



DETAILS

- PRODUCT**
Rega Aria MK3
- ORIGIN**
UK
- TYPE**
MM/MC
phono stage
- WEIGHT**
3.1kg
- DIMENSIONS**
(WxHxD)
218 x 78 x 325mm
- FEATURES**
 - MM/MC input
 - Separate MM/MC RCA sockets
- DISTRIBUTOR**
Rega Research Ltd.
- TELEPHONE**
01702 333071
- WEBSITE**
rega.co.uk

Rega Aria MK3 **£899**

The latest iteration of the Aria from a name that's synonymous with fine phono stages

What's the difference between the Aria MK2 and the MK3? Well, you're looking at it. On the inside, nothing. On the outside, what Rega calls its "latest half-width, custom-designed case to give the Aria a fresh new look". Very smart it is, too, in a Planar 10 turntable PSU-matching kind of way.

Not that the inside was in any need of updating – according to Rega – its celebrated expertise in phono stage engineering should be enough to send a shiver of trepidation down the spines of the opposition. As with the others here, this is an all-analogue MM/MC affair, eschewing the modernity of something like Chord Electronics Huei for old-school mechanical load switching.

Configured via six DIP switches on the back, the choice of impedance loading runs from 70 to 400ohm and capacitance from 1,000 to 4,200pF. Input sensitivity can be changed by 6dB, again by DIP switches.

The MM input uses low-noise, bipolar transistors configured as a compound pair, while the MC input

employs parallel-connected, low noise field-effect transistors to avoid bias current flowing in the cartridge and interfering with the cartridge's magnetic geometry. Both stages have separate input sockets and circuitry and signal switching is performed at high level and low impedance to ensure no degradation of the signal.

In the same vein, a self-adjusting servo control keeps the MC input circuit at its optimum, compensating for any variations in ambient or operating temperature. High-quality polypropylene capacitors are used in the signal path and equalisation networks and discrete circuitry are used throughout the signal path, allowing Rega full control of the circuit design.

Sound quality

The Aria is competing against some seriously talented kit in this group, yet it still manages to sound uniquely 'Rega', despite taking its lead from a turntable and cartridge a little less conscientiously resolute than one of the company's own. It isn't all about the amount of information that it

CONNECTIONS

- 1 MM stereo RCA inputs
- 2 MC loading and gain DIP switches
- 3 Stereo RCA outputs
- 4 MC stereo RCA inputs

shunts from the cartridge to the amplifier, however. In this respect, it's very much operating in the same ballpark as the Lehmann and Tom Evans. It's more a question of what it does with it. And here the fine detail is kept firmly in a musical context. The small stuff is present and heard but the Aria doesn't sweat it, much less shine a spotlight on it. Tie loosened off, shirt sleeves rolled up, it's more concerned with sounding honest and authentic and that has a lot to do with rhythm and flow.

There's a very appealing loose-limbed suppleness to the Aria's work that chimes well with the Pro-Ject turntable's approach. It's exactly the kind of sound that makes disaffected digital devotees want to buy a decent turntable. As such, the Rega draws plenty of colour and emotion from the duetting voices of Thorn and Watt singing the chorus of *We Walk The Same Line*. Marcus Miller's bass guitar doing the heavy lifting on *Que Sera Sera* seems to have a raised funk quotient on top of being just as super-taut and articulate as you'd expect. As for Curtis Fuller's skilful but rather under-inflated trombone solo on *Blue Train's Locomotion* (unfortunately sandwiched between a consummate Coltrane and dazzling Morgan), what typically comes across as lacklustre and washed out, even on CD, is at least given the kiss of life by the Aria and pulled closer to the performance zone occupied by his fellow musicians. The Rega has the happy knack of loving the music ●



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

- SOUND QUALITY**
★★★★★ **LIKE:** That musically sussed Rega sound; smart design; great build quality
- VALUE FOR MONEY**
★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Nothing bar those dreaded DIP switches
- BUILD QUALITY**
★★★★★ **WE SAY:** As safe a pair of hands as ever there was. A class act
- FEATURES**
★★★★★

OVERALL

