



Five star

After decades of service, Rega's MM cartridges are finally being replaced. **Ed Selley** discovers if the Nd5 is worth the wait

Some audio products are built for such a long period of time, you begin to assume that will be the case indefinitely. Rega's trio of moving-magnet cartridges; the Bias, Elys and Exact (HFC 467) have been part of the audio landscape for decades and a mainstay of thousands of Rega turntables. The decision to replace them comes as something of a surprise, but the wait makes more sense once you realise the technology on which they are based is all new.

The Nd models are – according to Rega at least – the first such design to use a neodymium magnet, which is the most powerful commercially available type. If there's one thing that Rega has learnt from working with moving coils, it's that the smaller the moving mass at the end of the cantilever, the better the performance. The more potent neodymium magnet allows for lighter and finer coils, which further reduces overall mass.

This assembly sits in a body that uses the same single piece 'spine'

found on the more affordable Ania and Ania Pro (HFC 452 and 460 respectively). Its made of PPS plastic and this curves around so it forms the top and rear section with the pins mounted. The generator sits in this 90° arc and has a protective metal panel around it to reduce interference.

The generator is attached to an aluminium cantilever, supporting a nude elliptical stylus. The Nd5 has a three-point fixing so will align perfectly in any Rega arm using three screws. If you don't have a Rega arm, it is simple enough to fit and shouldn't present any challenge to most turntables.

Sound quality

I fit the Nd5 to a Planar 10 (HFC 451), which is a little further up the Rega food chain than the company might expect would-be owners to use, but is useful as it has already been used for testing an Nd3. While the cheaper cartridge is a very decent performer, the Nd5 moves things on considerably.

Listening to *Emotions Run Dry* by Jake Ferguson and Malcolm Catto, the Nd5

reveals itself to be fabulously articulate and engaging. It captures all of the intricacies of Catto's drum work with a snap and immediacy that is extremely engaging. Like the Nd3, it's not the weightiest cartridge at the price but very few of the designs that can hit harder are anything like as articulate.

It is also a world away from older previous Rega moving-magnet carts. The manner in which the Nd5 reproduces Duke Garwood's growly vocals on the *Rogues Gospel* album is a treat. The presentation combines superb detail retrieval – more than the Nd3 on the same record. Crucially though, this is never an analytical or sterile-sounding performance. The shimmering supporting guitar and sparse percussion are full-bodied, rich and engaging. Compared with the Sumiko Olympia (HFC 418) that won our recent cartridge *Group Test*, there isn't perhaps quite the same level of three-dimensional space to the performance. However the Rega never feels compressed or constrained with material you play on it, it's more a case of there being a little less air around the performance itself. With really focused rock material like Josefín Ohn + The Liberation's *Horse Dance*, this actually works to the Nd5's advantage – giving it a focus and intensity that really suits the material being played.

Conclusion

Even away from the heavy-duty shoegaze, it is abundantly clear that Rega has built a bit of a star turn here. The Nd5 is a dramatic improvement on its long-running forebears and one of the very best designs available for £300 right now. Naturally, most will find their way onto Rega turntables (or at least Rega tonearms), but this is a formidable all-rounder that is likely to be every bit as capable used on other turntables too. And so, it has to be on any shortlist at the price ●

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Rega Nd5
ORIGIN
UK
TYPE
Moving-magnet cartridge
WEIGHT
6g
FEATURES
● ABS body with metal protector plate
● Neodymium magnet
● Elliptical nude diamond stylus
● Recommended Tracking Force: 1.75g
DISTRIBUTOR
Rega Research
WEBSITE
rega.co.uk



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★ **LIKE:** Detailed, energetic, but refined performance; easy setup

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Slightly lean bass

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★ **WE SAY:** A superb moving-magnet cart that will work well on Rega models and lots else besides

FEATURES
★★★★★

OVERALL

