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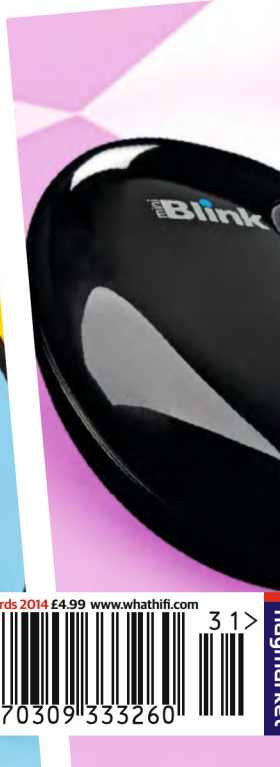
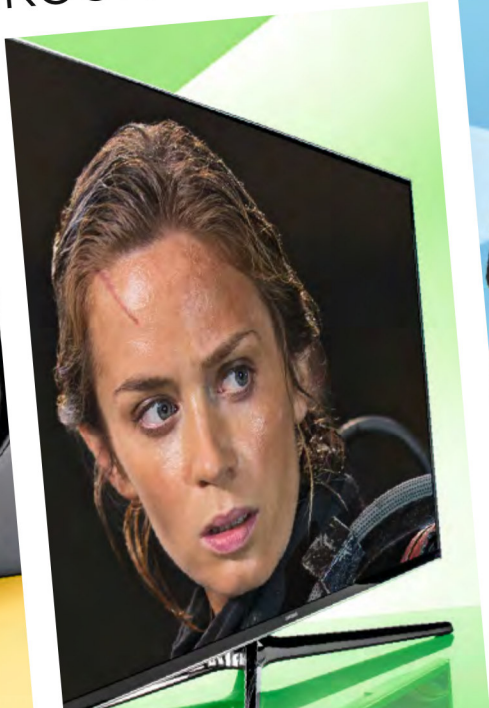
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Turntables



Records were once dusty relics of your Dad's generation, but vinyl's popularity has come full circle and we've got three decks to put you in a spin

Best turntable £400-£800

Rega RP3/Elys2 £550

The Rega RP3/Elys2 combination retains its Product of the Year title for the fourth consecutive year - and we can't think of another product that's managed that feat. It's a stunning achievement for what is, outwardly, a pretty unassuming product.

Rega has worked on the premise of 'if it isn't broken, don't fix it' for decades, and the company is not about to change its ways now. And why should it, when the results are this good? The RP3 is simply a refinement of what has gone before. The long-running RB300 arm design has been given a once-over and the plinth now includes extra structural reinforcement. But this remains a simple design, and is all the better for it.

The right support

All turntables need a decent, level support and here it's even more important; three hard, rubber feet will only go so far when it comes to isolation. It really needs a rigid, low-resonance platform to truly shine, and placed well away from the speakers is preferable. Get this aspect of set-up right and the RP3/Elys2 combination simply sings.

It has all the power and dynamic thrust to make the most of Bob Marley's *Exodus*, and the insight to differentiate musical strands even when things get demanding. There's composure, and ability to communicate the rhythmic flow and changes of pace as well. Subtlety is on offer here too, as John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* proves.

The heart of the matter

The Rega combination gets the tonality of instruments right and its presentation is impressive. Perhaps most importantly, this player seems to get straight to heart of the performance, delivering plenty of emotion.

It's possible to buy this turntable without a cartridge, but we recommend buying the package that includes Rega's excellent Elys2 moving-magnet cartridge. It adds around £75 to the cost - the price we've quoted - but the money is well spent. The cartridge comes pre-fitted, but its unusual three-bolt fixing means alignment is hard to get wrong.

This is a deck that has been decades in the making. It's time well spent by Rega and we wouldn't be amazed to see the RP3 here again next year.