

Good vibrations

Are external soundwaves messing with the sound from your hi-fi? **Lee Dunkley** tries out some essential loudspeaker isolation

We've all heard of the sonic benefits that decoupling audio components from their surroundings can have on a system's performance, but does it really make that big a difference? Townshend Audio thinks so, and has long been working on a range of isolation components that first started with an inflatable air chamber that was very much like a bicycle inner tube. Things have progressed considerably since those early days, and the Surrey company now has a line of elegant and well-made components that employ a range of cleverly damped springs in the form of its innovative Seismic Load Cell technology to isolate sensitive audio components and loudspeakers of all weights and sizes with the aim of neutralising any bad vibes that could affect their sonic capabilities.

The Seismic Isolation Podium builds on the company's Seismic Speaker Bars, but is a lot easier to handle and fit into position. There are five ready-to-go Podium sizes designed to accommodate the different weights and dimensions of typical loudspeakers, but custom Podiums can be built for more unusual dimensions on request.

Measuring 454 x 549mm (WxD), size 2 is the best fit for my Dynaudio Excite X38 floorstander, which is duly

placed on the Podium with its centre of gravity as close as possible to the geometric centre of the damped multi-layer treadplate for an evenly distributed weight balance. A Seismic Load Cell at each of the corners – fitted with a circular felt-padded foot to protect wooden floors and prevent slipping – is adjusted to fine tune the Podium and ensure the speaker is perfectly level and upright. The damped springs mean that the Podium sits still even if there is movement around it. Knock the speaker and it moves, of course, but it doesn't wobble for ages as you might expect and it quickly returns to equilibrium. The load cell moves in three dimensions, and when a spring is chosen to match the weight of the loudspeaker it's supporting, it claims to isolate it in all directions from vibrations above 3Hz.

Previous attempts to isolate my speakers from the floor using spikes in my carpeted listening room have proven unsatisfactory, and the speakers never felt entirely stable. Upon installing a Podium beneath each floorstander, I am relieved to find that it feels much better supported, but despite its fine engineering it's a significant addition to the footprint and its look and size divides opinion in my household. With the speaker in place, I am initially concerned that the extra height will raise the tweeter

above the ideal position for my seating, but I needn't worry as in total the speaker is lifted by just 20mm and has no major effect.

Sound quality

The first thing to note is a considerable reduction of boominess in the bass, as the speaker appears to interact much less with the room. Bass seems tighter and has a greater sense of energy and timing with the hypnotic beat of Rudimental's *Spoons* instantly sounding more engaging with the Podiums in place. As the track casts its spell, I am aware that it goes deeper too and for the first time I feel as though I'm truly understanding the interaction the environment has on the characteristics of the speaker – it's like hearing the X38 afresh.

With the bass tidied up, the midrange performance appears to blossom, giving vocals more insight, bringing greater grit to Rag'n'bone Man's *Human* and introducing intimacy to Kate Bush's *King Of The Mountain* that was previously lost.

The next thing to grab my attention is the sense of three dimensionality. I have always enjoyed the way the X38 presents the soundstage in my room, but here it opens up further still and instruments appear to snap into focus with greater resolution, making the difference with and without the Podiums in place like night and day.

Conclusion

Placing my loudspeaker on a Seismic Isolation Podium proves to be much more convincing than I originally imagined. The way it removes the speaker's interaction with its surroundings is mind blowing, bringing clarity to the entire frequency range that enables it to communicate more effectively with the listener. You haven't truly heard how your speaker can perform until you've placed it on one of these. Enthusiastically recommended ●

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Townshend Audio
Seismic Isolation
Podium

ORIGIN
UK

TYPE
Loudspeaker
isolation system

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
454 x 90 x 549mm

WEIGHT
6kg

FEATURES

- Multi-layered damped treadplate
- 4x Seismic Load Cells
- Custom sizes available

DISTRIBUTOR
Townshend Audio

TELEPHONE
0208 9792155

WEBSITE
townshendaudio.com



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★ **LIKE:** Robust build; transforms speaker performance

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Engineering looks; difficult to clean; quite pricey

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★ **WE SAY:** Transforms the way a loudspeaker performs in a room, highly recommended

FEATURES
★★★★★

OVERALL

