

Review: Teac VRDS-701 CD player & DAC

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Review: Teac VRDS-701 CD player & DAC-Explore the Teac VRDS-701, a CD player uniting classic audio charm with modern audiophile innovations.

In the realm of high-fidelity audio, the CD player has long held its place as a staple in many audiophile setups. Despite the digital revolution and the dominance of streaming services, there’s a unique charm to the ritual of placing a physical disc into a player and immersing oneself in the analog-like experience of music playback. Today, we explore a notable addition to this classic category – the Teac CD player VRDS-701. With its blend of cutting-edge technologies and an intriguing price point of 2,499 euros, the Teac VRDS-701 invites us to rediscover the world of CDs and promises a listening experience that’s both nostalgic and technologically advanced. Join us as we dive into the details of this audio gem.



Initial Impressions

Right off the bat, the Teac CD player VRDS-701 makes its presence felt – it’s surprisingly hefty for a CD player, reminding me of the legendary Sony CDP-X-777 ES I owned in my youth. While not quite as weighty, the VRDS-701 still tips the scales at an impressive 11.8 kilograms, hinting at its high-quality construction. It boasts standard hi-fi dimensions, comes in black or silver, and features a low-resonance aluminum housing. The black version, while elegant, might appear somewhat understated, but the silver variant reveals more of its design nuances. Notable features include front-facing carrying handles, cooling fins on the sides, and an old-fashioned on/standby switch on the front panel. It’s also equipped with three digital connections (USB, Toslink, S/PDIF coaxial), USB-C interface, and both RCA and balanced XLR analog outputs. Additionally, it serves as a D/A converter and offers a headphone amplifier with a 6.3mm jack.



Specifications

CD section

Supported media Audio CD, CD (CD-R/CD-RW) * 8cm CDs not supported.

Input Level 5Hz to 80kHz (+1dB, -6dB)

S/N ratio 108dB (A-weight, 1kHz)

Total harmonic distortion 0.002% (1kHz, LPF: 20Hz to 20kHz)

Analog audio outputs

Balanced

Connectors XLR × 1 pair

2.0Vrms (1kHz, Full scale, 10kΩ loaded, FIXED 0dB)

Maximum output level 4.0Vrms (1kHz, Full scale, 10kΩ loaded, FIXED +6dB)

12Vrms (1kHz, Full scale, 10kΩ loaded, VARIABLE)

Output impedance 220Ω

Unbalanced

Connectors RCA × 1 pair

2.0Vrms (1kHz, Full scale, 10kΩ loaded, FIXED 0dB)

Maximum output level 4.0Vrms (1kHz, Full scale, 10kΩ loaded, FIXED +6dB)

6Vrms (1kHz, Full scale, 10kΩ loaded, VARIABLE)

Output impedance 180Ω

Digital audio inputs

USB

Connector USB Type-C × 1 (USB2.0 or more)

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Supported formats | |
| PCM | 16 / 24 / 32bit 44.1k / 48k / 88.2k / 96k / 176.4k / 192k / 352.8k / 384kHz |
| DSD | 2.8M / 5.6M / 11.2M / 22.5MHz |
| COAXIAL | |
| Connector | RCA × 1 |
| Input Level | 0.5Vp-p |
| Input impedance | 75Ω |
| Supported formats | |
| PCM | 16 / 24bit 32k / 44.1k / 48k / 88.2k / 96k / 176.4k / 192kHz |
| DSD | 2.8MHz |
| OPTICAL | |
| Connector | TOS (JEITA RC5720C) × 1 |
| Input Level | -24.0 to -14.5dBm peak |
| Supported formats | |
| PCM | 16 / 24bit 32k / 44.1k / 48k / 88.2k / 96k / 176.4k / 192kHz |
| DSD | 2.8MHz |
| Digital audio outputs | |
| COAXIAL | |
| Connector | RCA × 1 |
| Output level | 0.5Vp-p |
| Output impedance | 75Ω |
| OPTICAL | |
| Connector | TOS (JEITA RC5720C) × 1 |
| Headphones out | |
| Connector | ¼" (6.3mm) Stereo jack × 1 |
| Maximum output | 500mW + 500mW (into 32Ω) |
| Clock sync input | |
| Connector | BNC × 1 |
| Input frequency | 10MHz |
| Input impedance | 50Ω |
| Input Level | |
| Rectangle wave | Equivalent to TTL level |
| Sine wave | 0.5 to 1.0Vrms |
| External control | |
| Trigger in (12V TRIGGER IN) | |
| Connector | 3.5mm Mono mini jack × 1 |
| Maximum current supply | 12V, 1mA |
| Trigger out (12V TRIGGER THRU) | |
| Connector | 3.5mm Mono mini jack × 1 |
| Output level | 12V |
| Maximum curret supply | 100mA |
| Power | AC120V, 60Hz AC220-240V, 50/60Hz |

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Power consumption | 20W |
| Standby power | 0.4W |
| Overall dimensions | 444 (W) × 111 (H) × 333 (D) mm (including protrusions) |
| Weight | 11.1kg |
| Operating temperature | +5°C to +35°C |
| Operating humidity | 5% to 85% (no condensation) |
| Storage Temperature range | -20°C to +55°C |
| Included accessories | AC cord, Remote control (RC-1338), AAA batteries × 2, Foot pads × 3, Owner's manual |



Under the Hood

The Teac VRDS-701 incorporates the Vibration-free Rigid Disc Clamping System (VRDS), a technology seen in Esoteric's premium players. This innovative CD drive mechanism minimizes rotational vibrations and unwanted drive vibrations, ensuring greater reading accuracy. The player employs a delta-sigma DAC with a discrete circuit structure for digital-to-analog conversion. It supports a range of high-resolution formats, including DSD512 and PCM up to 32 bit/384 kHz, along with MQA compatibility.

It also features an analog volume control, turning it into a preamplifier for digital sources, making it suitable for direct connections to power amplifiers or active speakers. Moreover, it has a sampling rate function that upconverts PCM input signals.

While testing, the Teac VRDS-701 delivered exceptional audio quality and versatile functionality.



Build Quality:

The Teac VRDS-701 boasts an impressive build quality that reflects the brand's commitment to precision engineering. One of the first things that strikes you when you interact with this CD player is its substantial weight. Weighing in at 11.8 kilograms (approximately 26 pounds), it exudes a sense of solidity and sturdiness that is reminiscent of high-end audio components. The player's chassis is constructed from low-resonance aluminum, a material often chosen for its ability to minimize vibrations and provide a stable platform for audio components.



This choice of materials not only enhances its durability but also contributes to the player's overall performance by reducing unwanted vibrations that can negatively impact sound quality.

Notably, the Teac VRDS-701 features cooling fins on its sides, adding to its aesthetic appeal while also serving a functional purpose. These fins aid in dissipating heat generated during operation, ensuring that the player remains thermally stable even during prolonged listening sessions. This attention to thermal management is essential for maintaining consistent and reliable performance.

Another design aspect that speaks to its build quality is the presence of well-engineered spikes and accompanying underfoot supports. While these may appear as simple details, they serve two important functions. Firstly, they minimize vibrations, further isolating the player from external disturbances that can affect audio playback. Secondly, they protect furniture surfaces from potential scratches, underlining Teac's commitment to user-friendly design.

The inclusion of a heavy-duty, yet unobtrusive, carrying handle on the front of the player adds a touch of practicality to its design. Although primarily a design element, it serves as a functional feature when transporting or repositioning the player within your audio setup.



Design:

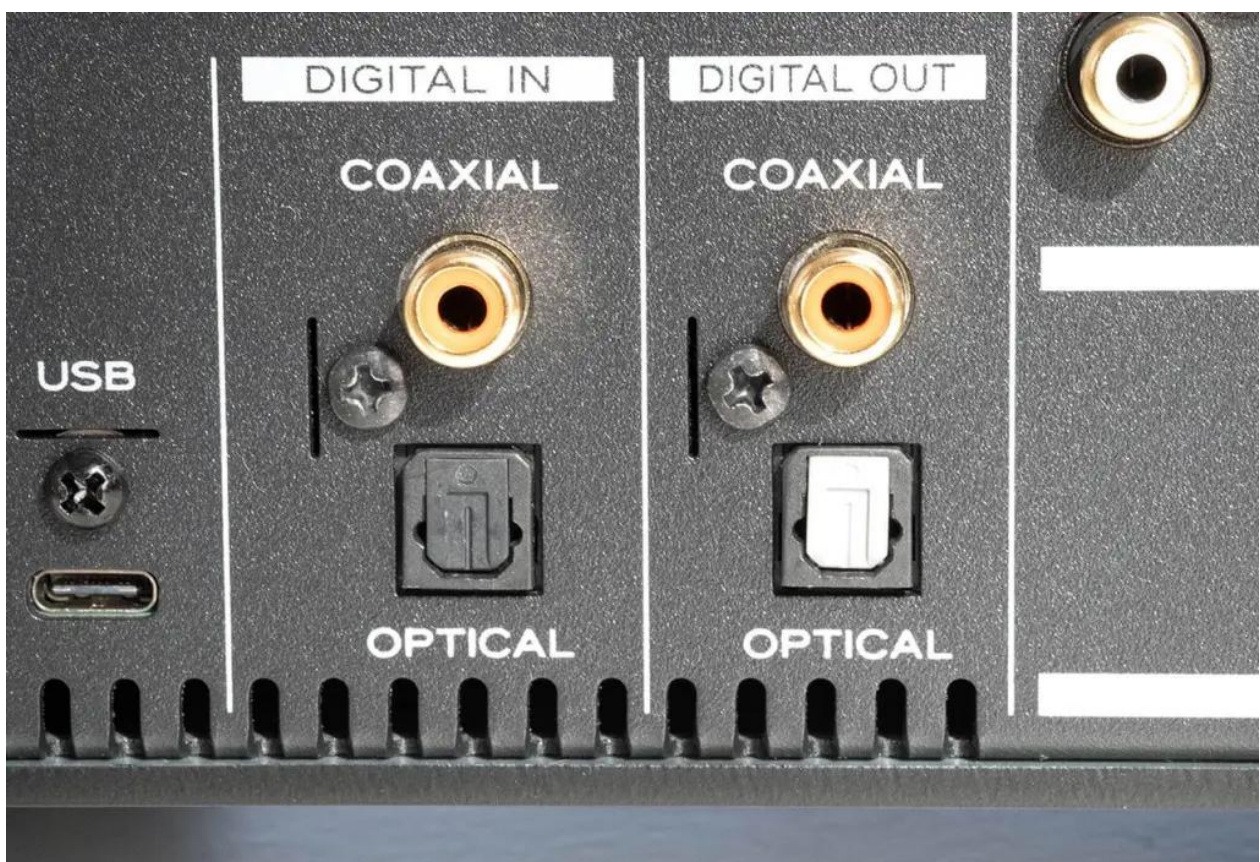
The Teac VRDS-701's design language strikes a balance between elegance and understated simplicity. Available in both black and silver variants, it adheres to the standard dimensions associated with high-fidelity audio components, measuring 444 x 111 x 333 mm (WxHxD). These dimensions make it compatible with most audio racks and furniture, ensuring seamless integration into your listening environment.

The black version exudes an air of understated sophistication, while the silver variant allows the design details to be more readily apparent. The choice of finishes allows users to select a look that best complements their existing audio equipment and interior decor.

One distinctive design feature that catches the eye is the on/standby switch located on the front panel. Resembling an old-fashioned light switch found in mid-20th-century homes, it adds a touch of nostalgia and uniqueness to the player's design. While serving a functional purpose, this design element also adds character to the front panel.

The front panel also houses a dimmable display, bathed in a pleasing yellow glow. A small rotary control, situated below the display, facilitates easy adjustment of the volume when using the Teac VRDS-701 as a preamplifier for digital sources. This thoughtful design feature adds to the player's user-friendliness.

In summary, the Teac VRDS-701 combines exceptional build quality with a design that balances aesthetics and functionality. Its robust aluminum construction, cooling fins, and spike-based isolation contribute to its long-term durability and sonic performance. The player's design, available in black and silver, blends seamlessly into high-end audio setups while incorporating unique touches like the on/standby switch and user-friendly controls, enhancing both form and function.



Sound Test & Comparisons

During the sound test, it was evident that the Teac VRDS-701 exudes a spirited and dynamic character. It offers precision and clarity in the midrange, maintaining a neutral stance. The player's tonal balance, while slightly bright in the treble, is not excessively analytical. The VRDS-701 showcases its prowess with exceptional dynamics, effortlessly handling both subtle details and intense musical passages. Its wide soundstage and precise imaging create an immersive listening experience. The player's headphone amplifier proved competent, delivering spacious sound and solid output for a range of headphones. Overall, the Teac VRDS-701 impresses with its lively and neutral performance, catering to those who appreciate detailed and dynamic sound reproduction. It confidently reaffirms the relevance of CD players in modern hi-fi setups.



Elaborating on Sound Quality:

Moving on to sound quality, the Teac VRDS-701 impressed with its audio performance. It demonstrated a lively and dynamic presentation that immediately captured my attention. When comparing it to my reference CD player, the McIntosh MCD 301, the Teac exhibited a more spirited and energetic sound signature. This vitality was particularly evident in the rendition of heavy electronic beats and dynamic tracks.



While the Teac's bass response wasn't significantly deeper than the McIntosh, it possessed a certain nimbleness and precision that gave it a neutral and well-defined quality. It refrained from overemphasizing the lower frequencies, maintaining a balanced and controlled character. The result was a bass response that was clear, accurate, and far from being overly bloated. Dynamics were another strong suit of the Teac VRDS-701. It excelled in conveying the ebb and flow of music, effortlessly handling abrupt shifts in volume and intensity. In tracks like "Nemesis" by VNV Nation, the Teac delivered an energetic and spirited performance that was engaging and immersive.

In terms of fine dynamics and detail retrieval, the Teac continued to impress. It exhibited exceptional accuracy in reproducing subtle details within tracks. An example of this was evident in the track "As It Fades," where delicate synth pads were rendered with exceptional clarity and precision. The Teac's precision and transparency made it well-suited for those who value nuanced and detailed musical presentations.

Treble & Resolution:

The Teac VRDS-701's performance in the treble range was notable. It presented upper frequencies with a fresh and lively character. While it tended to lean towards brightness, it did so within reasonable limits, and it never became overbearing or fatiguing. The high-frequency performance was accompanied by excellent resolution, making it appealing to those who appreciate analytical and detailed sound reproduction.

In tracks like "How are you doing?" from Dinosaur Jr.'s "Green Mind" album, the Teac VRDS-701 showcased its ability to preserve intricate details even in complex and thinly recorded music. It handled the treble nuances with finesse, maintaining a level of clarity that enhanced the overall listening experience.



Midrange & Space Illustration:

The midrange presentation of the Teac VRDS-701 was neutral and authentic, offering transparent and uncolored vocals. It achieved a remarkable separation of vocals from the

accompanying instrumentation. An example of this clarity was evident in Robert Smith's vocals on "Pictures Of You" by The Cure. The Teac VRDS-701 presented his voice with precision and authenticity.

Regarding soundstage and spatiality, the Teac VRDS-701 delivered a commendable performance. It created a wide and immersive soundstage that extended beyond the speakers. For instance, in tracks like "Into The Black Wide Open" by Long Distance Calling, the player showcased its ability to convey spatiality and instrument placement with accuracy.

In summary, the Teac VRDS-701's sound quality left a lasting impression with its spirited and dynamic presentation, balanced bass response, exceptional detail retrieval, and a treble performance that, while bright, remained within reasonable bounds. Its transparent midrange and expansive soundstage contributed to an engaging and immersive listening experience.



D/A Conversion & Headphone Amplifier:

As a D/A converter, the Teac VRDS-701 continued to deliver excellent performance. I connected my NAD M50.2 music server to it using a digital coaxial cable, and the results were consistent with its CD playback quality. Occasionally, there was a subtle sense of calmness or reduced dynamism in the sound, but overall, it maintained its versatility and sonic prowess.

The headphone amplifier built into the Teac VRDS-701 proved to be a pleasant surprise. When connected to high-quality headphones like the Hifiman Arya Stealth, it offered a spacious sound with ample power. While it may not match dedicated headphone amplifiers in terms of bass depth, it provided a balanced and enjoyable headphone listening experience.



Sound Test and Quality:

The Teac VRDS-701 underwent rigorous sound testing to evaluate its performance in various aspects, revealing a blend of qualities that cater to discerning audiophiles.

Tonal Balance and Presentation: The Teac VRDS-701 strikes a tonally neutral to slightly brighter balance. This characteristic makes it particularly appealing to “analysis-oriented” listeners who seek an accurate representation of their music. While it doesn’t add an excessive amount of warmth, it also avoids the clinical sterility that can sometimes plague overly analytical components.

In the bass range, the Teac VRDS-701 demonstrates a level of precision and clarity. Rather than emphasizing or overemphasizing the lower frequencies, it maintains a neutral, well-defined bass response. The result is a sound signature that avoids excessive bloat or thinness, providing a satisfying balance.

Dynamics and Energy: One standout quality of the Teac VRDS-701 is its dynamic performance. It exhibits a spirited and energetic delivery, which adds an extra layer of excitement to music playback. This characteristic is particularly noticeable when compared to more reserved and controlled players. It manages larger loud-quiet level transitions with ease, injecting energy into musical passages. This dynamic prowess is evident in fast-paced tracks with heavy electronic beats, where the player’s lively presentation shines.

Fine Detail and Resolution: The player excels in reproducing fine details within the music. Even the most subtle nuances in recordings are faithfully conveyed, making it an ideal choice for those who value analytical listening experiences. This precision is especially evident when handling quiet, delicate passages, showcasing the Teac VRDS-701’s ability to resolve intricate musical details with accuracy.

Treble Performance: In the treble range, the Teac VRDS-701 exhibits a fresh and lively character. While the upper frequencies are presented with energy and clarity, the player manages to keep treble emphasis within acceptable limits. This means that, in most cases, the treble does not become overbearing or fatiguing, making for enjoyable extended listening sessions. However, in recordings with already bright or thinly produced treble, the player’s characteristics may be more pronounced.

Midrange Transparency: The midrange of the Teac VRDS-701 is rendered with transparency and authenticity. It neither exaggerates nor subdues midrange frequencies, allowing voices and instruments to sound open, clear, and true to their source. This quality enhances the realism and accuracy of vocal performances and instrumental timbres.

Soundstage and Imaging: The player creates a pleasingly wide soundstage, extending laterally beyond the boundaries of the speakers. This spatial presentation contributes to an immersive listening experience. While the soundstage may not be the absolute widest in its price range, it provides an authentic and well-proportioned stage for most music genres. The player also offers an authentic stage height, starting at the height of the loudspeaker baseline



In terms of instrument localization, depth grading, and three-dimensional tangibility, the Teac VRDS-701 performs well within its price range. While it may not achieve the pinnacle of spatial accuracy, it offers a commendable and immersive soundstage experience.

DAC Functionality and Headphone Amplification: The Teac VRDS-701's built-in DAC extends its versatility, allowing it to function as a DAC for external sources. With digital connection options including USB-C, Toslink, and S/PDIF coaxial, it accommodates various digital audio sources. The USB-C interface is a modern touch, ensuring compatibility with contemporary devices.

As a headphone amplifier, the Teac VRDS-701 pleasantly surprised with its performance. It provides ample power to drive headphones to satisfying listening levels and offers a clean, spacious, and dynamic sound when used with high-quality headphones.

In conclusion, the Teac VRDS-701 delivers a sound quality that combines analytical precision with lively dynamics. Its tonally neutral to slightly brighter balance, impressive dynamic performance, and ability to resolve fine details make it a compelling choice for those seeking an accurate and engaging listening experience. The player's versatile DAC functionality and capable headphone amplification add to its value, making it a multifaceted component in a high-end

audio setup. While individual preferences may vary, the Teac VRDS-701's sound quality proves that CDs still have a place in the world of high-fidelity audio.



Conclusion:

In conclusion, the Teac VRDS-701 is a sophisticated CD player and DAC that renews the relevance of CD playback in modern hi-fi systems. Its lively and dynamic sound signature, along with its versatility as a D/A converter and headphone amplifier, makes it a compelling choice for audio enthusiasts. With its balanced tonal characteristics, precise detail retrieval, and spacious soundstage, it caters to both analytical listeners and those seeking an engaging musical experience. The Teac VRDS-701 is a testament to the enduring quality of CD players and showcases the brand's commitment to high-performance audio.

Advantages of the Teac VRDS-701:

1. **High-Quality Sound:** The Teac VRDS-701 offers outstanding sound quality with a tonally neutral to slightly brighter balance, making it suitable for audiophiles who seek accurate and detailed music reproduction.
2. **Dynamic Performance:** The player excels in dynamics, injecting energy and excitement into music playback. It effortlessly handles both quiet and loud passages, providing an engaging listening experience.
3. **Fine Detail Resolution:** With its ability to resolve fine musical details, the Teac VRDS-701 caters to listeners who appreciate analytical listening experiences. It faithfully reproduces even the most subtle nuances in recordings.
4. **Versatile Functionality:** Beyond being a CD player, the Teac VRDS-701 functions as a DAC for external sources, accommodating USB-C, Toslink, and S/PDIF coaxial digital connections. It also serves as a competent headphone amplifier, enhancing its versatility in a high-end audio setup.
5. **Solid Build Quality:** The Teac VRDS-701 boasts a well-constructed, heavy chassis and low-resonance aluminum housing. Its thoughtful design includes vibration-reducing technologies, demonstrating a commitment to build quality.

Disadvantages of the Teac VRDS-701:

1. **Price:** The Teac VRDS-701 comes with a relatively high price tag, which may deter budget-conscious consumers. It competes with other premium CD players in its price range.

2. **Bright Treble:** While its lively treble performance is a plus for some listeners, others may find it too bright, especially when paired with already bright recordings.
3. **Limited SACD Support:** The player lacks support for SACDs (Super Audio CDs), which may disappoint enthusiasts of this high-resolution audio format.
4. **Design Aesthetics:** While build quality is commendable, some users may find the Teac VRDS-701's design to be unremarkable or unspectacular, particularly in the black version.
5. **Weight and Size:** The player's substantial weight (11.8 kilograms) and dimensions (444 × 111 × 333 mm) may pose challenges for those with limited space or those seeking more compact audio components. Additionally, the carrying handles on the front, while visually distinctive, may not serve a practical purpose for all users.

The Teac VRDS-701...

- Is a spirited fellow who breathes new life into dusty silver discs and musty chains with his energetic gait. This is primarily due to its above-average gross and fine dynamic capabilities, which exceed its price range.
- Due to its high resolution and slightly bright nature, it is more suitable for “analysis fans” than for pleasure listeners, but it does not alienate the latter.
- Offers a neutral, crisp, and very defined bass – thumbs up.
- Shines with equally strictly neutral, very transparent mids, and great voice representation.
- The treble can be slightly over the top in some recordings, with the emphasis being on “slightly”. He is not an anemic tweeter for bean counters.
- Represents the stage wide, but not extra wide, and the same applies to the stage depth: deep, but not ultra-deep. Playback begins exactly at the level of the speaker baseline; plasticity and three-dimensionality correspond to the price tag.
- Leaves a first-class impression visually and particularly in terms of workmanship; it seems to be built to last.
- Also serves as a D/A converter for external sources, offering the same performance with slightly more quietness in the sound.
- Has a surprisingly good, fairly powerful headphone amplifier section that matches the sound description of the rest of the device.

Facts:

- Model: Teac VRDS-701
- Concept: CD player and D/A converter with headphone amplifier and volume control
- Price: 2,499 euros
- Dimensions & Weight: 444 × 111 × 333 mm (WxHxD), 11.8 kg
- Inputs: USB-C, S/PDIF coaxial, Toslink, clock input (10 MHz)
- Outputs: analog: 1 x RCA, 1 x XLR (variable and fixed volume), 6.3 mm headphone jack; digital: S/PDIF coaxial, Toslink
- Compatibility: PCM up to 32bit/384kHz and DSD512, MQA
- Power consumption: 40 watts (in operation), 0.4 watts (standby)
- Colors: Black or Silver
- Other: remote control
- Warranty: 2 years