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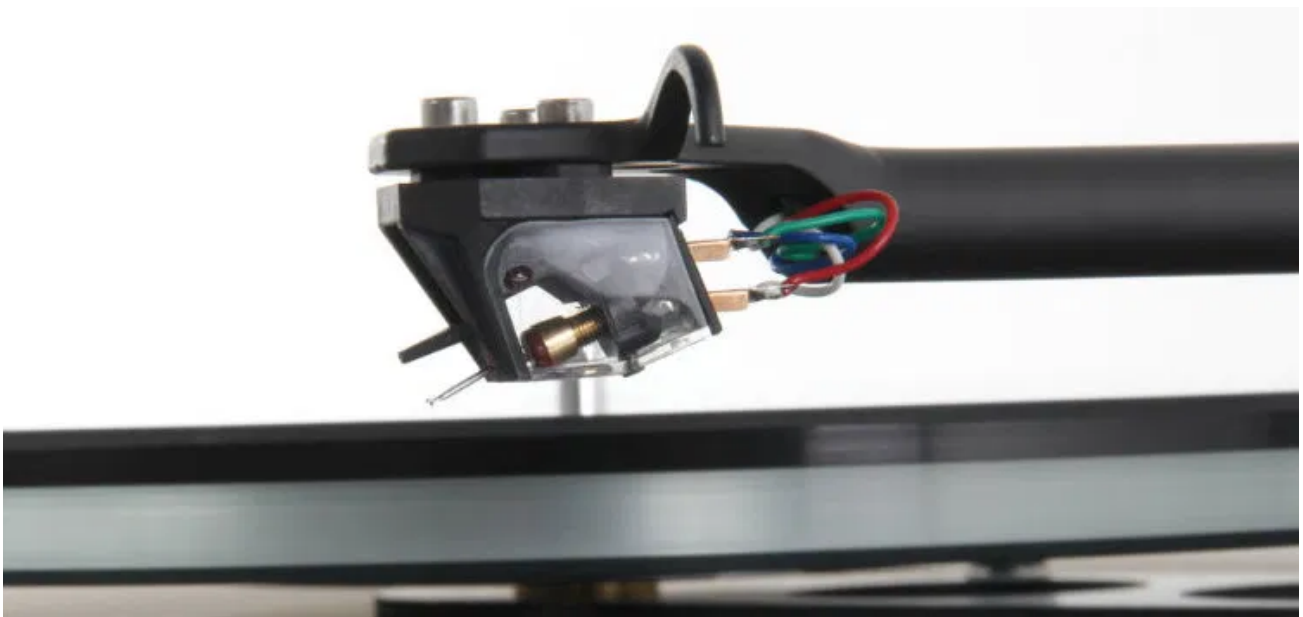
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Paired: Rega Planar 6 Turntable & Bryston BP-2 Phono Stage

DECEMBER 10TH, 2018 ([HTTP://FAIRHEDON.COM/2018/12/10/PAIRED-REGA-PLANAR-6-TURNTABLE-BRYSTON-BP-2-PHONO-STAGE/](http://fairhedon.com/2018/12/10/paired-rega-planar-6-turntable-bryston-bp-2-phono-stage/))

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There is something comforting about owning products made by companies who have been in business for decades, before the digital age, and who build their products in their countries of origin. Two such companies are UK based Rega Research, and the Canadian firm Bryston. Both companies have been around since the 70's, and have much in common.

Both Rega and Bryston make complete system components, from soup to nuts. That includes, turntables, CD players, speakers, amplifiers, phono preamps, and DACs. Both companies are also engineering driven, and ignore fads and trends. There are a few distinct differences between them as well. Bryston serves not only the high audio consumer market, but they are major players in pro audio as well. Rega offers a line of entry level products geared towards vinyl newbies, and allows for incremental upgrades. Both companies offer very high value products and are distributed globally.

We recently acquired products from both companies to write about: The Rega Planar 6 turntable with Ania MC cartridge, and the Bryston BP-2 phono stage with the **PS-3 power supply**. The Planar 6 is \$2200 as such, and the Bryston pair is \$2700. These products are beautifully made and are backed with generous warranties.

The Planar 6 was introduced in 2017 as an almost complete redesign of the P6. This followed the same pattern as the redesign of the P3, which then became the Planar 3 in 2016. Rega claims that only 10% of the previous parts were used for the new models. The Planar 6 is available in any color you like, as long as it is black.



Rega believes in low mass designs, coupled with rigidity, and the Planar 6 plinth is filled with a foam dampening material allegedly used in the aerospace industry, and uses the new RB330 tonearm. There is a solid aluminum sub platter, and a stainless steel counterweight. An essential addition to the bundle is the Neo TT-PSU power supply, which allows for precise calibration of speed, and the ability to switch speed with the touch of a button. As a stand alone unit, the Neo power supply can be purchased for \$400 for a Rega Planar 3 or older modified Rega tables.



Rega includes their higher grade white belt, and to finish off the package, the Ania Moving Coil cartridge. You can also specify the Exact Moving Magnet cartridge as well for \$200 less. A smoke colored dust cover that, thankfully, is easy to remove, comes standard.

The Bryston BP-2 phono stage and matching PS-3 power supply are connected via a high quality umbilical cord. Both units are as solid as bricks, very attractive in silver, but black is also available. A toggle switch on the back of the BP-2-allows for MC or MM use, and for MC, there is **61 dB** of gain provided. There is BP-2 model that applies an additional 10 dB of gain that can be ordered.

What does Bryston say about the design of the BP-2? They claim extremely accurate RIAA equalization, and distortion free, high bandwidth performance, and premium parts and connectors. Bryston says the steel chassis is designed to reject EMI/RFI, and it must be said both the BP-2 and PS-3 are very rugged.



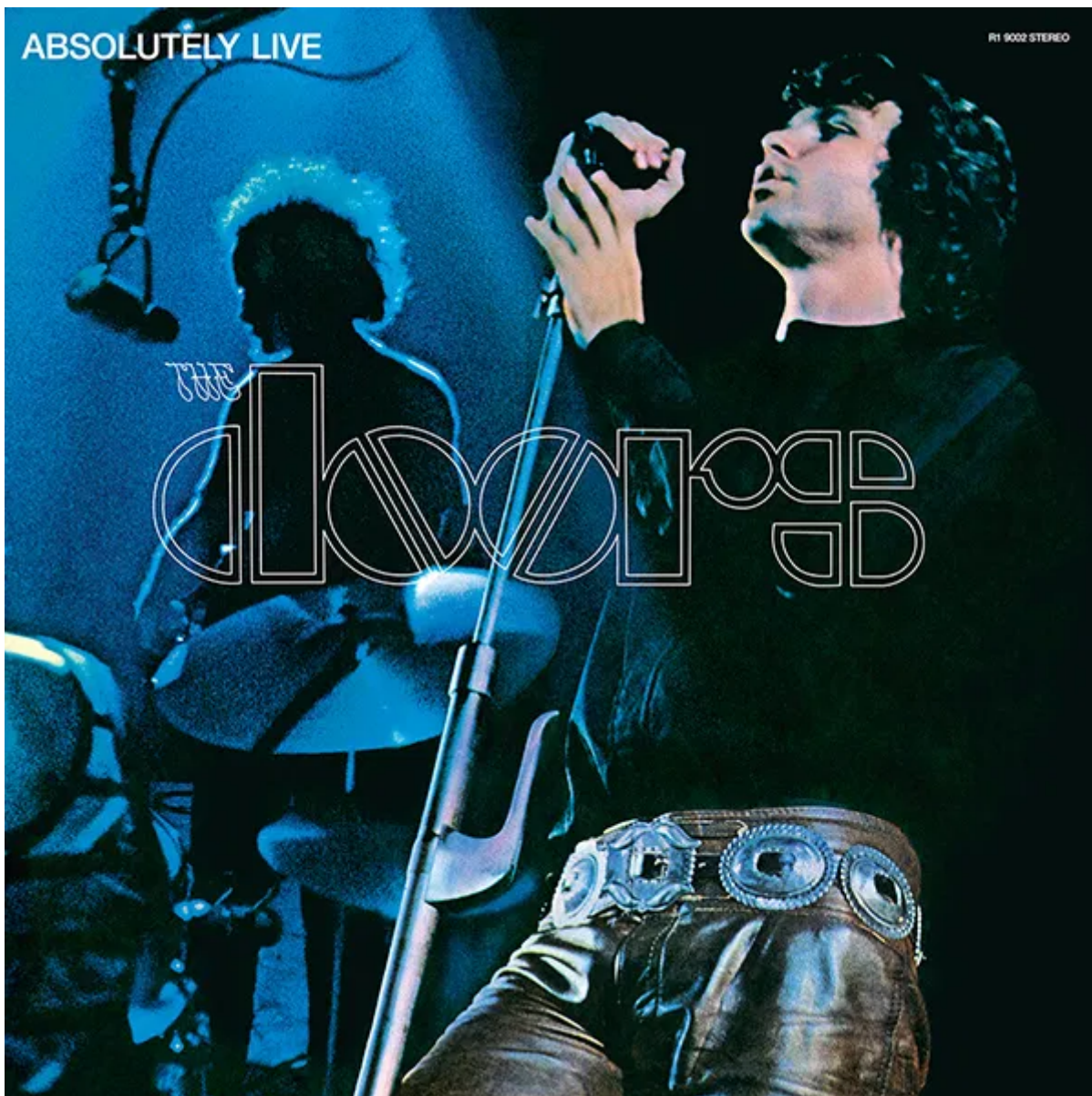
After setting up the Planar 6, which entailed balancing the tonearm, and setting the tracking force, all that was left to do was to place it on a Symposium platform, with three Symposium Rollerblock Jr. supports. This provided superb isolation and resonance control. With the Planar 6 plugged into the BP-2, all that was left to do was spin some vinyl, which of course, is the best part.

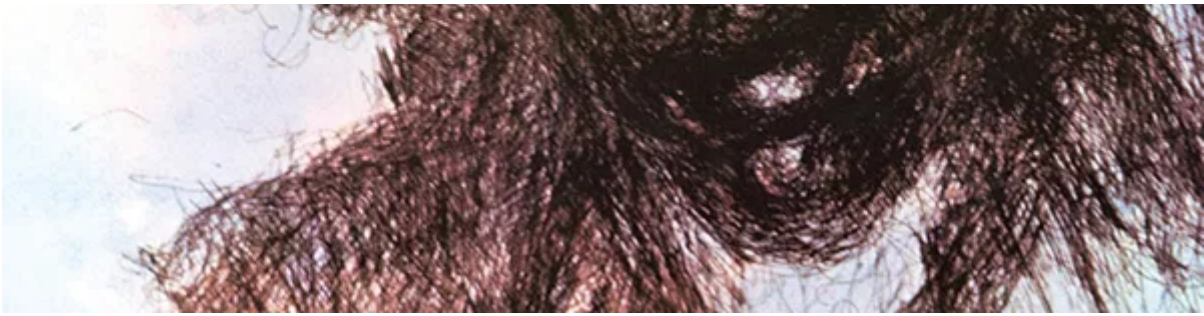


The first album I put on was a newly acquired vintage pressing of The Doors *Absolutely Live*, a record we know very well. What immediately became apparent was the Rega / Bryston pairing was creating an amazingly wide and deep soundstage. The album is authentically recorded and mixed, and you really get great stage sounds. You can hear Robbie Krieger and Ray Manzarek's amps being pushed to the limit, and the crowd

being whipped into a frenzy by ringleader Jim Morrison. Close your eyes and you can picture the electricity in the audience, and during the climax of “When The Music’s Over” you are given musical catharsis. Let’s repeat: *authentic!*

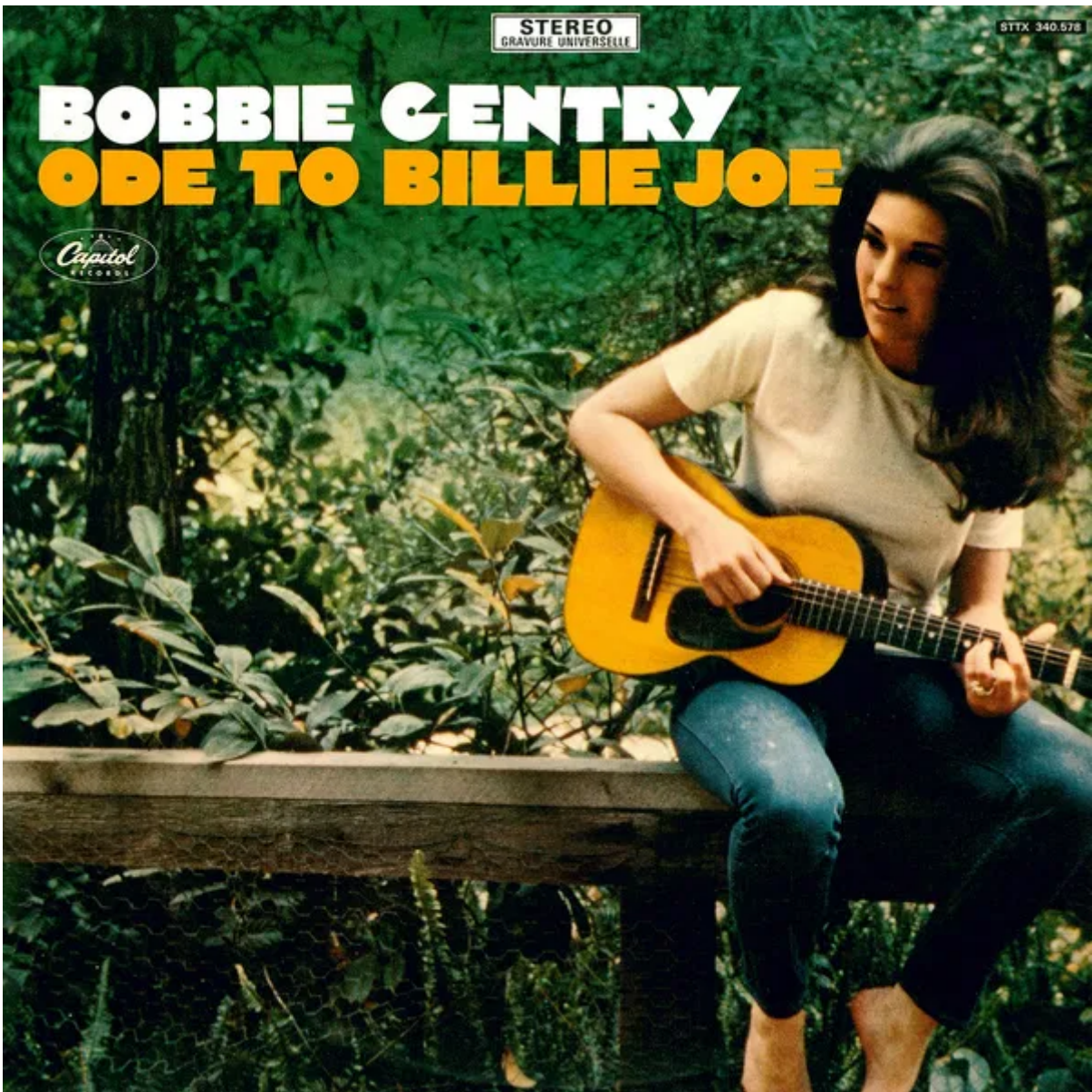
I then went through a fun series of comparisons between *vintage* and *recent* pressings of the same title. First was the two extraordinary posthumous Hendrix releases, *Cry Of Love*, and *Rainbow Bridge*. I had early pressings of each along with newly all analog mastered versions put out back in 2015, and cut by mastering genius Bernie Grundman. The early pressings were slightly warmer than the reissues, and offered a big full sound. The reissues offered up a bit more recorded detail and resolution, and bass lines were somewhat easier to follow. These attributes played right into the strengths of the Rega and Bryston combo!





Another comparison I did was a vintage Capitol pressing of the great Bobbie Gentry's debut, *Ode to Billie Joe*, and a new all analog mastering done for Record Store Day 2018 by Kevin Gray. Similar differences appeared as above, with the new cut offering more resolution, and more defined soundstaging, with the original pressing being slightly warmer, yet, no less enjoyable. Gentry's beautiful voice and the incredibly sympathetic mix of rock and acoustic instrumentation sounded every bit as vital as it did *fifty years ago*.

It seems that the Rega and Bryston marriage was absolutely perfect for late 60's progressive rock and psychedelia. The early use of wide stereo mixes and trippy effects came through with fantastic clarity on albums like The Moody Blues *In Search Of The Lost Chord* (original Decca pressing), and the Hendrix opus, *Electric Ladyland* (early Reprise pressing). I certainly don't recall these albums ever sounding as good many years ago as a teenager on my very decent starter hifi. And when these albums were released on CD, some magic was certainly lost. Although the Moody's SACD of *Chord* is superb.





Switching to music with bit more emphasis on groove, I pulled out a classic double album by The Crusaders, *Southern Comfort*, from 1974. Truly a jazz funk masterpiece, the Planar 6 / BP-2 just nailed the slinky syncopation and earthy bottom end. This album was taken to levels way above what would normally be a crate diggers dream.

The Rega Planar 6 may not be a “state of the art” turntable, and it’s \$2200 price will make penthouse turntable snobs scoff, but it offers me and *probably* the vast majority of people who spin vintage vinyl tremendously satisfying performance. Sure, the Planar 8, is coming soon, with it’s ultra cool skeletal plinth, and with one of Rega’s top of the line MC carts may be “better”, but would also probably require significant upgrades to your whole system.

The Bryston BP-2 with the PS-3 external power supply, at \$2700 for the combo, is a *steal* in my opinion. Call us crazy, but we feel it competes with far more expensive phono stages especially where a good part of the price is allocated to big, impressive enclosures, and quasi-exotic parts in non critical areas. The BP-2 board, by the way, can be ordered installed into Bryston preamps.



We can conclude with certainty that the pair of Rega Planar 6 table with Ania MC cartridge and the Bryston BP-2/PS-3 combo is stellar. In fact it is so good, that you may find your self tempted spend good money on a bunch of new LPs. Yes, we wonder what the forthcoming Planar 8 with an upper end Rega cartridge would bring to the party. Nonetheless, if you get a chance to hear Rega and Bryston analog front ends paired up, do so. We can imagine discerning listeners being very impressed.

Product pages:

[Rega Planar 6 \(http://www.rega.co.uk/planar-6.html\)](http://www.rega.co.uk/planar-6.html)

[Bryston BP-2/PS-3 \(http://www.bryston.com/products/phono/BP-2.html\)](http://www.bryston.com/products/phono/BP-2.html)

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