

Townshend Audio

Seismic Vibration Isolation Platform



TOWNSHEND AUDIO HAS been working on Seismic isolation platforms for a long time now. It started with cases that enclosed an air chamber (see bicycle inner tube) and has steadily been refined. The latest incarnation is the most elegant and well made, it also avoids the need for inflation by using a range of cleverly damped springs to accommodate different weights of component.

The Seismic Platform consists of a steel top plate that has a damping layer underneath and a second steel plate beneath that, this sandwich creates a constrained layer that minimises vibration in the platform itself. At this point most support makers stick some rubber feet on and consider the job done, not Townshend Audio. These feet are called Seismic Load Cells and consist of stainless steel cups at either end of a rubber bellows-type arrangement that forms a damped spring. A spring alone would bounce for ages if moved, this approach means the platform sits still should there be footfall around it or movement in the component on top.

Spring into action

What makes the Seismic Platform effective is that the Load Cell can move in three dimensions, so that when the spring is chosen to match the weight of the component it supports, it will isolate it from vibration above 3Hz. As you can have a Load Cell for weights anywhere between one and 32kg, it's possible to choose a Platform that will accommodate almost any piece of audio equipment. The potential drawback is that some components do not have balanced weight distribution. In such situations a weight specific system like this is difficult to level, which is why Townshend can supply Load Cells in different spring rates on the same platform, just mention what you are planning to support when ordering and they will pick the appropriate springs.

Seismic Platforms come in three sizes ranging from 43x30cm (size 1)



to 52x40cm (size 3) with prices increasing according to the spring rates. I test a Size 2 (49x34cm) sprung for up to 7kg (£590) and another for up to 16kg (£630).

I test them by putting components on a rigid Target stand and then placing the Seismic Platform between the two. The first component is Naim's latest UnitiLite. This is a 9.4kg chassis, that's not totally balanced. Using the streamer and amp in the UnitiLite and going from the Target table to the Seismic Platform atop it delivers a dramatic and all round improvement in sound quality. The first thing I note is a massive increase in stereo three dimensionality, notes become solid in the room. Then it becomes apparent that the sound is cleaner, a degree of harshness has disappeared and left a stronger sense of timing in its wake. At the same time the bass goes deeper so that the double bass on Gregory Porter's *Liquid Spirit* has more power and the groove is stronger. The icing on the cake is that Porter's voice has regained its full richness – there is more tonal depth, which makes everything sound more real. Quite a transformation in truth, and one that you'd be hard pressed to replicate with any similarly priced upgrade.

Next I move onto a 6.3kg Rega RP6 turntable on a lighter sprung 7kg Seismic Platform. Here the sense of space increases and the noise floor

seems to go down, meaning that more of the quiet sounds on the record are identifiable. There is more instrumental and vocal texture thanks to a deepening of tone. With Rickie Lee Jones' *Flying Cowboys* album the sense of the band being in the room increases dramatically and dynamic impact brings greater vitality to the sound.

Believe in miracles

The final candidate is a Leema Antila CD player, which is a pretty capable and solid machine. Spinning Beethoven's *Symphony No. 1 in C Major, Op.21* (Klemperer) once again transforms the result from a flat, dynamically restrained presentation to a vigorous and thrilling musical experience. The increase in dynamic range is nothing short of miraculous, now the power of the orchestra is palpable and its precision of tempo clear to all.

The Townshend Seismic Platform seems able to transform the potential of electronic components as well as, if not better than turntables. I am surprised that the Naim and Leema gain the most from proper isolation, but maybe that's a reflection of my expectations. What is clear is that few hi-fi components give their best without isolation and the Platform delivers as much in a neat and effective package and comes highly recommended. **JK**

DETAILS

PRICE
From £550
WEBSITE
townshendaudio.com

OUR VERDICT

