

ANALOG SOURCE COMPONENT OF THE YEAR



Rega Research RP3 turntable

(\$1095, including RB303 tonearm and Elys 2 moving-magnet phono cartridge; reviewed by Michael Fremer, Vol.34 No.12)

Though six of the eight contenders in our “Analog Sources” category received first-place votes, *this* race wasn’t much of a race at all. Rega’s RP3, the latest iteration of the famed Planar 3, ran fast (ha) and far ahead of the competition, receiving three first-place votes and 15 overall votes—more than twice as many as the closest runner-up. The RP3 was almost destined to win: Its predecessor, the P3-24, was both a “Joint Analog Source” and a “Joint Budget Component” for 2008. And while the RP3 shares the P3-24’s sleek look and modest price, a few subtle but significant revisions have resulted in far better sound.

The RP3’s RB303 tonearm looks almost identical to the P3-24’s RB301 arm, but has in fact been entirely reworked: It uses a different, more resonant-resistant shape for the armtube; a more stable, more rigid three-point arm mount; and a new headshell, counterweight, and bearing assembly. The RP3’s plinth, too, appears identical to the older version’s, but whereas the P3-24’s plinth was stiffened by a complete coating of phenolic resin, the new plinth has a flat, 4mm-thick brace of superhard phenolic that couples the tonearm mount to the main platter-and-bearing assembly, both above and below the plinth. The result is a far thicker, stiffer bracing material that concentrates stiffness where it produces the most benefit. *[Insert rhythmic-drive joke here.]* Cleverly, eliminating the phenolic coating allows Rega to improve the plinth’s appearance with furniture-grade finishes in gray, titanium, or white. Factor in the sweet new logo, and a handsome turntable just became a lady-killer.

The sound? Is it enough to say that girls love it? (They do.) Well, Mikey Fremer loved it, too—especially surprising considering the RP3’s relatively affordable price. According to Mikey, the RP3 retained the P3-24’s fast, forgiving sound, but added tighter and better-controlled low frequencies. In my own system, that improved bass performance resulted in greater overall clarity and presence, for exciting, compelling listening. MF concluded, “Rega has considerably upgraded the sonic performance of one of its classic designs.”

Blah blah blah. Girls love it!

ANALOG SOURCE COMPONENT RUNNERS-UP *(in alphabetical order)*

Clearaudio Goldfinger Statement MC phono cartridge (\$14,999; reviewed by Michael Fremer, Vol.35 No.9)

Clearaudio Ovation turntable (\$4300 without tonearm; reviewed by Erick Lichte, Vol.35 No.10 WWW)

Denon DL-103 MC phono cartridge (\$229; reviewed by Art Dudley, Vol.34 No.12 WWW)

Kuzma 4Point tonearm (\$6500; reviewed by Michael Fremer, Vol.35 No.7 WWW)

Lyra Atlas MC phono cartridge (\$9500; reviewed by Michael Fremer, Vol.35 No.5)

Ortofon Xpression MC phono cartridge (\$5399; reviewed by Art Dudley, Vol.35 No.2 WWW)

Wave Kinetics NVS Reference turntable (\$45,000; reviewed by Michael Fremer, Vol.35 No.10)