

**W**e have three more Rega tweaks this month. Though I have crossed over to the other side and am probably the last audiophile on Earth to buy an LP-12, I still have my trusty P25 in my second system and will be committed to wringing the most performance that this classic deck is capable of. This group of upgrades from Groovetracer are not quite as plug and play as what we offered last issue, but if you can follow a couple of simple instructions, you will be rewarded with much better sound.

We also revisit the classic VPI record cleaning machine. Enjoy!

# Groovetracer<sup>™</sup> Acrylic Platter, Subplatter and Counterweight For All Rega Turntables

[www.groovetracer.com](http://www.groovetracer.com) 408-727-2610

**Counterweight** — \$130

**Standard Subplatter** — \$189

**Deluxe Subplatter** — \$225

**Acrylic Platter** — \$160

*There is a 10% discount on the Platter and Subplatter if you buy them together.*

I met Frank Smillie on Steve Hoffman's forum discussing Rega upgrades. A few phone calls later and I discovered that he runs an aerospace machine shop in the Bay area and is a huge Rega fan, matter of fact when I called, he was working on modding a P3 for his son.

If you have a Rega table, you know that it is a good basic table, but especially the lower end models have had a few corners cut in build quality. Not to blame Rega here, because if these issues were addressed, they would cost twice as much! However, there is some room for improvement and if you already have a P2, P3 or P25 you can upgrade them quite a bit and achieve performance far beyond the original design. *(continued)*



There are a few places that offer upgraded platters, subplatters and counterweights for the Rega, but nothing comes close to the quality of the parts Frank sent me. This stuff looks like it would be at home in the Ferrari F1 garage, not on a budget turntable, and I know the difference, I've been in the Ferrari F1 garage!

### **First, The Counterweight**

Let's start with the counterweight first, but I highly suggest that you budget for all three of these products, they will raise the performance of your table significantly, especially if you have a P25, with the better RB600 arm. The counterweights are available in 130 gram and 150 gram weights, for cartridges over and under 8 grams, respectively. They are CNC machined from 6061-T6 aluminum and stainless steel. Tungsten and Brass are also available if you need more mass.

These will also work with other tonearms having a 1/2" (12.7mm) end stub, though I only tried mine on a Rega P3 and P25. The counterweight is decoupled from the arm with a precision Delrin bushing and set screw. An allen wrench is thoughtfully included.



Replacing the counterweight with the Groove-tracer allowed my Shelter 501 mk. II to track difficult passages a bit better with less distortion than before. Just to check this, I pulled out the trusty Shure Audio Obstacle course and I could track one more band than before installing it!

### **Next, A Better Platter**

I must stress again, that these pieces are truly a work of art, but functional art!! While the acrylic platter will work with your stock subplatter (which is also plastic), it will work a lot better with the Groove-tracer Subplatter. Here's what makes the Groove-tracer products the best: attention to detail and precision tolerances. The further out of round your platter and subplatter are, the more speed variation there will be along with increased wow and flutter.

The Groovetracer™ acrylic platter is 24mm thick and no longer needs the felt mat thanks to the precision recess cut in the center of the platter where the record label is. (I told you this guy should work for Ferrari!) The underside of the platter is machined to maintain the standard platter height, hence you will not have to fool around with VTA spacers. The Groovetracer platter works extremely well with the Basic Clamp we tested last issue. As you can see from the photo, this platter really makes the basic Rega table look a lot better too!

My observation from going to the Acrylic platter and eliminating the felt mat was a substantial increase in high frequency extension, without being harsh. I tried this on my P3 with a Shure V15 and a P25 with a Shelter 501 II. There was definitely a lot more midrange resolution as well, on any kind of music. Thanks to this extra resolution, now is a good time to check your cartridge alignment, there might be a few more percent lurking there as well.

*(continued)*



### Finally The Subplatter

Frank might argue with me, but I feel if you can only afford one of these three outstanding products, go for the subplatter. I feel that this is the weakest link in the Rega table, because it is made out of plastic and subject to the most manufacturing inaccuracy.

The Groovetracer™ subplatter is also machined from 6061-T6 aluminum and has three raised surfaces machined into the top so that it helps decouple the platter better while at the same time providing a positive interface between the 3 contact points. They also supply a new Ruby bearing and some oil to replace the standard bearing in your table.

Thanks to a well written instruction sheet, you should be able to do this in about 5 minutes if you are careful and the difference is not subtle. Because the Groovetracer subplatter is machined to a .001 inch concentricity tolerance, pitch control is significantly improved. Granted, your Rega, like mine will probably run a spot fast, (but we will address that too...) but it will be consistent. Frank mentioned that the new P5 also comes with a plastic subplatter so the upgrade really makes sense for anyone owning that model.

My suggestion is to play something acoustic before you do the subplatter swap, that will help you really hear how much more the image locks into place and the soundfield gets bigger. The new bearing also helps lower the noise floor significantly too.

### The Combination

I installed these parts on my P3 one at a time, so I could be a bit more scientific in my evaluation, but on the P25, I just went from stock to all three and it was amazing! My P25 did not even sound like the same table anymore, but a couple orders of magnitude better. Considering that I bought my P25 used for \$600, adding \$500 worth of goodies gives it a level of performance significantly better than what you can buy off the shelf for that kind of money.

If you have one of these turntables, I give the Groovetracer products the highest recommendation. You will be blown away by how much more sound is lurking in that turntable! You can find out more at [www.groovetracer.com](http://www.groovetracer.com) or you can give Frank a call direct. He's a great guy and will do his best to help you out. Tell him I sent you.

Next time, we will tackle the speed issue.

