

ART AND CRAFTSMANSHIP

One thing is certain: With the TD124 DD Exclusive, Thorens is bringing one of the most beautiful turntables on the market – one that money and kind words can't buy.







Power is supplied by the external, fully linear-regulated TN124 power supply

The left knurled wheel is used for fine speed adjustment; the right one is one of four for height adjustment

History

Longing for the good old days of the turntable era back in 2026 is probably a bit outdated. And insisting that a “real” Thorens must be driven by a belt – or, in very special cases, by a combination of a belt and a friction wheel – is, in all likelihood, also outdated. And yet, it’s worth taking a moment to recall that the grandfather of today’s

test subject – the late, great TD124 – was a combination-drive turntable in which a friction wheel set the heavy sub-platter in rotation, which in turn was driven by the motor via a belt. In 1957, this represented the absolute pinnacle of drive technology, and even today, the original TD124 enjoys extreme popularity in vintage circles. However, finding a unit that doesn’t rumble unbearably is a real challenge and usually requires restoration by one of the few specialists who truly know the device inside and out.

Today

In 2026, the current incarnation of the TD124 features a state-of-the-art direct-drive system that has absolutely nothing to do with rumbling or similar issues. Priced at 12,000 euros with the tonearm, the turntable is housed in a meticulously polished wooden cabinet; I suspect that its highly decorative surface is a lacquer finish that looks almost like a veneer. The combination of colors and shapes is also extremely well-executed; the design blends tradition and modernity absolutely perfectly.

In fact, the entire turntable chassis is identical to the one used in the current TD124 DD – with one exception: the platter in this exclusive model has received a significant upgrade. So it’s no longer just a 3.5-kilo-



gram aluminum platter plus a rubber mat on which the vinyl rests, but rather that aluminum platter plus a half-centimeter-thick copper mat. This should increase the platter's mass by about another kilogram and also provide those "copper benefits" that have made platter mats made of this material legendary – and a nightmare for any machinist who has to shape the material on a lathe.

The toggle switch on the front left switches between the two platter speeds – that's right, there's still no shellac compatibility here. A nod to the original TD124 is still the "turntable brake" on the left edge, which actually allows the turntable to be slowed down noticeably faster than with the speed selector – even though there's no mechanical brake at work here, just a bit of "electronic assistance." Anyone expecting the Thorens' direct-drive system to deliver acceleration and braking performance on par with the "mothers of all direct-drive turntables" – the drives of the Technics DJ turntables – will be disappointed. This, right here, is a hi-fi piece of equipment. It doesn't need to reach rated speed within a quarter turn, nor does it require emergency stops with screeching tires. Curiosity prompted me to take a quick measurement, and the TD124 DD Exclusive responded with outstanding results; both wow and flutter were below 0.02 percent – that's a feat few can match. The speed, adjusted using the built-in stroboscope, is also spot on – from a purely technical standpoint, this drive is practically impossible to improve upon.

Tone Arm

Secured to the right side of the turntable with two high-quality slotted screws is the tone arm board, which features the brand-new TP124 tone arm. This is the first 12-inch tonearm of the "new Thorens era," and it's the reason the turntable has such an imposing presence: it measures 510 millimeters in width, which needs to be taken into account when planning where to place it. As befits a proper 12-inch tonearm, the TP124 has some effective mass – but at 20 grams, it's still on the moderate side.

Visually rather simple, its design is based on the 9-inch TP124, which is used on the "standard" TD124 DD. In both models, the tonearm is guided vertically by play-free and virtually frictionless slewing bearings, while ball bearings are used for the horizontal axis. The slightly J-shaped aluminum tube features an SME-compatible bayonet mount at the end, which makes it much easier to experiment with different cartridges. The tracking force is adjusted using a combination of weight and spring force: The rotatable counterweight is used to balance the tonearm, while the adjustment lever on the top of the bearing housing sets the desired value. Antiskating is provided by a rather ingenious "weight-plus-string" arrangement; the weight actually disappears into an opening in the tonearm base. All in all, the tonearm design is an expected variation on a proven design.

Teammates

Phono preamplifier:

- Alders & Lange Vinyl Engine VE-100 F

Integrated amplifier:

- Symphonic Line RG14

Loudspeaker:

- JBL L300
- Ulber Audio Mira

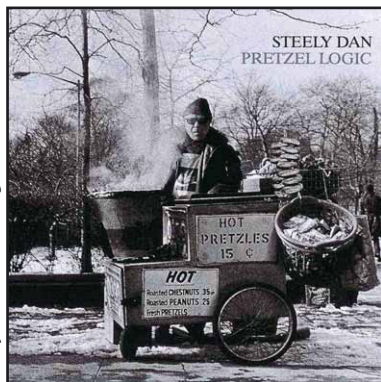
Competitors

Turntable:

- Transrotor Massimo Nero / Studio 12"

The thick copper mat is a hallmark of the "Exclusive" model





What we played

Steely Dan
Pretzel Logic

Wishbone Ash
Argus

Crippled Black Phoenix
Great Escape

Long Distance Calling
The Phantom Void

*It was inspired by professional equipment:
The Thorens EMT is reminiscent of the
legendary studio pickups from EMT*



Cartridge

While the original TD124 DD caused a sensation when paired with a specially designed SPU-style cartridge, Thorens owner Gunter Kürten opted this time for a collaboration with EMT, whose German distribution he conveniently handles anyway. The result is a very special cartridge variant that features the typical EMT studio look: In the finest “Tondosen” tradition, the cartridge and headshell form a sin-

gle unit that has been specially optimized for the TP124. At 5,000 euros, this special EMT model – which lacks its own model designation – is hardly a bargain, but it certainly stands out thanks to various unique features. This starts with the rather exclusive magnesium body, which – despite the generous use of material and the resulting stability – weighs in at a modest 25 grams. EMT owner Micha Huber has also created

*You can see it clearly here:
The drive rests on top of the frame*





The toggle switch allows selection of two platter speeds

a very special cartridge for the large Thorens: for example, no other EMT model features a ruby stylus tip. Incidentally, in this case, the end of the stylus holder is fitted with a Gyger diamond featuring a special fine-line cut. The stylus and stylus holder move a set of coils – wound from gold wire – within a magnetic field. This results in a nominal output voltage of a robust 0.8 millivolts at a speed of 5 cm/s. I'm a big fan of cartridges that really feed the phono preamp some "substance," which is clearly the case here. Even though the classic turntable setup with a magnifying glass and "aiming line" might suggest tracking forces at the upper end of the scale – that's not the case: The Thorens EMT makes do with a very average 20 millinewtons. The generator's internal resistance of 12 ohms is also well within the "normal" range, and the recommended load impedance of 100–120 ohms is suitable for just about any phono preamp.



The TP125 features the familiar motorized tonearm lift. It's now faster, but still loud

And since the TD 124 DD Exclusive is, thankfully, equipped with a connector panel that allows for both unbalanced and balanced signal connections, the fantastic Alders & Lange “Vinyl Engine” from the last issue was delighted to have the opportunity to demonstrate its capabilities with an XLR connection.

Sound

Let me put it this way: Holy s... What on earth is this? This is by no means the first direct-drive Thorens I’ve come across, but this one? This is the real deal! On the fingerprint-resistant lacquered copper platter sits a copy of Steely Dan’s “Pretzel Logic” that’s not exactly brand-new; we’re listening to the title track. Clearly one of the rockier tracks from the cult band’s repertoire. The electric bass line, at the very latest, makes you sit up and take notice: it doesn’t usually sound this gritty, direct, and energetic, does it? The next surprise comes when the vocals become polyphonic: here, you actually get the impression that there’s more than just Messrs. Becker

and Fagen working in perfect harmony. And that’s actually the case, because Eagles and Poco bassist Timothy B. Schmidt is singing along here as well. Something a hi-fi setup is actually very rarely able to unravel – here, it happens with delightful ease. You can also hear very clearly on Wishbone Ash’s masterpiece “Argus” just how superbly power and subtlety combine on the Thorens. Here, too, the perfect separation of the various vocal parts (“Time Was”) stands out. The wonderfully authentic bass also delivers that perfect ’70s vibe here. With Wishbone Ash, there’s the added challenge of making the polyphonic guitar parts clearly distinguishable. This is achieved – hardly surprisingly – with flying colors.

And so, the TD 124 DD Exclusive, in combination with the EMT cartridge, can be considered – while not exactly cheap – a brutally convincing statement in the world of turntables. I would have gladly let it stay a little longer.

Holger Barske

The brand-new 12-inch tonearm is a variant of the well-known TP124



Thorens TD124 DD Exclusive / EMT Tondose 124 Exclusive



- Price approx. 12,000 Euro (drive with arm)
5,000 Euro (Cardridge)
- Distribution Thorens, Bergisch Gladbach
- Phone +49 2204 8677720
- Internet www.thorens.com
- Warranty 2 years
- Dimensions (W x H x D) 510 x 190 x 352 mm
- Weight approx. 15 kg

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Thorens TD124
DD Exclusive /
EMT Tondose
124 Exclusive

International 2/26

» Thorens and EMT complement each other to create a wonderful total work of art characterized by breathtaking intensity and superb transparency. The art of turntables at its finest!