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Above Thiele TT01 turntable (left) and Analog Relax EX2000 cartridge (right)

New vinyl brands join Absolute Sounds' UK distribution portfolio

As vinyl's resurgence continues apace, the UK's foremost high-end audio distributor adds another turntable manufacturer (Thiele) and cartridge maker (Analog Relax) to its peerless roster of brands

London, England – Sales of vinyl records increased for the 16th consecutive year in 2023, with 5.9 million units sold in the UK alone, so it stands to reason that demand for turntables at all price levels has also continued to rise. Absolute Sounds, the UK's leading distributor of high-end audio equipment since 1978, has responded to this demand by building an exceptional portfolio of the vinyl scene's brightest luminaries, including Döhmann, Reed and TechDAS.

Keen to further extend its vinyl offering, Absolute Sounds has spent the last 12 months auditioning turntables, arms and cartridges from a range of highly reputed manufacturers to find the perfect fit. At the end of this exhaustive process, two companies were selected – German turntable and tonearm producer Thiele and Japanese phono cartridge maker Analog Relax.

Thiele

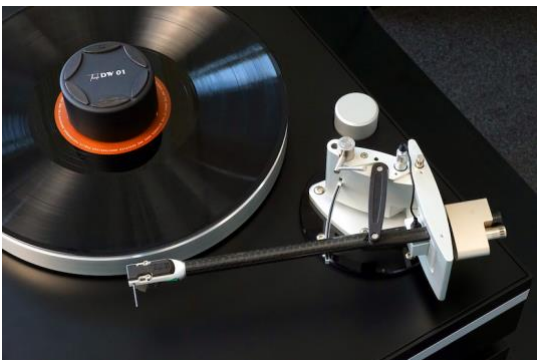
Thiele's founder, Helmut Thiele, boasts a highly impressive CV in the field of audio design. He has held the position of chief designer at turntable specialist Thorens for more than 10 years and has worked with an impressive array of brands including Acoustic Research, Marantz, Mordaunt-Short, Parasound, Pioneer and Tannoy.

Three years ago, Thiele launched the first products under his own name – the TT01 turntable and TA01 tonearm. He began developing the tonearm in 2009, creating multiple prototypes before finally perfecting its ingenious 'zero tracking error' design. When the matching turntable was ready – painstakingly designed to be the tonearm's perfect partner – both were made available to analogue aficionados in Germany in 2021. Now, Thiele is reaching out to passionate vinyl lovers around the world...

The TT01 turntable features 'constrained layer damping', its internal construction divided into three levels to ensure that interference from the drive motor is kept away from the tonearm and cartridge.

The lower level incorporates the motor and its associated electronics, the XLR output terminal and three adjustable feet that couple the TT01 to the turntable support. The centre level, externally edged in silver, is connected to the lower and upper levels by a special damping adhesive and carries only the arm board and tonearm, while the platter bearing and control panel are mounted on the top level. A large linear power supply unit is kept offboard, entirely separated from the main chassis.

Each level's vibration control is optimised using different types of wood and wood composites. This construction, utilising multiple isolated levels with a specific mix of materials, eliminates all forms of vibration from drive level to tonearm level, enabling the cartridge to dig every drop of detail from a record's grooves, unsullied by interference.



Left The TA01 tonearm's ingenious engineering eliminates tracking errors

The complex kinematics of the partnering Thiele TA01 tonearm combine the precise guidance of a pivoted arm with the advantages of a linear tracking design, delivering a remarkably low lateral tracking angle error of less than 0.036 degrees. The arm tube consists of not one but two coaxially arranged carbon fibre tubes, one inside the other, with a special damping gel filling the space between them.

The TA01's headshell and the coupling struts of the arm bearing incorporate ebony wood, favoured for its acoustic damping properties (even the turntable's spindle is made of ebony). The combination of

ingenious engineering and painstaking attention to detail pays sonic dividends that include enhanced spatial resolution, exceptional detail retrieval and perfect tonality.

The Thiele TT01 turntable and TA01 tonearm are made in Germany and now available in the UK for the first time via Absolute Sounds. The UK RRP for the TT01 in its standard anthracite finish is £24,500, including the TA01 arm and RM01 resonance-damping platter mat. Custom finishes using any colour from the RAL colour matching system may also be requested.

The TA01 tonearm can also be purchased separately to use with other turntables, with prices ranging from £11,500 to £15,000 according to connection type and a choice of aluminium or gold-plated bronze metal parts.

For more information about Thiele, visit: helmut-thiele.com/en

Analog Relax

Yasushi Yurugi, the founder of cartridge maker Analog Relax, is a Japanese craftsman of the highest calibre. He is also something of an 'analogue crusader', not simply in terms of vinyl evangelism but also in relation to the wider 'digital world' we live in. Digital information is all-pervasive, he argues; our brains don't get a minute's rest. We are 'analogue' creatures living in an 'analogue' world – take the time to interact with that world and feed your physical senses, and your mind and body will thank you.

The concept of being at one with yourself and the world around you is embedded deep within Japanese culture and is also central to Yurugi's philosophy. He makes phono cartridges with bodies carved from exotic woods selected for their acoustic properties, fashioning perfectly realised marvels of microengineering with exceptional skill. The pleasure generated by these beautifully crafted physical objects, each fulfilling a singular purpose – to deliver glorious, living, breathing sound from a vinyl record – is a perfect example of the joy of 'analogue living'.



Left The body of Analog Relax's EX1000 cartridge is carved from 2000-year-old Yakusugi cedar

There are four cartridges in the Analog Relax range, all moving coil designs (as opposed to moving magnet). The entry-level model is the EX300 (£2,698), sporting a body made from beeswax-finished walnut – a tonewood used for guitars – and an elliptical diamond stylus. The EX500 (£4,998) steps up to Romanian maple, favoured by violin makers for its tonal qualities, with an enhanced version of the EX300's elliptical stylus. According to Absolute Sounds, these two cartridges exceed the sound quality of any they have experienced below £3,000 and £5,000 respectively – and they have heard the very best.

Next in the range is the EX1000 (£10,998), its body fashioned from 2000-year-old Yakusugi cedar from Yakushima Island. These trees are protected by law and wood must be sourced from trees that have already been felled, adding to its rarity. The wood’s natural resin content and fine, densely packed wood grains, formed through centuries of growing in harsh conditions, endow the cartridge with an unmistakably pure, organic quality that simply sounds ‘right’. This is combined with Analog Relax’s Super Line Contact Version 2 diamond stylus and ruby cantilever.

Top of the line is the new EX2000 (£15,000), featuring a body carved from the finest spruce from the South Tyrol region of Northern Italy – a tonewood highly prized by preeminent stringed instrument makers since the time of Stradivari. An ultra-fine powder coating is applied to the surface of the cartridge body, enhancing the wood’s organic resonance to maximise the EX2000’s extraordinarily engaging and natural sound. Its stylus is the Super Curve Line Contact Version 3, a further evolution of the Version 2 stylus used for the EX1000, combined with a precision-machined diamond cantilever.

For more information about Analog Relax, visit: analogrelax.com/en

A few words from Ricardo Franassovici

Speaking about the addition of Thiele and Analog Relax to Absolute Sounds’ distribution portfolio, Ricardo Franassovici – Absolute Sounds’ founder and Managing Director – said:

“Vinyl has once again become a vital part of the high-end audio scene, with strong demand for ‘forever’ turntables that will do full justice to a treasured record collection and become timeless heirloom pieces. But if we were to add to our vinyl replay portfolio, which already includes such peerless luminaries as Döhmann, TechDAS and Reed, it had to be something very special...

“We scoured the world and trialled many highly reputed brands, some of which are truly impressive. But none stirred our souls as much as Thiele and Analog Relax. Both these makers apply unique creativity and engineering for the sole purpose of achieving world-class analogue sound – without question, they have emphatically succeeded.”

BRANDS DISTRIBUTED BY ABSOLUTE SOUNDS – MAIN PORTFOLIO AND TEN COLLECTION			
Analog Relax	dCS	Krell	Thiele
Artesania Audio	DeVore Fidelity	Magico	Trafomatic
Audio Research	Döhmann Audio	Metaxas & Sins	Transparent Audio
Constellation Audio	Franco Serblin	PrimaLuna	Wilson Audio
Copland	HSE Swiss	Reed	
Dan D’Agostino	Ikigai Audio	Robert Koda	
darTZeel	Jadis	TechDAS	



Absolute Sounds is the UK's leading importer and distributor of high-end audio equipment. The company was formed in 1978 by Ricardo Franassovici, who left a successful career in the music industry to become one of the world's leading hi-fi entrepreneurs. Ricardo's burning desire has always been to give UK-based music fans the opportunity to experience audio at the highest level, cherry-picking the very best components from around the globe to create a 'hi-fi boutique' overflowing with highly covetable, high-performance products. Like the finest watches and most prestigious motorcars, these brands deliver finely tuned, supremely engineered products that simply ooze desirability. If you are seeking the world's best audio equipment, Absolute Sounds is your first port of call.

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