

## Project RPM 6 SB

**Project RPM 6 SB turntable. \$1399**

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Sweden's Ikea is the world's largest home furnishing retailer. Think Freedom, but with meatballs, lots of meatballs. Ikea's stock-in-trade is home assembly furniture, blandly styled to complement any contemporary home. Simple lines, silver trimmings and blonde wood veneers on MDF carcasses.

Assembling Ikea furniture is an exercise in lateral thinking. You'll be presented with a set of alingual instructions, a large number of parts and couple of mystery tools that appear to be made from cheese. None of these things will give you a clue as to what the finished piece will look like.

Such was my experience upon opening the box for Project's latest turntable, the RPM 6 SB. There was nothing that actually resembled a turntable. The instructions amounted to three paragraphs and no pictures. Thanks.

### Errm, I thought this was a turntable

One of the parts at least had a tonearm attached, so that was where I started, and after a mere fifteen-minutes of head scratching (Ikea practice paid off), I had all the important parts assembled and working.

Atop three beautifully machined alloy cone feet, sits a circular MDF chassis. This carries the rubber-suspended motor, the SpeedBox (of which more later) and a short beam that extends to support the Project 9 tonearm. A chunky, acrylic sub-platter slips down at the centre of the structure, sitting on a hefty, inverted brass and steel bearing. Finally the MDF/steel/vinyl composite main platter drops over the whole assembly, neatly obscuring everything you've just done. There's a substantial brass record clamp too, topping off the whole ensemble.

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### Assembly a piece of cake in the end

The completed turntable resembles nothing more or less than a particularly large silver cake and the effect is rakish to say the least. As an item of furniture, it is striking and purposeful but without being industrially ugly.

Once I'd assembled the turntable, I fitted a Goldring 1012GX cartridge, a predictable match for most arms and appropriately priced at around \$350.

With the cartridge fitted on the Project 9 arm, aligned and vertically adjusted (a simple, if frustrating process with the supplied cheesy tool), what emerged from the RPM6 was as pure and simple as the turntable's appearance: music. Fluid, gorgeous and alarmingly real.

### Seduced by the Dark Side

Listening, for example, to the 25th anniversary re-release of Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*, the RPM6 panted a lavish picture; I felt a very clear engagement with the music as a whole, rather than with individual elements. Both the sense of rhythm and information retrieval are prodigious. The



Goldring 1012 is pretty good in both regards and the RPM6 let the cartridge do its very best. The detail doesn't get in the way, but instead reinforces the vivid image of an expansive soundstage.

By way of comparison, consider a line drawn between the Rega P3 and the venerable Linn LP12. Where the Rega takes music by the scruff of the neck and lets it know who's boss (I mean that only as a compliment, by the way), the Linn takes an altogether more delicate approach; creeping up and seducing both music and listener. The RPM6 sits clearly at the Linn end of that line. There's no lack of drive, but it presents the music almost coquettishly. There isn't (quite) the purity managed by a well set up Linn, but it's less far off than you might expect.

### Now includes dangling carbuncle

The SpeedBox used to be a \$100 addition to Project turntables, and generates a quartz-clocked power supply for the AC motor. Now included in the RPM 6's \$1399 price it ensures that the turntable's speed is maintained to within 0.5% accuracy. The box also allows push-button switching between 33 and 45rpm, which is, as they say, nice. It's a shame that this small electronic carbuncle, hanging from the bottom of the turntable, is so insufferably ugly.

It is, of course, too much to expect that everything would be rosy. There are aspects of the RPM6 I find mildly irritating, at least. For a start, there's nowhere to rest your hand while cueing a track. Then there's the lack of a dustcover. Not a huge worry if you like preening your equipment (so to speak), but tiresome nonetheless.

Returning for a moment to Swedish furnishings, Ikea has an unnerving habit: among the MDF carcasses and bland veneers, it produces the odd star. An item of furniture that will surely become a design classic and that is built well enough to last the course. Oddly, these are often cheaper items.

The RPM6SB belongs quite clearly in this camp. This is a turntable of precocious quality and one that will flatter the rest of your system. Best of all, it's just as compelling aesthetically, whispering "I'm an audiophile" to visitors. Far better than shouting "I'm odd", which is all that most turntables manage—*Matthew Masters*

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