

Thorens TD202 Review



No other brand better represents the sophisticated turntable at an affordable price than Thorens. The new owner wants to continue the great tradition with the brand new TD202. STEREO tested whether it is suitable to become the next customer's favourite.

Boost to higher grounds

If anyone has ever built a popular audiophile turntable, it is Thorens with the purist, timeless and indeed indestructible TD166 and 146 models the latter offering at least the minimal comfort of automatic switch-off. Tens of thousands of these classical turntables conquered the facilities of their ageless clientele from the mid-1970s to the end of the 1990s in various versions. From pupils to grandparents, everyone loved them.

In the event of a similar success of the modern successor TD202, the new Thorens owner is likely to beam with joy. Gunter Kürten, who served for many years as managing director of Denon and lately directed ELAC's business between 2015 and 2017, where he initiated their current record player line-up, possesses the HiFi gene – and owns Thorens since 2018. Of course, there is a whole range of the brand's tried and tested turntables. The first new device is now the TD202, which is considered a benchmark for the seriousness of the new Thorens owner.



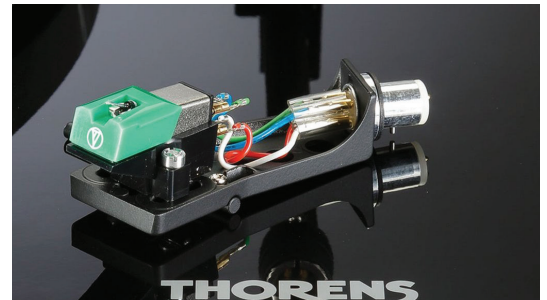
In addition to the support, an internal rubber ring should also effectively dampen vibrations and the „ringing“ of the plate – with success.

The Phono-Pre is great

The immaculately shimmering aluminum plate with rubber mat, reminds of days gone by and has a rubber ring inside for dampening. Fans of the sound of old Thorens will certainly also remember the ringing of their plates, which stopped after a slight flick. The TD202 didn't inherit this bad habit.

For a tonearm they used a straight type with removable headshell, dampened lift and anti-skating adjustment via a spring mechanism. Since experience has shown that customers of this class do not (yet) want to worry about a fitting pickup, Thorens has precisely pre-adjusted Audio-Technica's AT-95E MM. After all, it has proven its worth millions of times without exaggeration. Balancing the tonearm by means of a counterweight and adjusting the required 18 millinewton tracking force after zeroing the scale is a breeze. And off you go.

The TD202 already has the phono-preamplifier on board, so it doesn't even need a phono input on the amplifier. To activate, the small switch labeled „Pre Amp“ in the connection terminal must be set to „On“. Then the new Thorens can be connected like a CD player. Very convenient, since many modern amps, especially those from the A/V sector, lack the phono branch. The TD202 plays on them without any further measures. If a phono input is present, it is easy to try out which way the sound is of higher quality.



The cranked headshell is removable, which simplifies the installation of another pickup. A nut fixes it to the straight tonearm.

Though we had suspected the TD202's Phono-Pre to be, at best, a makeshift, we were proven wrong by its pleasing, because color-homogeneous, clearly differentiated as well as lively presentation. Even on expensive amplifiers equipped with phono we would have often preferred it, although the stage always seemed a little more compact and more oriented towards the front.

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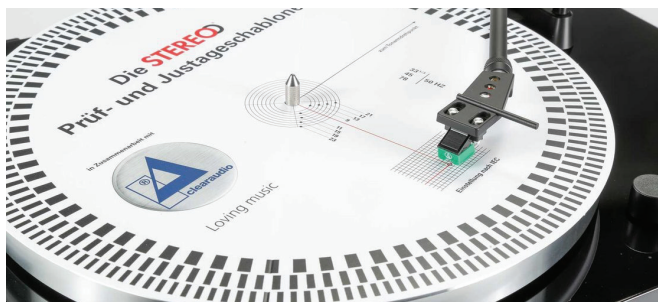


The TD202 sounds optimally resolved and homogeneously only when the power supply is inserted in the correct phase. For orientation we have marked the preferred side with a red dot.

On the other hand, the integrated preamplifier impressed with tonal coherence. Thus it emancipated itself in our opinion: from a supposed makeshift solution to a secret trump in the new Thorens' sleeve.

Who wants to digitally feed their records to a computer via the integrated USB interface, with the data format corresponding to the CD standard of 16 bit/44.1 kilohertz, needs the work of the internal phono amp anyway.

Apart from the easy adjustment of the tracking force described above, only the flat belt lying on the inner rim of the plate has to be placed on the motor pulley during assembly. That is done through an opening in the plate support and requires a little finesse.



Using the STEREO test and adjustment template, we checked the cartridge adjustment in the factory-setting: Result: perfectly on point!

Dry, clear bass

In the listening room, the idea of the TD202 as a new, universally usable "turntable for the people" soon came to the fore again, because the TD202 - whether with its own or external phono part - put in a lot of effort. Wolfgang Bernreuther's multi-layered and detailed „For Ole“ was conscientiously unraveled, while depicting voice and instruments at the intended positions within the sound stage and without forgetting to give the successful performance a shot of emotions without which this title simply does not „work“.

It was astonishing how dry and clear the Thorens represented lower frequencies. Even in a mixture of vehemently plucking bass impulses and dragging bass clouds from Carolin Nos „Still Waters Run Deep“ the TD202 kept the reins tight and didn't smear which was great for transparency.

The newcomer could not quite match the proven TD209 for 1000 Euro, which played even airier and more relaxed. However, in our cross check it rather kept up with the nearly 700 Euro expensive TD207. A great achievement, especially as these two offer neither Phono-Pre nor USB. The new TD202 rightly bears the name Thorens and is a real tip in the ambitious entry-level class of turntables.



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Verdict: Thorens TD202

The first Thorens under the new leadership is immediately a strong start. The TD 202 is a well-designed turntable, equipped with good ingredients and also has a first-class phono preamplifier amp on board, along with an A/D converter for the USB output. This makes the turntable suitable for all systems without phono input. As the phono pre can be switched off, the listener can also operate the turntable directly at the phono input of the amplifier. This is however not mandatory, as the sound of the TD 202 is balanced, lively and relaxed via the integrated phono amp, which thus turns out to be its trump card. Altogether, a real tip for beginners and advanced listeners!

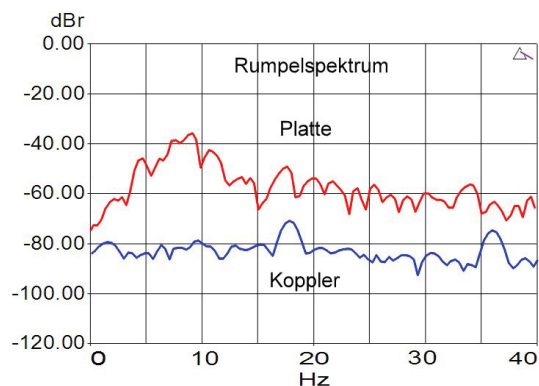
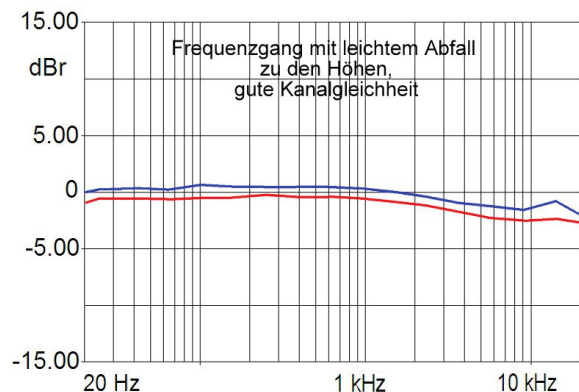
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Technical Details

Dimensions WxHxD: 42 x 13 x 34 cm
Weight: 3.9 kg
Warranty: 2 years
Manufacturer: Thorens GmbH

General Data

Measurement Results



Stereo Test

Sound Level Turntable: 57%

Measurement Values

Pickup type: MM
Output voltage (1 kHz, 5 cm/sec): 4.5 mV
Recommended contact force: 18 mN

Price/Performance



Lab Comment: Thorens TD202

A balanced frequency response with only slight high frequency drop, good synchronisation values (see picture) and low rumble are the characteristics of the small Thorens. The output voltage refers to the operation without the phono preamplifier.

Features: Thorens TD202

External power supply, MM-cartridge, integrated switchable phono preamplifier, USB interface for digital recordings from turntable to PC/Mac, removable headshell, dust cover.

If you are interested in Thorens products, please contact:

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