

TURNTABLES

There's little to beat the ceremony of listening to your music on vinyl. These decks will make you appreciate your discs all the more

Elys 2 Cartridge

The cartridge has three-point mounting - a great benefit, as alignment is assured so you get minimal distortion.

PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

Best turntable £400-£800

Rega RP3/Elys2 £550

Another year and yet again it's Rega's RP3/Elys 2 that picks-up our top turntable Award. This is the RP3's third consecutive Product of the Year win, and that follows four years of its predecessor also picking up wins.

Like every Rega deck we've reviewed, the RP3 is a simple design. It has little in the way of suspension, bar a trio of rubber feet, and is as manual as these things get. Want to change speed? You'll have to move the drive belt from one step of the motor pulley to the next by hand.

The lack of suspension means the RP3 is a little fussy about positioning and support used. Keep the support light and rigid, and well away from the speakers for the best results.

The RP3's innate simplicity is appealing, but it's not the reason Rega decks tend to do well in our reviews. That's all down to the excellent engineering and performance.

This is a carefully conceived and beautifully engineered deck that has evolved over decades. Any rough edges were smoothed away years ago.

The RP3 may look just like previous offerings but look closely and you'll see the plinth features bracing between the arm base and main bearing, and the long-running RB300 arm has been given a gentle make-over.

You can buy this turntable without a cartridge (at £75 less), but we wouldn't. The Elys 2 moving magnet cartridge is a good, solid design that works seamlessly with the rest of the package. It doesn't matter if it's the complex electronic music of Radiohead, or the jazz of Miles Davis, this deck has the insight, timing and dynamic discrimination to impress.

This is a product that puts the music first. If you want to analyse the recording, the RP3 will oblige, but it won't be long before you just sit back and enjoy the music. It's what Rega's decks have been doing for years.