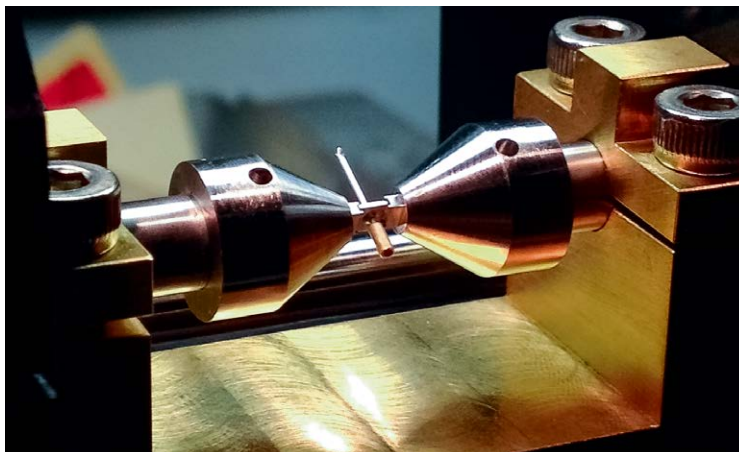




STAR-PARADE EVERYTHING UNDER OWN CONTROL

Hyun Lee manufactures his „Tedeska“ cartridges by hand to the highest standards, and to meet his own requirements as well as those of his customers.

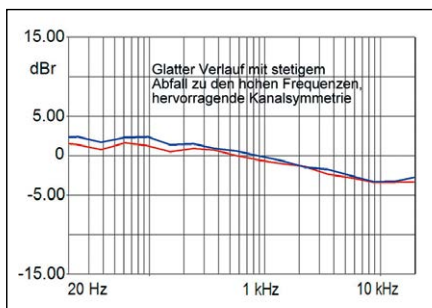


▲ The DST201 worked excellently on the Technics arm, the jewelry pearl on the front face being a Tedeska trademark. ► In the laboratory, the value of Hyun Lee's handiwork became apparent: the designed-in drop towards the high frequencies is very even, and the channel balance simply superb.

We'd already heard a lot about the man who makes mono and stereo moving coil cartridges by hand, right down to the smallest detail. In fact, Korean Hyun Lee builds between 40 and 50 units a year in his Berlin workshop, selling them at prices between €3800 and €5000, and since 2009 this has been his main profession. But it didn't start like that: in his 'previous life', the designer was a musicologist who taught at the University of Seoul and came to Germany as a student. So why cartridges? He explains that at some point his audio system started making horrid noises, so he took the cartridge apart to find out why and – well, he was hooked!

With the arrival of its new DST201, Tedeska has a total of six models, so we asked for a presentation in our listening room, and what came was the 'long-body' version, the DST201L; the cartridge also comes in conventional half-inch-mounting "u", and short-body "k" versions.

A special feature is its ironless "motor", using pure copper coils in the field of an Alnico & Samarium cobalt magnet, which is designed to prevent dynamic losses caused by eddy currents. While teaching himself to make cartridges from scratch, Hyun Lee has also experimented widely with materials, generally follows the carbon theory and using organic materials instead of special plastics or metals, because they have proven to be superior



in listening experiments. The hand-turned and shellac-covered cases are made of hard and precious woods such as grenadilla, rosewood or ziricote, which are also used in instrument making, while their undersides are formed from bone.

And hand-crafting is the trump card everywhere: even the tiny cantilevers and connection pins are hand-turned by the designer, who admits such processes are "stupid" because the effort is out of proportion to the quality of parts he could simply buy. However, if he did that, the product would no longer be one hundred percent his own: in fact only diamond styli, cut to Lee's specifications by the Japanese specialist Namiki, are bought in. But then he does mount and set them up himself...

Intensity on tap

At well as the €5000 DST 201L "Dynamic Stereo Pickup", we also tried Tedeska's €4500 DT101L mono model, also in long body form – and, like the 201 also available with standard half inch mounting. We started with the Technics SL-1200G turntable – whose high-quality magnesium arm offers a quick coupling for the Tedeskas – and played a mixture of old and new records from our collection, quickly revealing why these handmade cartridges are enjoying a growing fan base.

▲ Control mania or consequence? Even the particularly hard „AW2017“ aluminum cantilever of the Tedeska is handmade.

Both models offered a stirring combination of refined precision, coarse and fine dynamic attack, and an intensity fed by natural vitality and color. Even with good mono recordings this was the case, the DT101 drawing an open, airy sound that makes it an excellent high-end recommendation for ambitious listeners of a single-channel persuasion.

However, we couldn't help but think that with the stereo version there was some shortage of fervor and tonal glow, despite the powerful lower registers – a factor the designer was able to explain. At the request of the customer and as a tribute to his great role-model, the Japanese cartridge expert Haruo Takeda, Lee provided the DST201L with a gentle but even roll-off to the upper registers. The idea was to give the sound a noble, dark timbre without affecting the transparency or joy of playing, although "Of course, I could have voiced it differently".

In the laboratory, it became clear how precisely and evenly he had achieved this effect, and with complete channel-symmetry. What's more, after a few minutes of comparative listening, cartridges with a more linear response suddenly appeared bright and intrusive beside the Tedeska.

A psychoacoustic trick? Of course - but an effective one, and with addictive potential.

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