



Excellent isolation

Tony Bolton tries out some vibration damping components that have an industrial heritage.

Materials and technologies make their way into the hi-fi industry from various sources. Sound Damped Steel started out making vibration and resonance damping materials for industrial usage in various applications, from generator housings to general noise suppression.

Founder Les Thompson is also a hi-fi buff and started using his SDS materials to great effect within his system. This resulted in the development of the two products reviewed here: the Isofeet and the Isoplatmat.

Taking the former first, as the name suggests these are 3mm thick feet to be placed underneath either electronic components or loudspeakers and consist of two layers of stainless steel that are bonded together with a 60micron thick layer of polymer. This constricts the interaction between the pieces of steel, causing any vibration to be converted into heat and thus dissipated. It is called constrained layer damping.

The feet are finished in black and

have Neoprene pads underneath to prevent them from marking surfaces.

I tried them underneath a variety of components, starting with the Leema Acoustics items on my downstairs system.

It took only a few moments listening to realise that the bass seemed to reach deeper, the midrange was smoother and more expansive and the treble a little more extended. There was a more obvious change when I tried them under a valve amplifier. They were also effective under the motor of the Clearaudio Master Solution turntable.

Next I tried the Isoplatmat. There are two versions of this, one in stainless steel for use in non-suspended decks, and a lighter aluminium version for Sondexs and the like.

Again these are made of two layers of metal, joined by a polymer. A Neoprene mat is provided so that the record has a forgiving surface to rest on, or the original mat may be used instead. Arm height may need to be adjusted to take into account the couple of millimeters thickness of the Isoplatmat.

There was no subtlety about

the difference here. Bass extension and clarity improved greatly, with a midband that suddenly seemed less cluttered and more defined. I noticed more texture and detail to various sounds, with trumpets losing an edgy sharpness and having, instead, a more realistic rasp in their notes.

Detail around percussion improved with cymbals having a shimmer to the sound that decayed gracefully into the distance, while high-hats lost the trashy dustbin sound, becoming more tightly described and controlled.

Both of these products seem really effective, although this perception may vary depending upon the specific component. Users of valve phono stages will particularly appreciate what the Isofeet can do in tidying up the sound. I tried the Isoplatmat on a variety of turntables and found it effective on each one, including those with acrylic platters. Machines with metal platters really benefitted.

These are two excellent products that are affordable and very effective, offering a value for money performance upgrade for all of your equipment.

ISOFEET



OUTSTANDING - amongst the best

VERDICT

Neat and unobtrusive isolation feet that prove particularly effective under valve equipment and anything with a motor in it.

FOR

- easy to fit
- effective
- minimal increase in component height

AGAINST

- nothing

ISOPLATMAT



OUTSTANDING - amongst the best

VERDICT

Very effective turntable mat that reveals definition, texture and space in the sound from your record player.

- easy to fit
- wider bandwidth
- better imaging
- improved tonality

AGAINST

- arm height will need adjustment to maintain correct stylus rake angle

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