

TEAC VRDS-701T CD Transport Unboxing and First Impressions

Details

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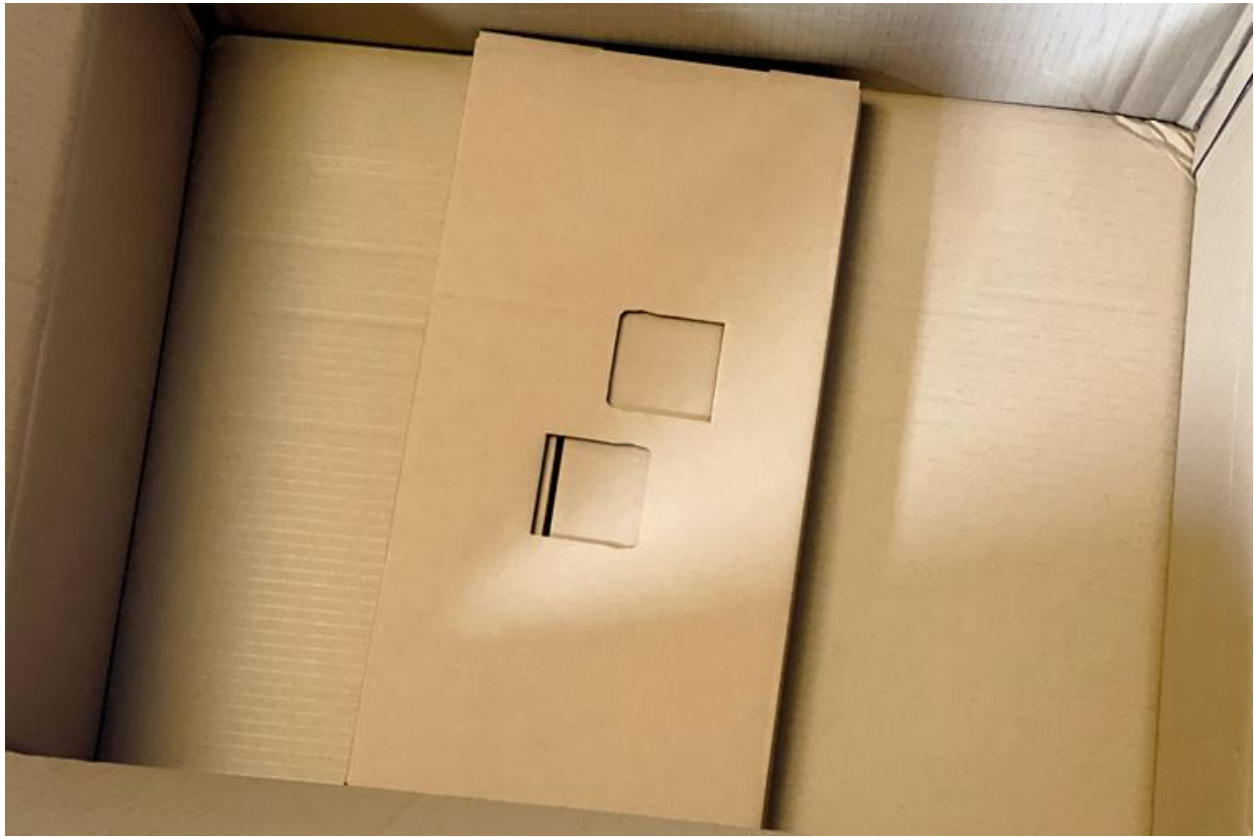
Oftentimes, one of the most difficult things about editing a publication focused on high-value audio, with a goal of reaching newer hi-fi enthusiasts, is simply guessing how much historical context said readers have.

That becomes especially critical when working on a review of something like TEAC's VRDS-701T CD transport (\$2699.99). There's just so much to unpack here, and I'm not talking about the device itself. TEAC isn't a brand that springs immediately to mind the way it did when I was a pup, although that's changing since TEAC crawled out from under the imploding Gibson umbrella.





More than anything, though, the tidbit of trivia and history I want to focus on here isn't the brand, but rather the model number. Because for us ancient audio enthusiasts, the letters



VRDS—in that order—mean something quite special. It's short for **V**ibration-free **R**igid **D**isc-clamping **S**ystem, and you can argue all day about whether the technology actually results in sonic improvements, but the fact of the matter is that its emergence in the marketplace in the early 1990s coincided with a significant step up in the audio quality of the CD format. So we silverbacks have a fondness for it—even those of us who haven't owned a piece of TEAC gear since sometime around the Y2K scare.

Enough with the history lesson. You're here for an unboxing, right? The good news is, right off the bat TEAC impresses with a commitment to good packaging, including reliance on expanded polyethylene foam instead of dreadful EPS. The CD transport is secured well and beautifully protected, and its EPE foam padding isn't prone to crumbling or cracking or leaving bits of detritus everywhere.

That's far from the only bit of laudable packaging, but curiously, the whole shebang gives the impression of less-than-sufficient protection at first, because as you shift the contents of the box around, you'll hear the occasional clunk. There's a reason for that clunk, and it's not an accident, but it's related to the VRDS mechanism—at least in part.

Let's discuss something of a mystery in terms of the packaging really quickly, though. Pull the VRDS-701T out of the crate, and you'll notice this raised box-within-a-box at the very bottom.



At first blush, it seems like the cardboard equivalent of origami: a folded 3D shape that's purely decorative. Ignore the central box-within-a-box-within-the-box, though, and check out the surrounding structure.



Within, you'll find the remote control and power cord—both important accessories, needless to say.





Getting the VRDS-701T out of the crate, one of the most noteworthy things about its own individual wrapping is that the typical cloth bag has been swapped out for what can only be described as a miniature fitted sheet. I love this, because it makes the unit so much easier to repackage—granted, more of a consideration for us reviewer types, but it might also be handy if you ever need to send it off for service, or even if you move house more often than other folks.



And here we see another reason for some rattling noise you might not expect. In addition to the clunk from the VRDS itself, the 701T's three feet sport a sort of wobbly design intended to further reduce vibrations—although, in this case, external ones. And yes, I did say three feet. They're arranged more like turntable tootsies, with two up front and one centrally located in the back. Hold that thought. We'll come back to the feet once we get the transport installed in my gear rack.

With the player flipped right-way up, we can get a good look at the transport controls. I didn't quite grok the twist/turn-and-boop forward-and-back knob at first, at least as anything other than a touch of character. Turns out, it's pretty cool in practice, which is something I'll dig deeper into in my full review.



Before we get there, though, a quick peek at the back panel. Not a lot to talk about here, given that this is a CD transport and not a CD player. You have your choice of optical or coaxial digital outputs, as well as an input for TEAC's optional CG-10M 10MHz master clock generator. Also, slightly out of focus on the left, there's an RS-232 port for advanced control systems, as well as a 12V trigger input and output.

Here's a quick shot of the RC-1338 remote control as well. It's a pretty jam-packed remote, with buttons that don't apply to the VRDS-701T, but it feels OK in the hand and gets the job done, despite not being super ergonomic.

One last parting shot: a closer look at the VRDS-701T's feet *in situ*. The design of the feet is such that they're self-leveling, and the overall effect is neat. It's sort of like tensegrity: the way these



wobbly feet level themselves and hold up the chassis with only a single point of contact per foot (plus, I think, two backup screws that merely serve to keep the feet connected to the chassis when you pick it up). There are also three included foot pads in the package.



The design of the feet, plus little touches like the flip-toggle standby switch and the slick rack handles, give the transport a vibe that's equal parts industrial-cool and retro-swanky.

Does any of that affect its performance? Well, perhaps the feet do. But any questions about sound quality will have to wait for their answers in the form of my full evaluation, coming soon to *SoundStage! Access*.

. . . *Dennis Burger*

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