

THIXAR

Eliminator the Magical Vibration Absorber

Author : Martin Leung

Translate : Paul Leung



Thixar is a German brand. They focus on designing and producing vibration control products. When I engaged their CEO, Dirk Rüdell, I always found him a descent and respectable person. Frankly speaking, probably because I'm an editor of Audiotechnique magazine, I found our interaction has always been pleasant. I remember that when Dirk and I first discussed about the arrangement of product testing, we had a small debate. However, he was the one who compromised first. Since then, every time when there is a new product from Thixar, I have the privilege to receive their samples very quickly. Two months ago, Dirk sent me two big packages. Christmas was not here yet, so it should not be a Christmas gift, I think. Would that be an hi fi rack?

The Black and the Silver

When I opened the carton, I saw a flat wooden box. The colour was as light as maple. The touch of the surface was very smooth. After appreciating the beauty of the package for dozens of seconds, I couldn't wait to open the lid. There was a long "brick" in flat black. It's not exaggerating to describe it as a "brick" (see the picture!), it wasn't light. At the bottom I saw two damping pads which I think are vibration absorbing accessories. This brick is by far the heaviest accessory I have seen. I couldn't imagine what would happen if I place it on top of my equipment.... The other carton is a thin wooden box which contains a silver brick! Apart from the fact that it was only half the size of the black brick, the appearance is identical. It weights as much as 1.6kg. Visually, the silver brick doesn't look as cumbersome as black brick. The surface was like a mirror reflecting the surrounding. The bottom of it saw the same damping material. Before I took out the bricks, I put on gloves as if I were picking up a piece of very luxurious jewellery because I didn't want to leave any fingerprint or grease on the shiny surface and ruined its beauty!

The origin of vibration

"Brick" is just a metaphor. The name of the product is "Eliminator". The black one is represented with "L", meaning that the size is large. However, the silver one has one size only. In addition to satisfying the user's preference, different sizes actually serve various practical purposes. It might sound

a bit complicated but let's be patient to look at the details. According to Dirk, resonance originates from air, buildings or hi-fi equipment. Take hi-fi equipment as example, the chassis or supporting devices such as hi-fi racks and platforms adopted materials with different density. In other words, an MDF platform looks very solid but the gaps inside the platform have different sizes so their vibration behaviours are also different. Besides, the amplitude of the vibration is the size of the range with the frequency and the generated energy, and the time of occurrence. The "resonance" often mentioned by the hi-fi community usually has small amplitude but frequently repeating within a short time frame. Therefore, vibration dissipating accessories need to have wide operating frequency range and strong capacity to absorb energy. I believe our readers should know single material could not achieve a wide range of frequency absorption. Take loudspeakers as a reference, the cabinet of modern loudspeakers is typically made of two to three different materials which supplement each other. Dirk combines several materials with different rigidities in his vibration absorption formula. For instance, Eliminator combines HDF, aluminium alloy, damping materials etc. and superimposed these materials in sandwiched fashion without aligning their patterns. The gaps of each layer is injected with vibration absorbing gel. This material was first adopted in their Silence platform. Don't ask me what the "magic gel" is made of. Dirk told me basically everything about the product except the gel because the gel is their secret sauce. Based on my personal experience with Thixar SMD



Eliminator II S specification : ■ Size (W×H×D) : 150×25×100mm ■ Weight : 1.6kg
Eliminator II L specification : ■ Size (W×H×D) : 280×50×120mm ■ Weight : 5.5kg

Ambitious MK II Hi-Fi rack (See my review in issue #452 in May 2019), I'm confident about the benefits of the gel. I would take that the black brick uses enhanced materials to achieve better effects than the silver brick. Nevertheless, the actual performance also depends on the placement of the equipment and the weight support of the underlying platform. This is not something we can tell for sure!

The story behind the scenes

Before explaining the test results, I would like to briefly introduce the equipment, just like "Behind The Scenes" in some movies. I hope that readers will have a better understanding when reading the following. The preamp used this time is Accuphase C-3900. At the moment of testing this flagship preamplifier, I only felt that the sound has a very high signal-to-noise ratio. At the same time, the volume attenuation is extremely accurate. I realised that the volume control of Accuphase is so good, it is second to none in my mind. It does not compromise the details and dynamics of the sound, and the sound of playback was very realistic. During this period, I repeatedly tested other preamps and amplifiers, which made me appreciate that the volume attenuation has a huge impact on the acoustical performance, especially the dynamic loss. No matter how to make up for it later, even using very expensive cables will not make up for the loss. Since AudioTechnique added C-3900 into the reference equipment list, I feel so much relieved! Next I want to talk about my favourite power amplifier "No. 8", which is a pair of Audia Flight Strumento No.8 mono block power amplifiers. After using them for several years, we requested First Impression, the agent of this brand, to perform service and calibration to make "No. 8" sound even clearer and faster than before. They make a perfect match with C-3900! What's more, Dirk was kind enough to offer us with two Silence Focus platforms for "No. 8". Not only did they match the size, they also match the tonal colour of the "No. 8". Two weeks before the "No. 8" was shipped back from service, they were manufactured in Germany and then sent to our office by air. The air freight cost was not cheap and thanks to Dirk!

When they all arrived at the office, I listened to them for a few days. I felt that the "No. 8" was very stable, and the dynamic ups and downs leave no trail. I know that Silence Focus has taken effect. In simple terms, its structure is divided into two parts, the top is a sandwich splint of mixed materials, the middle is filled with "magic jelly", and the bottom is attached with 5 aluminium alloy feet. When the gel is under pressure, the effect will not be reflected in the sound until a later time. Therefore, when I tested Eliminator, it was also when the whole set of equipment was in perfect harmony.

Finally, I want to introduce the speakers. This month the reference loudspeakers happened to be AVID Reference Three. They have metallic cabinets with a metal tripod. They are medium-sized 2.5 way dual-wire crossover speakers. The speakers exhibited high rigidity and could play dynamic drums and sounds. Colouration or resonance interference was

minimal. If Eliminator is effective when placed on the top of Reference Three to be effective, that would be great!

The control reference

Without putting the "black bricks" on the top of the speakers, I first played a piece of music. Since I listened to the "Three Kingdoms" from the "Fujiyama" by Ondekoza in an high end listening room, I fell in love with this piece of music. Since then, every time when I came across a pair of suitable speakers, I often used this piece of music as the test track. It would be a loss of opportunity to me if I never use Reference Three to play it. The performance of a pair of speakers worth HK\$450,000 is indeed extraordinary. The challenge of this piece of music lies in its presentation: the sense of presence, the sharp and dense dynamics of the shamisen, and the upward rushing flute sound. The three effects are more pungent than the drum sound. The performance of Reference Three was effortless. I was not too excited to hear the bass drum and other instruments nailed in place. By contrast, the sound of shamisen and flute were far more refreshing. Shamisen demonstrated strength in scrape and pick, and sound was razor sharp. The sound of the flute at climax was immediately followed by this effect. What a surprise, this effect was totally unexpected from this kind of hemispherical tweeters. The energy was so strong that I could get killed! The loud and bright flute sound mixed with the intensive variations of strength gave the whole piece of music a vivid and three-dimensional presentation. How would the "black brick" make a difference on top of this close-to-perfect playback?



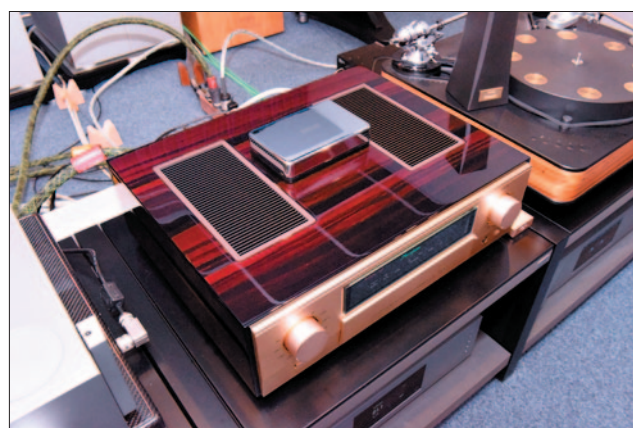
The finish

Right after I settled the two “black bricks”, I returned to the “emperor” seat (Our audition room has an emperor seat and also a producer seat. When sitting at the producer seat, I heard a very wide soundstage. I turned up the volume a bit to reveal more dynamics, as if a producer is sitting in the control room and paying attention to the sound effect.

The drum sounds as if the performance venue were changed. The scale of the sound stage and sense of space were also significantly enhanced. Eliminator L brings about two major improvements. The treble was clear and directional. The frequency extension appeared to be limitless. On the other hand, the sound stage was very stable. I clearly heard the position of each drum group. The members underwent rigorous training to achieve such a perfect performance. The two sets of drums behind the flute sounded absolutely linear in rhythm and strength. Try to think from another angle: How much does it take to develop such a level of performance precision? Long time? The shamisen performance had similar improvement. The brick created an formidable ambience of being surrounded from all directions. The speed of plucking is so agile. Ondekoza's performance impressed me with its consistency and precision. The most notable effect of Eliminator L to Reference Three's performance is that it eliminates negative interferences through its weight and shock absorption structure. As the speakers including the feet weigh 100kg, the weight of the “black brick” is almost negligible. The real effect is the coupling between the damping material at the bottom of the “black brick” and the top of the speaker, which absorbs a lot of vibration energy. Through this test, I want to emphasise that any accessories are the finishing touch. Audiophiles can't put the cart before the horse. Eliminator L brings about the effect, but don't forget that the beautiful sound actually comes from the speakers. If the speaker is not well designed, how can there be any beautiful sound?

Make the best out of it

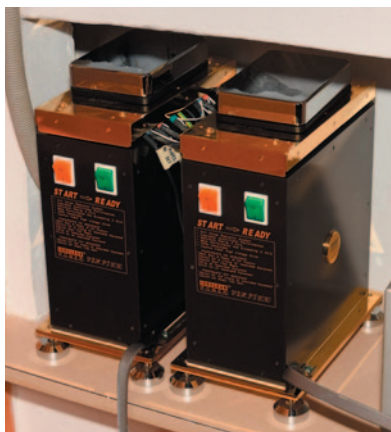
“Black Brick” has very good finishing touch. What about the smaller “Silver Brick”? Among the reference equipment in this magazine, which one would be the best place to match it? Before I attempted to match it with equipment one by one, I set myself a goal. The effect should be as significant as “black brick”. Merely slight improvement is not acceptable to me. To achieve this goal, I started with SACD/CD transport, then preamplifier and power amplifiers.... I selected “For Me, Formidable” from Anne Bisson's “Keys to My Heart” (UHQCD) as the test track. This jazz song is brisk and rhythmic. The trio provide a wealth of test materials. I test “Silver Brick” with all the equipment one by one and found that the effect for the power amplifiers is not obvious at all. However, other equipment demonstrated more



significant improvement. There was slight improvement in SACD/CD transport and decoder but the most notable improvement was demonstrated in the preamplifier. Anne Bisson's voice is in front of the drum, piano, and double bass. If you listen to the sound of cymbals, you can clearly hear the metallic texture. The bass sound was also solid. The whole listening experience instantly turned a flat music picture into a three dimensional one. After listening, I learned how to make the best out of the "silver brick". Normally, electronic equipment is sensitive to interference and vibration albeit to different extents. I only need to identify the most sensitive equipment in the whole chain of playback and apply "Silver Brick" on it. Following the same principle, the front-end seems to be the best target but hold on! There are two devices that have not been tested with "Silver Brick" yet. Maybe they are the sweet spots.

Mission accomplished

In Audiotechnique, we have a pair of "IsoClean Power VDH PT-3030" 3,000W isolation transformers hidden in a wooden cabinet in the audition room. They are here to supply electricity to all the digital equipment. Normally, we will leave them intact. Six months ago, the manufacturer upgraded the wiring and some parts in these transformers. After the upgrade, they returned to the original position and there has been no change since then. Today, the idea that the isolation transformer may well be one of the components that generate a lot of vibration suddenly popped up. Although they are far away from the other audio equipment or not coupled with them, they are so crucial to the performance of the system. So I think it is worth a try. I carefully placed one "silver bricks" on the top of each isolation transformer. They seem to match in size, which also implies that "black brick" will be too big! I returned to my emperor seat after I have carefully placed the "Silver Brick". I listened to Anne Bisson again. Oh my! The change was so obvious! First of all, the music background became as quiet as under deep ocean. Second, the treble is more detailed. For example, I can hear the cymbal has thinner edge after the bricks are used. It sounds more shiny and bright. Anne Bisson's voice sounded closer to the microphone, articulation became more detailed. More importantly, the low-frequency energy radiated more extensively. This reminded me that eliminating interference is not only applicable only to sensitive components but also the power source. I understand that most audiophiles do not use isolation transformer. But let's take a step back, if you don't have an isolation transformer, you can use it on a power distributor. If there is no room in the power distributor, you may consider placing the brick on the top of the equipment near the power supply. Anyway, just think out of the box!



Conclusion

After testing for a period of time, I got the tricks of using Eliminator effectively. I can make a summary here. I used to think that we should avoid putting any object on top of the chassis in any audio equipment as it would suppress the high frequency and make the music dull and boring. In some cases, the sound stage will be even narrowed. However, I found that Eliminator has no such negative impact at all. At first, I was worried that putting the brick on top of Kondo GE-1 phono amplifier would have an adverse effect. But the facts proved that there is no such negative effect at all. The phono stage is also sensitive to vibration so placing a "silver brick" on top of its chassis to absorb the shock will produce more focused vocals and clearer image contours. When playing "The Wonderful Sounds Of Male Vocals", Dean Martin's "I'm Confessin'" has an absolutely charming voice. I really like using "Silver Brick" to reduce noises and I think it works best when placing it near the power supply position of



the equipment. The price of Eliminator "Silver Brick" is a four digit figure (HKD). It's not expensive at all but for audiophiles who don't appreciate the power of accessories, they won't spend even a penny on accessories. Eliminator and other accessories need to be heard in person. Audiophiles who have not heard of these accessories will have an opportunity to experience it soon. Dirk revealed that he is restructuring his business and updating the website. There will be some good news soon. Stay tuned. 🎧

