



# Rega Saturn MK3 £2,000

The Saturn MK3 not only looks different to your common-or-garden CD player, it sounds different too

## DETAILS

**PRODUCT**  
Rega Saturn MK3

**ORIGIN**  
UK

**TYPE**  
CD player

**WEIGHT**  
9.7kg

**DIMENSIONS**  
(WxHxD)  
432 x 82 x 320mm

**FEATURES**

- Top-loading mechanism
- Inputs: 2x optical; 2x coaxial; USB
- Outputs: RCA; 2x optical; 2x coaxial

**DISTRIBUTOR**  
Rega Research Ltd.

**L**ike other recent Rega model refreshes, the MK3 Saturn CD player arrives with a fresh set of clothes.

Well, a new front panel, anyway – this to pull it in line with the latest Rega electronics house aesthetic.

Under the skin very little has changed and, given the previous Saturn R's redoubtable sonic chops, the route to better for the asking price wasn't obvious. So, as before, the DAC is built around twin Wolfson WM8742 chips that are used in conjunction with a high stability master clock and high-capacity power supplies throughout.

As with its Saturn-R predecessor, the MK3 is a top loader, the intriguingly angular architecture of the manually operated lid covering a spring-loaded hub. In stark contrast to the robust and weighty slab of a chassis, the lid is a deliciously light and delicately damped thing, if not quite as physically involving as playing a record, then certainly the next best thing in CD land. It floats down by itself past a certain point and

initialises the disc's data on landing, which is swiftly flagged up on the typically red Rega display. The facial controls are basic, just five clearly labelled buttons, but they – and all the layered functions – can be accessed from the supplied Solaris remote.

Again, there's the option of using the Saturn as a DAC. Signal switching between the CD and DAC functions is performed in the digital-to-analogue converter stage enabling the signal path of the CD section when in CD mode to be kept to a minimum. It has user filter settings (some for hi-res playback) and a plethora of digital connections, including asynchronous USB (44.1 to 192 kHz and up to 24-bits), making it a truly practical hub. The USB input has the same galvanic isolation as Rega's standalone DAC-R and uses dedicated drivers in the computer, enabling full ASIO operation and thus giving the signal degradation caused by generic Windows-based drivers the swerve. The only cause for disappointment is the lack of balanced XLR outputs, which might disappoint some.

## Sound quality

It's almost trite to say it, but the Saturn MK3 sounds not unlike a good Rega turntable. And, of course, why wouldn't it? It's been voiced, and I suspect aided in no small part, by the Wolfson DAC chips, to fit in and compliment traditional analogue Rega components, not highlight the stark contrasts a digital source can bring to the party.

Whatever the company's secret, it seems to work. With some CD players you're left in no doubt of the technology you're listening to which, weirdly, presents itself as a sort of CD watermark you never quite hear through. Listening to the Saturn MK3, it's still there initially but very faint. So faint it's soon overwhelmed by the sheer force of the collaborative elements at the heart of, say, Alison Moyet's *Beautiful Gun*, not least its

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chugging temporal impetus. Once the music is rolling, awareness of its reproduction method, however peripheral, winks out.

Partly it's because traditional CD technical tropes – dynamic range, inky black noise floor, detail, imaging – tend to work behind the scenes and aren't paraded as trophies for approbation. The Saturn MK3, like its intended customers, cares more about flow, interplay, tonal colour, texture, coherence and capturing a true sense of performance. Nowhere is this more apparent than Jeff Beck at his most alluring, *Goodbye Pork Pie Hat's* spare, slow blues gifted an almost luminous tonality before the drums snap in and Beck starts to rip it up, extracting more emotion through vibrato than seems humanly possible ●



## Hi-Fi Choice

### OUR VERDICT

#### SOUND QUALITY



**LIKE:** More analogue-like sound; top loading; beefy build quality; good connectivity

#### VALUE FOR MONEY



**DISLIKE:** No DSD

#### BUILD QUALITY



**WE SAY:** A no-brainer for Rega fans and a stiff test for the competition

#### FEATURES



#### OVERALL

