



OWNERS' MANUAL FOR VIBRATION CONTROL KITS & ISOBLOCKS

PERFORMANCE AND DESIGN

Effective vibration control is every bit as crucial for first rate sound as well-designed wires, noise-free AC power or clean room acoustics. The widely acclaimed, thoroughly proven Mapleshade approach to vibration control for electronics and turntables consists of 1) heavy, non-resonant [brass footers](#) to efficiently and cleanly drain internally generated vibrations out of the component down into 2) a massive [air-dried maple platform](#) to receive and thoroughly dissipate these vibrations (while reflecting almost none back into the component) and 3) an Isoblock suspension to effectively isolate the maple platform from resonances in the shelf or floor or rack below.

Any platform acting as a sink for vibration, whether optimum-sounding maple or some other material, needs to be mounted on a good-sounding isolation suspension. Simply placing the platform flat against a shelf or floor—resulting in wide area, low pressure contact—never works well, due to micro-rattles between the two imperfectly flat surfaces and the transfer of vibrations from below up into the platform.

A good sounding suspension for platforms needs to have correctly tuned infra-bass resonances (vertical *and torsional and horizontal* resonances all make a difference) and clean, non-distorting attenuation of the midrange and treble resonances. The proper balance of these characteristics is far too complex to settle with instruments, so we did all of our suspension development experiments by ear. We 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). Those tests demonstrated clearly that rubber-like or other high-damping materials, though they can occasionally improve some parts of the frequency spectrum, lead to soft, woolly bass and deadened dynamics. The best of the air suspensions sometimes give somewhat solid bass, but typically have significant deficiencies in midrange and treble energy and 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 cube-shaped footers under the corners of maple platforms. By careful variation of the contact area, the height, 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.

The final result of all that testing was satisfying indeed: one of our inexpensive Vibration Control System Kits (\$115 and up for footers, maple platform and Isoblocks) will do more to improve the sound of your turntable, DAC, streamer, disc player, power conditioner or amp than any \$1500-\$5000 isolation tables or space age constrained-layer damping platforms.

INSTALLATION TIPS

1. Place Isoblocks under the four corners of the supporting maple platform. Arrange in diamond orientation rather than 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 $\frac{1}{4}$ of a turn or so; if the surface



under the platform is slightly warped, one of the Isoblocks will feel loose. Use scissors to cut 2" x 2" shims from a manilla file folder, hard cardboard or hardwood veneer and shim the loose Isoblock until it feels just as tight as the others.

3. If you'd rather avoid the shimming, you can use a three-Isoblock suspension with little or no loss in sound quality. If you're using three Isoblocks under a platform, always place them in the opposite pattern of the three footers that are supporting the component on top of the platform. Unattached brass footers normally should be installed with one in each corner of the heavy side of the component and one on-center on the lighter side (see step 6), this will dictate the orientation when using three Isoblocks.

4. Vibration Control Systems with Isoblocks should only be used on hard surfaces—on audiophile racks, on ordinary shelves and furniture, or on bare floors (wood, tile or concrete). **If you are installing on carpet, you have ordered the wrong product.** We do not recommend mounting Isoblocks on carpet or laying the platform directly on the carpet.

For best sound, it is essential to use a maple platform with carpet-penetrating brass footers attached so the platform is rigidly locked to the solid floor below—not 'floating' on the carpet. Isoblocks never perform correctly on carpeted surfaces. Likewise, never use Isoblocks under platforms for mounting speakers. The slight speaker rocking permitted by the Isoblocks' compliance adversely affects speakers' bass frequencies. Instead, use [Maple Speaker Plinths](#) to correctly implement our [Vibration Control System For Speakers](#).

5. Put your component on the platform and then place two footers single point down at the chassis corners of the heavy side and one footer at the center of the opposite edge of the chassis. Normally, the heavy side is where the transformer is; in other words, the heaviest side may be the back, the front or one of the sides. If all sides are equally heavy, then pick any convenient side for the two footers. If you are having trouble getting a component, particularly a light one, to balance evenly on the three footers, try installing the first one upside down to start with a stable base that will make installing the next two easier. You can leave the first one inverted with only a small compromise in sound or flip it after installing the following two.

6. To extract the ultimate in sound quality from a Vibration Control Kit, we recommend moving each brass footer an inch or two from its initial position and listening for possible improvements. Even larger improvements can sometimes be gained by swapping the positions of the two footers and the single footer. For CD players or transports, positioning the single footer directly under the center of the transport mechanism is often, though not always, the sweet spot. For unsuspended turntables, we recommend initially positioning the single footer in back, biased towards the arm base.

7. Although Isoblocks were designed purely as the optimum suspension for maple platforms, they can be used directly under stereo components as an inexpensive improvement over the inevitably poor-sounding factory rubber feet—or as an upgrade over any of the over-damped isolation footers like Vibrapods, Sorbothane or Bear Claws. Note however that Isoblocks will never sound as good as brass footers when used directly under components (except when the component is on something as poor sounding as a glass, granite, marble, or slate shelf).

8. If space constraints force you to stack components (which will always sound worse than unstacked equipment), we recommend brass footers under the bottom component and then Isoblocks to separate each stacked component above.