



EQUIPMENT REVIEW

The MusicWorks ReVo

By Steve Dickinson

When is a table not a table? No, actually, this isn't going to turn into a 'how many audiophiles does it take to change a lightbulb*' joke; for once, it's a serious question. You see, the MusicWorks ReVo has the essential quality of tabley-ness in that it sits under something, raises it to a height and supports it in place but there is no top, for example, nor what might reasonably be described as legs, for that matter. 'Equipment support platform' sounds pretentious and, once again, the ReVo lacks an element of platformicity in the manifest absence of any kind of level, flat surface. Not, you might be thinking, a very auspicious start.

I got my first introduction to the ReVo during the work-up to the piece on the AudioWorks in issue 63. Those of you who have attended any of the recent UK shows in Manchester, Bristol or Heathrow may also have seen it in action. Suffice to say,

repeated exposure left me just as intrigued by its remarkable capabilities and I was keen to get one home to familiar surroundings and equipment I know well, to give it an extended period of listening.

Frankly, with a bit of judicious padding I could have pretty much written the review from what I had heard during those sessions. It seems that regardless of the circumstances, and regardless of partnering equipment, whether budget, mildly aspirational or serious high-end, the ReVo does much the same thing and to a similar degree. What it does, in essence, is to soak away a layer of inner congestion and confusion: everything becomes more intelligible. ▶

▶ Most of its competition sounds limited in dynamic range, or coloured, or smeared and tuneless by comparison; some, unfortunately, manage to be all of these. The improvement is one you can hear, quite literally, the moment the first note is struck: with the Revo in place, the notes are instantly more tuneful, the instruments more clearly defined in terms of its location and size. The rest of the ensemble benefits similarly; as each instrument takes its proper place on stage there is less blurring of the boundaries between them with improvements in other aspects of performance, such as timing, attack and decay. Acoustic spaces take on a distinct character, dynamic shifts become more emphatic. Musicians play with more sense of commitment and élan and their instruments have more form and substance.

At first listen, though, it can appear that the soundstage is foreshortened, a shallowing of the performance space. More careful auditioning confirms that the stage is as deep as previously, but the most distant instruments are more easily discernible; the best analogy I can think of is the way distant mountains appear closer on a clear day.

The generally accepted explanation for these effects is that microphony is responsible for introducing a great deal of crud and hash into the delicate musical signal. It's a bit like driving a car with the wheel nuts just finger-tight, then again with everything torqued-up properly (don't try this at home). Reduce the amount of musical energy which feeds back into the equipment and you make its life a lot easier. Music can be played at higher volumes without sounding strained, while bass is better controlled and more tuneful.

The ReVo approaches this in two ways. Firstly, choice of materials: the guys at MusicWorks like their acrylic. They appreciate its self-damping characteristics, the fact that when struck it sounds no obvious note - unlike a sheet of glass or wood, for example. The ReVo design has been carefully thought through to eliminate all other materials. I heard an early prototype in which the screws holding it together were metal. It didn't sound as good as one with the metal screws replaced by acrylic ones. There seems to be something about the discontinuities between different materials (not unlike the effect materials with differing refractive indices have on the propagation of light) and it is clearly audible. Secondly, the shape: by eliminating any large, flat surfaces, the Revo reduces the opportunity for sound to energise the structure, and by scant use of straight lines and right angles, nodes of stress or energy concentration are also minimised.

The result, in best Bauhausian fashion, is a distinctive and attractive design where every element is there for a reason. It has a curiously modern, yet slightly retro air and wouldn't look out of place in Habitat. My wife likes it because, like the Quadraspire loudspeaker stands before it, the ReVo tends to disappear. Audiophile performance and domestic harmony, who'd have thought it?

ReVo users may need to make some, relatively minor, practical compromises however. There is no levelling option in the standard unit, it simply sits on the floor. Turntables therefore require a top shelf, supported and levelled via threaded inserts into the top support bars. The shape of those support bars does mean a modicum of lateral levelling of equipment can be achieved, but not front-to-back. The use of secondary equipment supports like Stillpoint cones or Nordost Pulsar Points are tricky because of the narrowness of the support. In my limited experience, going back to the dissimilar materials argument again, the results on the ReVo don't merit the risk. One option definitely worth exploring, however, is that of resting equipment casework directly onto the support bars, bypassing any feet. Not always recommended,

but when it works, it can be revelatory. The standard design is a 3-tier with openings big enough for all but the chunkiest power amps, if you need 4- or even 5-levels, there are optional dividers which convert one deep opening into two, shallower ones. There is also a half-height 2-tier version intended for heavy or bulky power amps. If you are short of space, as I am, use a turntable as well as a CD player, with a phono-stage, pre-amp and chunky monoblock power amps, not to mention mains distribution boxes, you may need to give this a little thought. One quick listen, however and you may decide a modicum of head-scratching is worth it.

**It doesn't matter how many there are, one of them will always say they preferred the old one. +*

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

MusicWorks ReVo equipment support stand.

3-tier unit in 15mm acrylic and 10mm centre support, 35cm deep, £1250.00

3-tier unit in 15mm acrylic and 10mm centre support, 46cm deep, £1250.00

One-to-two shelf converter for use with 3-tier unit £290.00

2-tier unit in 15mm acrylic, 35cm or 46cm deep £775.00

3-point levelable turntable top shelf from £200-300

MusicWorks
14 Stockport Road
Cheshire
SK8 2AA

(t) 0161 428 7887
(f) 0161 428 3633
www.theaudioworks.co.uk