

Mapleshade

ISOBLOCKS OWNER'S MANUAL

PERFORMANCE AND DESIGN

A vibration control platform is the next most important sonic upgrade after you've mounted your equipment on well-designed brass footers. Massive platforms made of granite, slate, corian (or more exotic plastic damping composites), graphite, plywood, or medium density fiberboard, or glass can all work to some extent. In our experiments the actual platform material makes more difference than the mass. (This is not surprising, if you view the platform as the sink or ground for the vibrational energy being drained out of the equipment by the footers). A heavy slab of maple or (2 inch thick or more) sounds far better than any of the above materials—and sounds better than cherry, oak, walnut, poplar or mahogany.

Any of the vibration control platforms described above, need to be mounted it on a good-sounding isolation suspension. Simply placing the platform flat on a shelf or floor never works well, due to vibration reflections and micro-rattles. The suspension needs to have correctly tuned infra-bass resonant frequencies (*vertical and torsional and horizontal* resonances all make a difference) and clean, non-distorting attenuation of the midrange frequencies. The proper balance of these characteristics is far too complex to settle with instruments, so we have done all of our experiments by ear. We have tested high damping, rubber-like materials (Sorbothane, Navcom, Vibrapods, Iso-Bearings, Sorbo-Gel, Blu-Tak, etc.), sand mountings, and air suspensions (air cylinders, inner tubes, balloons). Our results show that the rubber-like or other high-damping materials, though they can improve some part of the frequency spectrum, lead to soft, woolly bass and deadened dynamics. The best of the air suspensions sometimes give solid bass, but typically have significant deficiencies in midrange and treble clarity.

In our listening tests, the evident deficiencies of the air suspensions and high damping materials led us to explore scores of other materials. By far the most promising were laminates of ribbed rubber and cork, used as small square footers under the maple platforms. By careful variation of the contact area and the number of laminations of the square laminate blocks (that is, by varying contact pressure and compliance) in hundreds of listening tests, we were able to optimize the equipment/platform/suspension resonances to arrive at a best sounding Isoblock configuration.

Thus, any audiophile can, use our \$50 Ready-To-Be-Finished Maple Platforms and our \$24 Isoblocks to come up with a state-of-the-art vibration isolation platform that outperforms the \$2000+ air suspensions or space age constrained layer damping platforms.

INSTALLATION TIPS

1. Place Isoblocks under the four corners of the supporting platform or wood slab. Arrange in diamond orientation, not with sides parallel to the sides of the platform. For platform plus equipment weight totals up to 99 pounds, use our Isoblock 1s; for heavier weights, use the Isoblock 2s.
2. Make sure each Isoblock carries roughly equal weight by rotating each block of a turn or so; if the surface under the platform is slightly warped, one of the blocks will feel loose. Use scissors to cut 2"x2" shims from Manila file folders, hard cardboard or hardwood veneer and shim the loose Isoblock until it is about as tight as the others are. If you'd rather avoid the shimming, you can use a three-Isoblock suspension with only a very small loss in sound quality. If you're using three, always put two at the heavy end and one at the lighter end.
3. The maple slab/Isoblock isolation platform will work well placed on audiophile racks, on ordinary shelves and furniture, or on the floor (wood, tile or concrete). For mounting a maple platform on carpet it is essential to use carpet-piercing brass footers rather than Isoblocks—Isoblocks never perform correctly on carpeted surfaces. Likewise, never use Isoblocks under platforms for mounting speakers. Speaker bass is adversely affected by the slight speaker rocking permitted by the Isoblocks' compliance.
4. Isoblocks can be used directly under stereo components and are an inexpensive improvement over the factory rubber feet or over any of the rubbery footers like Vibrapods, Sorbothane or Bear Claws. However, brass footers

Mapleshade

always sound better than Isoblocks for directly mounting under equipment (except on glass, granite, marble or slate shelves).

5. If you must stack components (which always sound worse than unstacked equipment) due to space constraints, we recommend brass footers under the bottom component and then Isoblocks to separate each component above.
6. Over time, Isoblocks will leave slight black rubber marks on the shelf below. You can easily remove these marks with Goo-Gone cleaner. If you wish to avoid the marks, simply place a 2" x 2" square of thin, hard paper under each Isoblock.