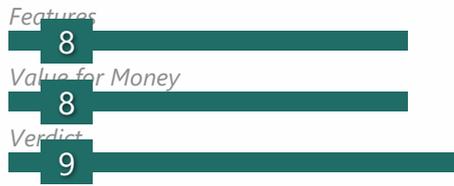
bargain - the best vinyl front end I know for the price. The Planar 10 is capable of levels of performance that are no less emphatic but as we've moved into the shades of brilliance area, it isn't the profound leap forward that the Planar 8 is over the [Planar 6](#) - it can't be, that's the laws of diminishing returns in action. This being the case, I am still impressed as to how much better the Planar 10 has actually turned out to be. The message is clear enough though. For most people, the Planar 8 will be as good as they ever need and that's why it secures the Editor's Choice. The Planar 10 is for people shooting for perfection and it does sufficiently well at that, that it has to come Highly Recommended.

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