

PRESS RELEASE

Press contact: Tim Bower
020 8654 8945 / 07854 966071
tim@hashstar.co.uk

APRIL 2021

absolutesounds.com
020 8971 3909
ten-collection.com



AN ARTISAN COLLECTION
SOUNDS FOR THE COGNOSCENTI



Robert Koda joins Ten – the artisan audio collection

Extraordinary stereo preamplifier joins DeVore Fidelity speakers in Absolute Sounds' carefully curated collection of singular sonic artistry

London, England – For more than 40 years, Absolute Sounds has brought the world's finest audio equipment to discerning music lovers in the UK. At the end of 2020, the company launched a new distribution concept called Ten – a hand-selected collection of extraordinary sonic creations curated by Ricardo Franassovici, Absolute Sounds' founder and MD.

The first maker to join Ten was DeVore Fidelity, creator of specialised high-sensitivity loudspeakers fashioned in Brooklyn, New York. Now, the second maker is revealed – Robert Koda of Tokyo, Japan.

Founded in 2008, Robert Koda was born from the passion and experience of Robert Koch, a music lover and audiophile who worked for Audio Note Japan (Kondo) for many years. After the death of Mr. Hiroyasu Kondo in 2006, Robert decided to work independently and called his new company Robert Koda – a combination of his first name and his wife's maiden name.

Mr Franassovici has selected a particular piece from the small, perfectly formed Robert Koda range to join the Ten collection – the Takumi K-15 EX. Unquestionably one of the world's finest line preamplifiers, this statement piece exudes extraordinary engineering of a kind more commonly associated with the finest timepieces or hyper-performance motorcars. This is not an audio component designed as a crowd-pleasing commodity; it is specialised and expensive, as befits its utterly uncompromising design and construction. For those who appreciate its singular artistry it is pure revelation; this makes it a perfect fit for the Ten collection.



Explaining why he chose the K-15 EX to join Ten, Mr Franassovici said: "Music fires directly into the emotional centres of the brain. It's like a drug that generates euphoria, without the nasty side effects; the endorphins released when we listen to music can build excitement, calm anxiety and ease pain. The health benefits are clear – there is even evidence that it helps to stabilise our immune systems.

"In order to fully convey the emotional message of music, and therefore maximise the endorphin-releasing effect, audio equipment must unlock the musical message without a hint of distortion, restriction or over-emphasis, so that every element, physical and subliminal, is direct-coupled to our brains. This is why we chose the K-15 EX preamplifier; like the other pieces that are joining the Ten collection, it is the mechanism that delivers the best 'drug' in the most intoxicating way."

Redefining the state of the art

From automotive excellence to sartorial perfection, high-end creations of every kind may be declared the best 'this' or the finest 'that'. Certainly, the Takumi K-15 EX is intended to be the best stereo preamplifier that it is possible to make; but what does that mean in reality? Simply put, its purpose is to extract the very best performance from each connected component so that the system as a whole delivers maximum musical pleasure. By that definition, the K-15 EX lays a valid claim to be the very best.

At the preamplifier's heart is Robert Koda's ITC (Inverted Transconductance Coupling) design – a unique arrangement of semi-conductors pioneered in the preceding K-10 preamp and taken to the next level in the K-15 EX to achieve truly exceptional subjective and measured results. The ITC circuit provides an excellent interface between source component and power amplifier, delivering massive power gain with remarkably low distortion whilst remaining immune from the negative influences of power supply noise. The circuit is elegant, simple, unflappable and totally effective over a dynamic range in excess of 145dB. It is the ideal preamplifier 'engine' and uniquely Robert Koda.

Quality speaks volumes

Another unique design element is the volume control – a critical part of any preamplifier that can have a dramatic impact on sound quality. The K-15 EX sports perhaps the most

extravagantly designed balanced-mode volume control in existence – at its core is a massive, custom-built eight-channel switch incorporating 256 nude, made-for-purpose resistors of the finest audio grade. However, only two resistors are used per channel phase at any one time in this 'L-pad' configuration. The switch itself maintains perfect contact pressure, the contacts are solid silver and generously proportioned, and all aspects of construction are of the highest order.

Obsessive about detail

Robert Koda has considered every detail to ensure a complete absence of compromise. For example, all inputs are hand-wired and mechanically switched – a costly and time-consuming endeavour – in order to eliminate the use of circuit boards, relays and solid-state switches. The materials and construction have been carefully considered in order to gain maximum performance; delicate signals are carried in bundles of four-nines silver wire, while a solder of 99.99% pure copper and lead-free alloy is used. The selector switch is specifically made for the delicate task of handling sub-microcurrent signals without corruption, while the RCA sockets are milled from high-purity copper and rhodium-plated to ensure optimal signal transmission.

Built to perfection

The K-15 EX's chassis is made from layered copper to shield the circuitry from electromagnetic interference. For obsessive completeness, the most sensitive elements within the ITC circuit are further protected in individual mu-metal capsules, ensuring total immunity against external influence. Yet more internal isolation is provided by the fully annealed per malloy vault that encapsulates the power supply, optionally complemented by noise-eradicating Super Ground circuitry that benefits the entire system in which the K-15 EX is placed.

To deliver an exterior as exquisite as the interior, a graded aluminium finish is applied to the copper chassis, with gold-plated inserts and a ruby lens adding to the perception of elegant luxury. Hand crafted, built to perfection and packed in a sturdy flight case, the Takumi K-15 EX is a preamplifier of the very highest order – perhaps the finest ever made. It is available in the UK this spring, priced at £60,000.

Now that DeVore Fidelity and Robert Koda have joined the Ten collection, which extraordinary sonic creator will be next? More will be revealed in the coming months – brought to the UK exclusively by Absolute Sounds.

More about Ten – the artisan audio collection

Ten stands apart from Absolute Sounds' main distribution portfolio, which consists of many high-end audio marques already widely recognised to be among the finest in the world. The products selected for Ten are made by audio artisans – perhaps less well-known, more specialised and smaller in scale, but no less accomplished in their pursuit of sonic perfection.

Ten does not necessarily carry a featured maker's full range. Instead, each piece is selected for its outstanding individual attributes, lovingly crafted in limited quantity to satisfy the specific tastes of audio connoisseurs. Only adventurous designs of exceptional quality stand a chance of making the grade, and only makers who specialise in a singular concept – a specific type of loudspeaker, or amplifier, or source component – will be considered.

Speaking about the Ten distribution concept, Ricardo Franassovici – founder of Absolute Sounds and curator of the Ten collection – said: "If I were to draw an analogy from my music industry background, I would describe the main Absolute Sounds catalogue as a 'major label' to which many of the world's most critically acclaimed artists are signed, while Ten is a specialised subsidiary with a more 'indie' ethos, shining a light on exceptional creative talent from every corner of the globe."

Mr Franassovici continued, "Each maker has a high level of specialisation. Just as an accomplished shoemaker makes the best shoes, an exceptional tailor makes best suits, and a superior milliner makes the best hats, so the best audio equipment is made by creators who specialise in a particular thing. The bar for membership of Ten is set at the highest level and each maker has proved they exceed it."

Ten is a number of great significance in culture, religion, science and mathematics. The Japanese word '天' (pronounced 'ten') translates as 'heaven', 'sky' or 'destiny'. Now, Ten also signifies the extraordinary work of gifted audio artisans, brought together to represent the absolute art and soul of sound.



Absolute Sounds is the UK's leading importer and distributor of high-quality hi-fi and home cinema equipment. The company was formed in 1979 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 hi-fi and home cinema equipment, Absolute Sounds is your first port of call.