

HIGH FIDELITY

RC's guide to the gear that will get the best out of your records. By Paul Rigby



SHELF PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Decent Audio One Decent Wall Shelf: Single Shelf, £249
Double Shelf, £349

I have a problem in my listening room – and I don't think that I'm the only one; those of you who own turntables will no doubt sympathise with me. When I play a vinyl and to walk from one side of the room to the next, the needle of my cartridge vibrates and wobbles in time to my footsteps. Even worse, it sometimes bounces from groove to groove. Wooden, suspended floorboards make this even worse.

The problem of the bouncing turntable arm, when used with a suspended floor, is exacerbated by the shelf your hi-fi is on. That's because, of course, shelves couple directly to the floor. That's great, if it's a concrete affair, but trouble if not. Such shelves are fine for boxes such as amplifiers but they induce harmful vibration and distortion into a turntable so that, even if your turntable arm doesn't wobble, or the needle doesn't bounce around, there will always be small vibrations moving up from the floor into the turntable and into your music during play – back from the speakers, if nothing else. Even if it's not obviously noticeable, such interference will pollute the sound.

The solution to this is to place your turntable on a shelf connected directly to a solid wall, away from the floor's influence. There are many on the market, some made from glass and others from wood or MDF. All of these substances have their problems, though, so the best bet is to have a Perspex shelf. That's exactly what Decent Audio have done, along with attaching a sturdy steel skeletal frame to support even the heaviest turntables: up to 40kg, in this case.

The shelf features a top isolation plinth, measuring 25mm thick, decoupled from a lower shelf by specially selected cones or elastomer squares, both provided in the kit.

Fitting is quick and hassle-free, mainly because of the centrally-placed screw holes, in addition to the left and right holes, that aid levelling. Once done, apart from the rock solid vinyl playback, the sound is a revelation. As is often the case, subtle, yet, harmful distortion is only noticeable once it's gone. With the Decent Audio shelf, the sound, across the board, has never been so clear, relaxed and open. The clarity across the mid-range is most impressive, while bass is both tighter and more controlled. Taking the price and improvements in sound into consideration, the One Decent Wall Shelf represents outstanding value for money. info@decentaudio.co.uk tel 0845 601 9390



INNER VISIONS

Mobile Fidelity Original Master Sleeves. Pack of 50, £19.95

They're taken for granted and not given the attention they require. They're also the first and last bastions of defence for the long-term health of your precious vinyl records: inner LP sleeves should be given careful note.

A paper inner sleeve is better than nothing, yes, but it doesn't eradicate static, which attracts dust and grime into the sleeve. Add that dust to the inherently harsh physical make-up of paper and you have an excellent, fine-grain sandpaper constantly attacking your precious vinyl and increasing the chance that surface noise will become a permanent fixture to future replays.

These Mobile Fidelity sleeves are made from soft plastic with a paper insert within one half to act as a stiffener. Because of their construction, they act as an anti-static agent and won't scratch the vinyl surface. www.russandrews.com tel 0845 345 1550

GIZMO of the month

Isotek Full System Enhancer & Rejuvenation Disc £15

The problem when buying any piece of quality hi-fi is that it will need a long run-in before it can perform at its best. The traditional method of running in any new component is to play music, normally from a CD, on infinite repeat over several days. Some components, however, need more time than others; speakers, for instance, don't reach their potential until after several months of use.

This disc has been formulated to produce just the right sort of noises to stretch the muscles of even the most stubborn of peripherals, in double-quick time. I tried it on a CD player via Esoteric, which sounded tinny to begin with, but transformed itself into a winner after a few days playing this disc. More than that, because of its complicated tonal output, it actually speeds up the run-in process. Given a couple of days' play, the Isotek disc produces the equivalent of hundreds of hours of running-in time via a basic music album.

You can also use the disc after a daily 'cold start', for a five-minute warm-up, or to weekly demagnetise your hi-fi components – a source of accumulated distortion over time. As a bonus, anyone who is into avant-garde electronica will find the incumbent noises most attractive. www.isoteksystems.com

