



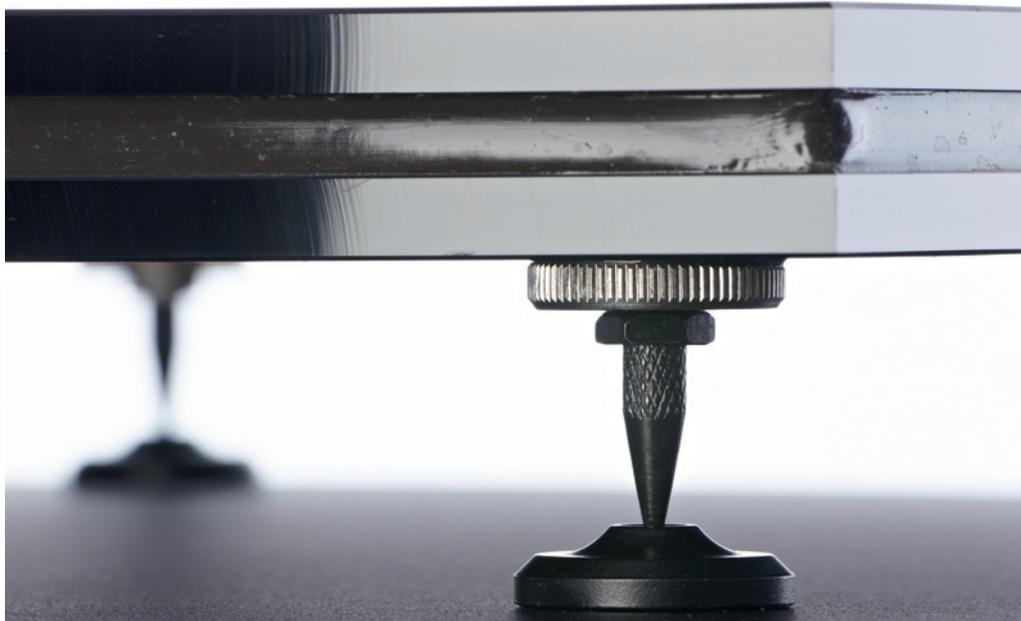
THIXAR Equipment Stands

Written by Wolfgang Kemper

This is nothing new, but the places on which we set up our hi-fi equipment do make a difference to the sound. THIXAR is a new business based in Düsseldorf, which constructs special platforms with a promising concept behind them. I have already listened to the results of using three of these stands.

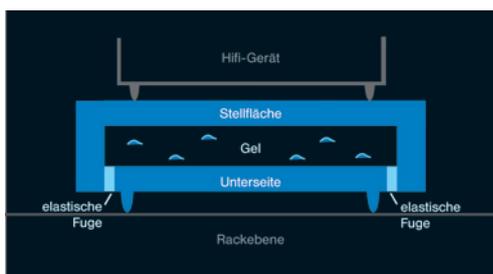
THIXAR – the face behind this name is that of Dirk Rüdell, whose other career is as a laboratory chemist. When his own professional success, and the consent of his family, allowed him to purchase a high-quality hi-fi system some years ago, the question arose as to where it would make sense for the equipment to stand. With his own knowledge of chemistry, he undertook numerous listening tests to develop absorbing bases, made with acrylic or MDF housings around special silicone cores. This material is specially manufactured for his company. The name of the product, THIXAR, is derived from a technical term from the world of chemistry, i.e. thixotropy. This is descriptive of the stabilising property of gels when subjected to energy in forms such as shaking (as with a ketchup bottle) or vibration. Liquid materials which possess this property are called thixotropic. The consistency of the silicone in the THIXAR damping layer is a decisive factor in a number of ways. In the production process, the viscosity of the damping gel needs to guarantee a shape that remains stable over the long-term. In acoustic terms, the damping needs to combine with various weights and work for both heavy and lightweight hi-fi equipment. The effect needs to encompass a broad frequency range, especially in the bass registers, where distortions due to footfall can clearly be heard. Equipment base units firstly need to damp the resonant frequencies of the equipment housings placed on them as fully as possible, and secondly they need to isolate the equipment from external sounds such as footsteps or vibrations caused by the music itself. To put it another way, it is a matter of breaking what, in an acoustic sense, is a vicious circle of mechanical interference. The Silencer, made by German company Accurion and also vended by Dirk Rüdell exclusively, makes an impressively perfected solution for this. The only trouble with the Silencer is its purchase price of almost 20,000 Euros for a single stand, especially bearing

in mind that a stand will be needed for each piece of equipment. I had a brief audio and visual taste of the Silencer when it was demonstrated at the "Norddeutschen HiFi-Tagen" exhibition. The effect is amazing. I have accepted an offer to test that equipment at a later date, though, because the concept of the THIXAR stands, single-handedly developed by Mr Rüdell, interested me so much that I wanted to test them and report on them to you first. There are three different models. The consistency of the special silicone, its unique properties used exclusively by THIXAR, needs special work. This work involves individually crafting each stand, at the maker's factory in Düsseldorf. The prices of the various sized stands are indicative of the amount of craft that goes into the units, as all three differ surprisingly little in price. The differences in the amount of work are hardly noticeable. Each stand even has its own serial number, which I have never encountered before with comparable products.



THE ENTRANCE STANDS ON SOLID SPIKES, OPTIONALLY RESTING ON BASE PLATES. THE TRIPLE-LAYER, "SANDWICH" DESIGN CAN BE CLEARLY SEEN.

The small model bears the name "Entrance". It features a sandwich design consisting of damping material between two layers of black acrylic. Five high-quality aluminium threads protrude from the bottom acrylic layer to accommodate three or four steel spikes. These are supplied with the equipment, along with four matching aluminium base plates for them to rest on, thus preventing the surface beneath from becoming damaged. In most cases, the ideal solution will certainly be to let the base rest on a surface via these spiked feet, but if spikes are not wanted, other types of feet can be screwed into the M6 threads. These can be obtained from hi-fi suppliers and well-stocked DIY stores. It is nice to see a manufacturer being so flexible when it comes to individual situations and the wishes of the customer. The dimensions of the Entrance measure 45 by 36 centimetres. This fits any kind of electronic equipment as well as many record players. Units can be specially tailored for size and colour on request, a fact which applies equally to the more expensive models.



THIS IS A SCHEMATIC OF THE DESIGN FOR THE SILENCE STAND. THE ELASTIC JOINT PREVENTS ANY OF THE THIXAR GEL LEAKING OUT.

The more complex Silence and Silence Plus stands are made in standard sizes of 45 by 36 or 50 by 44 centimetres. The stands are made of painted MDF and the THIXAR gel core, but they differ markedly in design and price. The Silence is normally painted black and with five M6 threads let into the bottom to accommodate three or four spikes. As such, it rests on the surface in a similar way to the Entrance model. The Silence has an enclosed MDF housing. Inside, it is filled with THIXAR gel. The spiked base unit is decoupled from the platform and the sides above it by means of an elastic joint. This is essential to ensure that no gel can leak out when deformed by heat.

vy loads, instead retaining its shape as a damping core. With a thickness of 4.8 centimetres, not including spikes, the Silence is twice as tall as its little sister, the Entrance. The larger size of the Silence allows it to accommodate wide turntables or large amplifiers.

The largest size of the Silence Plus costs 1590 Euros, making it rather more expensive than the Silence at 700 Euro. It is constructed in an entirely different way, though, and even the exterior immediately exudes tangible quality with its very appealing grey/black Nextel paint finish. It is set up on a surface in a different way from its sister units as well. The silence plus also measures 4.8 centimetres in height but lies flat on the surface, that is, without spikes. From outside, it looks like it is in two parts. The bottom part takes up two thirds of the height. A groove forms a mechanical division between it and the slimmer top part, and looks smart as well. Apart from the THIXAR gel, there are also single layers of natural cork and one other material inside, the nature of the latter being Mr Rüdell's commercial secret. The top section can move slightly with respect to the bottom part. Thus it floats, so to speak, on the damper bearings, but it nevertheless remains completely stable and does not change position even under heavy equipment.



UP CLOSE, THE SOBER BUT SMART SILENCE PLUS. IT IS EMPLOYED WITHOUT THE USE OF SPIKES.

To test the stands, I put them on top of the spiked Creaktiv Audio absorber stands of my own rack. This means that acoustically they already had a pretty decent base. It makes sense to start by testing a piece of hi-fi equipment with moving parts, whereby a certain amount of disturbance is intrinsic. Therefore I initially put the Silence Plus under my turntable. Manuel de Falla's *The Three Cornered Hat* played by the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Seiji Ozawa and Theresa Berganza from 1977 was the first piece of music I tried. The change in the musical reproduction was unmistakable. It was as spectacular as it was surprising. I always expect the differences to appear in roughly the same way, i.e. that there should be more of everything: more space, more colour in the sound, more body, more dynamic structure and fineness, more precise timing. Hearing this, I was initially perplexed, but there was a clear difference. The spatial spread of the instruments seemed to have got smaller. I put some other records on the turntable to check my initial impression. The remastered Abkco version of the Stones' *Beggars Banquet* from 2003 came first, then Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald in mono on the triple album from Vinyl-Passion that came out in 2011 and Dillon's *This Silence kills*. The effect was the same, even if it was noticeable to different degrees. The spatial effect was remarkable. When heard without the Silence Plus, it is as if the stage opened out at the back, the instruments at the left and right spreading out wider from the speakers. With it, they were closer together.

The depth of the room remained the same, perhaps even slightly deeper. In terms of width, though, the musical experience demonstrated a new sense of closeness. The musicians now seemed to gather together on a tangible stage and no longer seemed to appear from some undefined location to the left or the right. The voices and instruments seemed

more within grasp. All the singing seemed to gain body and substance, which I found especially impressive with the mono recordings of Ella and Louis. Kettle drums, for example, came with clearly defined contours and volume from the depths of the room. At the same time, the differentiation is clearer and more solid, far more beautiful and much neater. After lengthy listening, also over the days that followed, I consistently gained the impression that the THIXAR stands were bringing a pleasant repose to the music. They did this without the slightest sign of limiting the dynamic. On the contrary, the solidity in the music made the sound even more explosive and exciting. I had to try out something else. My music room, part of a residential building erected in 1973, has tiled floors. Footsteps come over very clearly on my system. As a test, therefore, I dropped the pick-up onto a stationary turntable and turned the volume up louder than usual. I then stamped down hard on a piece of floor I knew to be particularly sensitive. This usually results in an audible booming from the speakers. With the Silence Plus, though, the phenomenon was markedly suppressed, clear proof of the outstanding damping effect achieved by the THIXAR stand in the low frequencies.



A SPIKE IN THE MIDDLE OR TWO SPIKES ALONG A LONG SIDE (THREE LEGS OR FOUR) ARE WHAT THE MANUFACTURER RECOMMENDS FOR SETTING UP THE ENTRANCE OR SILENCE ON THE SURFACE BELOW.

Next I went through the same listening test with the spiked Silence stand. The result was slightly less obvious, but nonetheless similar. At high volume, the Silence Plus was superior in terms of how cleanly the sound came over. The footstep test was not quite as impressive with the Silence. This indicates that the Silence Plus is better at suppressing disturbances in the deep register. In terms of my evaluation of the music, the two stands were not far apart in my test configuration. The inexpensive Entrance also did its job superbly but it was a bit further behind the Silence than the latter was from the Silence Plus. Taking into account the price, I would certainly have chosen the Silence stand for my turntable.

However, there is equipment other than record players. The next thing I tried was my tube preamplifier. Although less obvious than with the turntable, similar effects were clearly noticeable here, too. In this case, the Silence Plus was my favourite. In particular, the sense of restfulness that ensued was pleasantly relaxing and improved listening enjoyment. The same was true of an experiment with my Apple Mac Mini and Antelope converter that I put on the stands together. That slightly annoying factor that often seems to be attached to digital reproduction was ameliorated. This alone would make buying a stand for a quality hi-fi set worth considering. The stands also improved the sound when placed beneath the power amplifier and the CD drive. It was always noticeable that there was greater peace and neatness in the sound, while the dynamic, even in detail, was enhanced to greater or lesser degree.



THE SILENCE FROM BELOW: THE MIDDLE SECTION IS FIXED, WHILE THE FRAME CAN OSCILLATE. WHAT GUARANTEES THIS IS THE SPECIAL SILICONE SEAL CLEARLY SEEN HERE.

The various THIXAR stands all seem to have a very much similar effect to me, regardless of what differing pieces of hi-fi equipment are placed on top of them. This indicates how carefully they have been developed and that Mr Rüdell has a very clear idea of his objectives. We all know that improvements always become more expensive the further they go. This is the case with THIXAR too. Nevertheless, the high-quality solution impressed me in particular with a pre-amp, computer and converter and a CD player. The Silence Plus is definitely not a bad choice under any circumstance. Nevertheless, depending on the components of the hi-fi and the reach of the wallet, both the Silence and Entrance could be more reasonable alternatives that leave nothing wanting. This was true for me and my turntable. This test was, as I mentioned, carried out on an already high-quality base. If the existing surface is not so good, I can imagine the improvement in the music might be even more evident. One practical concept from THIXAR is the chance to try out the stands at home in order to find out what the right stand for the respective equipment might be. It is not necessary to order a customised rack from a dealer. It is worth finding out step by step what the differences are. In my experience, this is not being spoilt for chance, but rather is an enhancement to the joy of listening.

STATEMENT

I hope that this test will inspire you to try out THIXAR stands. What awaits you is something that could fundamentally enhance the fun and enjoyment you get from listening to music.

ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT

Computer	Apple MacMini / OS X 10.6.8 / Amarra 2.4 / Antelope Zodiac plus
CD-Player	Primare DVD 30 /Antelope Zodiac plus
Turntable	Kenwood KD-990 mit Kunststeinauflage
Phono cartridge	Benz-Micro Glider L2
Phono stage	Primare R-20
Preamplifier	T+A P-10 with Audioplan Sicomin TubeDamper
Equalizer for bass	LA-Audio EQ 231G
Power amplifier	Primare A-32 (2 x) for bass, Spectral DMA 100 S with Enacom or Air Tight ATM-3 with Audioplan Sicomin TubeDamper for mid/high
Speaker	Triangle Magellan Grand Concerto sw2 (Bi-Amping)
Cable	Audioquest DiamondI and Coffee USB, Inakustik Black&White NF-1302, Mogami 2549, QED Genesis Silver Spiral with Enacom LS, MudrAkustik Max power strip, Mudra und Audioquest NRG-X2 power cable, AHP high purity copper-fuses
Stands	Creaktiv Audio with absorbing boards

MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATIONS

Entrance

Size	45cm x 36cm black acrylic
Price	300 Euros including spikes Specially made items available

MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATIONS

Silence

Size	45cm- x 36 cm oder 50cm x 44 cm MDF painted black
Preis	650 Euros / 700 Euros including spikes

MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATIONS

Silence Plus

Size	45cm x 36 cm oder 50cm x 44cm MDF painted with grey/black Nextel paint
Price	1520 Euros / 1590 Euros

SALES

THIXAR

Contact	Dirk Rüdell
Telephone	+49 211 3618 1657
E-Mail	info@thixar.de
Internet	www.thixar.de