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A highly relevant analogue source

AVID (**A Very Interesting Design**) was founded in 1995, and its turntables emerged thanks to the perseverance of an enthusiast dissatisfied with the options available on the market and with innovative ideas regarding them. That man is Conrad Mas, who continued his work over time, spending many years delving into the "whys and wherefores" of turntable sound. He ended up focusing on controlling vibration induced by both the environment and reproduction, through an understanding of the properties of various materials. As a result, AVID manufactures almost all the components used in its equipment in its own facilities and has an enviable reputation in terms of the quality and finish of its products. AVID's first turntable was the Acutus, a model that has continuously evolved over the last quarter-century and has seen several other models appear alongside it.

The new Relveo represents a rationalization and reorganization effort within the AVID line, resulting in the replacement of some older models, such as the Diva and Volvere. Today, the six turntable models manufactured by AVID are distributed across two distinct lines, each with a hierarchy defined by the Master (Acutus Dark Iron, Relveo, Ingenium) and Top-of-the-Range (Acutus Reference Mono, Acutus Reference, and Acutus Classic) classifications.



Technical description

The main highlight of the Relveo is its suspension method, or rather, isolation. Most AVID models have been based on a spring suspension system, complemented by lateral stabilizer strips. In the case of the Relveo, AVID abandoned the springs and instead used three conical Sorbothane isolators between the main base and the sub-chassis. This achieves the necessary and sufficient resilient coupling, while an increase in the sub-chassis mass at key points improves both the overall stability and the impact resistance of the solid metal alloy support feet, with adjustable height for perfect levelling.

The 7 kg plate has a dark grey finish as the suspension towers and fits securely into the sub-plate, which is driven by the motor via a set of two belts. The inverted shaft support uses AVID's traditional tungsten carbide and sapphire bearing. A screw-on *clamp* securely attaches the disc to the felt mat, which is an integral part of the Relveo platter.

The motor that drives the platter is a high-torque (12 Nm) synchronous alternating current motor, powered by a new variant of AVID's DSP-based power supply, which provides 24 V at two different frequencies for 33 and 45 rpm. A DSP power supply uses advanced digital processing to synthesize a sinusoidal voltage with a near-perfect waveform and high frequency stability, which is fundamental for maintaining the precise speed of the synchronous motor used by AVID. On the front panel of this power supply case, there are two buttons for stop/start and speed selection (*Play* and *Speed*), with an LED that lights up green for 33 rpm and orange for 45 rpm, and a large power button. While the platter is running at either speed, fine-tuning is possible: simply press and hold both buttons until the LEDs flash, allowing you to adjust the rotation in precise increments. In most situations, the Relveo turntable comes with an AVID Altus V2 tonearm.



Originally launched in 2023, the Altus and Nexus tonearms received some updates for the brand's 30th anniversary in 2025. These updates included improvements to bearing tolerances, tonearm damping, and mechanical decoupling, but perhaps the most notable was the introduction of AVID's exclusive dual *antiskating* compensation. Different compensation levels can be set in terms of when the stylus reads the record in the inner or outer grooves. This is an interesting and innovative concept, and it's fortunate that the end consumer receives the Relveo with the tonearm and headstock already perfectly tuned because the calibration process is long, time-consuming, and above all delicate: it requires a special calibration disc and great care each time any of the screws are adjusted, as they are very close to the tonearm tube and any contact with them can damage the *cantilever* or the headstock stylus. I also suggested to Conrad that it would be a good idea to include some kind of graduation on the adjustment screws, but Conrad told me that on the one hand it would be difficult to have any precision in the indications and that on the other hand its existence could become confusing for some users who might make a wrong connection between the scale value and the reading weight of the needle. The set includes a turntable cable, which is equipped on one side with RCA connectors and the traditional ground connection cable, and on the other with a miniature 90-degree DIN connector, which connects directly to the base of the tonearm.

To complement the Relveo, Exaudio supplied a Shelter 901 MkIII MC cartridge, with an output voltage of 0.5 mV, an internal impedance of 9 ohms, and an elliptical stylus. The recommended readout weight is between 1.4 and 2 grams. As a preliminary note, I should mention that the Shelter has an excellent set of qualities in terms of reproduction regarding spatiality, detail capture, and transient response.



Auditions

After careful assembly and alignment, which took me some time as I mentioned, the Relveo was integrated into my usual system, consisting of the Constellation Inspiration 1.0 electronics set, with the Roon Nucleus Plus as the digital source, powered by the Ferrum Hypsos power supply, with the iFi Audio Pro iDSD as the D/A decoder and MQA *renderer* (full decoding); and also the Accuphase DP-85 CD player, connected to the same iFi Audio D/A converter. The AVID turntable then replaced my analogue system where the Basis turntable with SME V Gold tonearm and Air Tight PC1 Supreme cartridge usually shines, while the Nagra CLASSIC Phono preamp remained with the input resistance equal to the value it had for the PC1 Supreme, i.e., 470 ohms. The speakers were Diptyque DP 140MkII, and the interconnect cables were predominantly from the Kimber Select range, with the AudioQuest Thunderbird connected between the iFi Audio Pro DSD and the Constellation preamp. The power supply was provided by a Vibex Granada Platinum power strip, to which all the electronic equipment in use was connected, with the Constellation power amplifier powered via the Tiglon TPL-2000A cable. The Silent Power LAN iPurifier Pro, accompanied by the AudioQuest Cinnamon Ethernet cable, handled the internet connections.

With everything tuned and calibrated, and after having already listened to a good collection of records that I know well, I decided to "dive headfirst" into some works that I know demand a source of equal calibre.

And one of them was none other than the famous opening of *Mahler's 2nd Symphony*, with Zubin Mehta conducting the Vienna Philharmonic and Cotrubas as soprano, which sounded sumptuous, imposing, and full of energy. Indeed, this entire work thrives on a series of dynamic bursts between strings and percussion that put even the best sources to the test. The opening piece of the second disc, side 1, has a moment where the dialogues between *pizzicato* strings and brass instruments acquire an almost perfumed beauty!

And this work, which could be a true "Resurrection" of analogue for those who doubt the quality of sources that use vinyl records and the records themselves, ends superbly with the presence of Cotrubas' melodious voice. I haven't listened to these two LPs in one sitting many times, and that happened with the Relveo+Altus v2 set, which speaks volumes in its favour.



The LP *Art Pepper + Eleven* is a remarkable studio work and pressing quality from Analogue Productions, which has been doing significant work in recovering and re-releasing iconic works – for those who don't have such a long memory, I remind you that it was *Audio* that brought the first vinyl records from this label to Portugal, more than 30 years ago. The vinyl used is of HD180 quality and the surface of the record is perfectly clean, without any background noise, clicks or *pops* that some criticize so much – go to a live concert and you'll have to tell everyone who's coughing at so many inopportune moments to be quiet. The dynamics are overwhelming, especially in the track *Bernie's Tune*, which was widely used in the sixties in modern jazz circles in "*jamming sessions*", while the silences and the sustain of the notes leave us speechless. Overall, this album contains 12 tracks selected from among the great jazz songs of the late fifties, performed by Art and 11 other musicians, hence the reason for its title.

Miles Davis's "Ascenseur pour l'Echafaud" is another of the most frequently mentioned works in the realm of jazz, and for me it's like a musical poem of high dramatic density, especially in the penultimate track of side 1 – "*Visite du Vigile*". It's almost chilling to hear Miles with the trumpet fitted with the lid, accompanied by the piano and double bass, creating a kind of solid and expansive foundation for the musical theme, achieving all this with a minimal number of musical notes. This refined concept places great demands on the playback source, but the Relveo was perfectly up to the task and filled my room with music as fully as if it were reproducing a symphony orchestra.

I've already mentioned more than once the LP *"Smoke & Mirrors"* , a gift from Louis Desjardins of Kronos, during the last show in Munich. On the first track of side 1 (*Vanish*), we have, to begin, a beautiful and almost ethereal sound of percussion and *glockenspiel* , later accompanied by the piano which creates a kind of counterpoint, resulting in a beautiful interplay of harmonies to follow, as if we were watching a painting being created, with all the nuances of the brushstroke and the shades of colour filling our eyes (and ears, if one can say so).

And the party was going so well that I decided to listen again to one of my favourite LPs from the old days, and one that I've used so often in many tests published in Audio magazine. It's *King's Galliard, Irish Folk Music* , from Opus 3. And I especially liked the way the last track of side 1 – *Stars of Munster* – was reproduced . "Enchantment" is the only word that briefly describes listening to this beautiful piece of music – three minutes that pass in a flash, such is the true joy that overwhelms us when listening to this beautiful work of Gaelic music when played by the Relveo/Altus/Shelter 902 III. In the track *"The Hunters Ruse ,"* the "wooden spoons" (two wooden spoons are actually used as percussion instruments!) appeared quite far from the left speaker, an excellent demonstration of the spatial reproduction capabilities of this analogue source.

Conclusion

The Relveo is a turntable that demonstrates the extent to which the concepts developed by Conrad Mas and Avid for controlling the smallest details of vinyl record playback have evolved. By abandoning spring suspension, its adjustment has become almost unnecessary, and the Altus v2 tonearm also incorporates an innovative *anti-skating* control system that, when properly adjusted, allows the stylus to travel through the grooves of a record almost imperceptibly. It was very interesting to talk with Conrad Mas (and I learned a few more things about the workings of an analogue power supply) about the various aspects of this beautiful vinyl power supply, and I also want to commend the Shelter 901 MkIII cartridge, which combined perfectly with the tonearm and turntable. I had a truly "stunning" combination with me for a good period of time.

