

WATCHING THE BIRTH OF THE RP10 TURNTABLE

A Quick Visit to Rega

On the heels of our RP10 review, a visit to Rega was in order to check out the many changes they've made at the factory since our last visit in issue 28. With their workforce now expanded to nearly 100 people, Simon Webster meets us at the front door to show off the new bits.

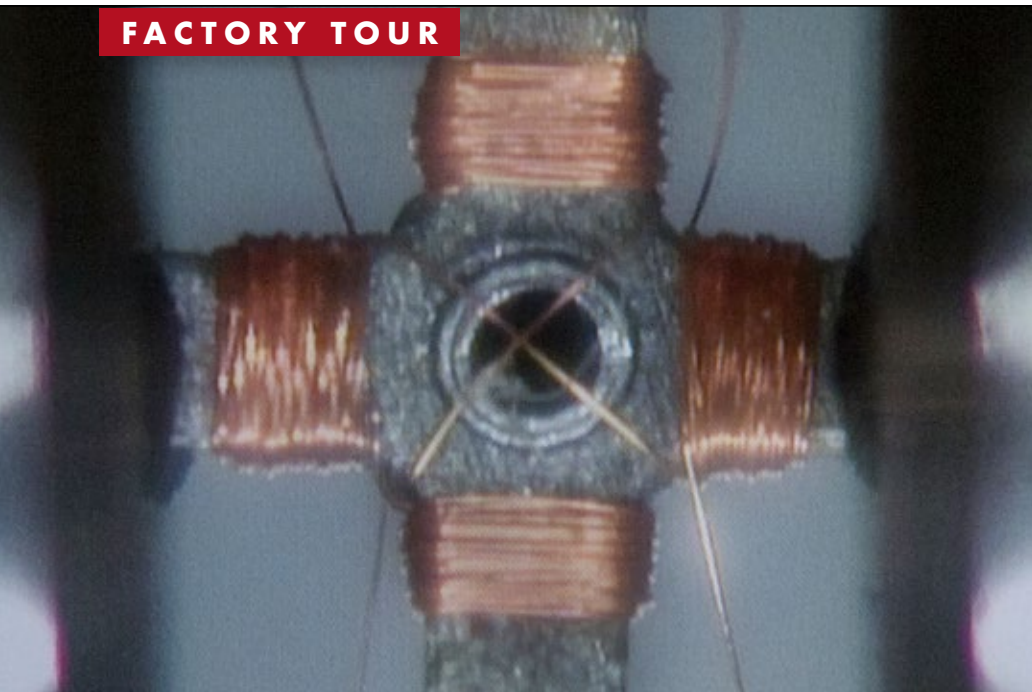
Shipping over 100 RP1 turntables per day, there is now an entire area of the plant dedicated to RP1 production. Like the tables further up the range, everything is QC'd 100%, to ensure that the only thing coming back to the mothership is because of shipping damages. Webster smiles as he says, "well we can't control *everything*."

Yet the rest of the factory is well sorted, now with an updated computerized inventory control system keeping track of over a million pounds of raw parts on the front end of the factory and all of the finished turntables and electronics on the other side, that once finished, ship to all parts of the globe. If you had to describe Rega in one word, it would be organized. Another great description for Rega would be compassionate.

With many of their employees having been there more than half of the company's 40-year history, owner Roy Gandy's philosophies of how to take care of his employees are just as solid as the ones surrounding his turntable designs. Everything at Rega is built in house now, and all of their employees earn a decent wage. For those of you conscious about how your favorite goods are produced, Rega is a stunning example of how a company does not have to sacrifice their workers to build fantastic products.

Much like Google in the US, Rega employees have somewhat flexible hours to work around families and rush hour traffic, and everyone gets a free lunch daily. Taking the option of making slightly less profit and keeping production in the UK has paid off for their workers and their suppliers. Most of the recent expansion is a result of Rega pulling a number of processes, like polishing and machining, back in house. Webster confirms that this is a result of their growth. *(continued)*

FACTORY TOUR



“Back when we only needed 100 bits from a supplier, it was easier to manage delivery times and quality control. Now that we need 4,000, it’s become too hard to keep it together. Bringing it back in house gives us the economy and the quality control our dealers and customers demand.”

Our visit proved extra special for analog lovers, as they were just installing a bank of high-powered HD cameras to oversee coil winding in the cartridge department. On our last visit, they were making one or two Apheta cartridges per day. Now, they produce ten times this, and at a much lower reject level than before. An impressive feat, considering the coil wire in the Apheta is one-third the diameter of a strand of human hair. The fellow winding coils has the skill of a fine jeweler and the steadiness of a surgeon. Incidentally, his Mom has been at Rega for a number of years.

The design department works away, with many different parts and drawings everywhere. There were a few new projects going on, so unfortunately, we can’t share a photo of this area, and as we walk through the door, Phil Freeman and Roy Gandy are intensely pondering a set of drawings pertaining to Rega’s flagship Naiad turntable. 40 have been pre sold in honor of Rega’s 40th anniversary, even though the cost has not been finalized yet. It represents a culmination of everything Rega has learned about turntable design and manufacturing over their history. *(continued)*

FACTORY TOUR

Freeman points out that while Rega has always built the best product they know how to build while keeping costs contained, it was an incredibly fulfilling design exercise to build a product with no cost constraints whatsoever. And he assures us that everything learned bringing the Naiad to fruition, will be incorporated into future Rega designs.

Those paying close attention to our website might remember that we saw and heard the prototype of this turntable about five years ago, and much of that design became the RP8 and RP10 turntables of today.

The rest of the factory shows off similar upgrades, from the three large polishing machines downstairs, to a complete wing built above the RP1 assembly area to build electronics. As we visit the final assembly for loudspeakers, Webster is thinking out loud about adding mezzanine space here as well and mentions more space being added out back in the very near future.

After a full tour, it becomes obvious that there isn't one square meter of wasted space at Rega. Our trip ends where it began, in the RP10 assembly area, where about a dozen RP10s are finishing final assembly and testing. Asking if the RP10 might ever be available in the cool colors like the RP3 and RP6 models, Webster grins and says, "You know us, anything's possible." ●

