

Volume 3 No.1
S\$5.00 / RM8.00



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REVIEW

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FEATURE

**Home
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Special**

KDN PPS 1477/4/2003



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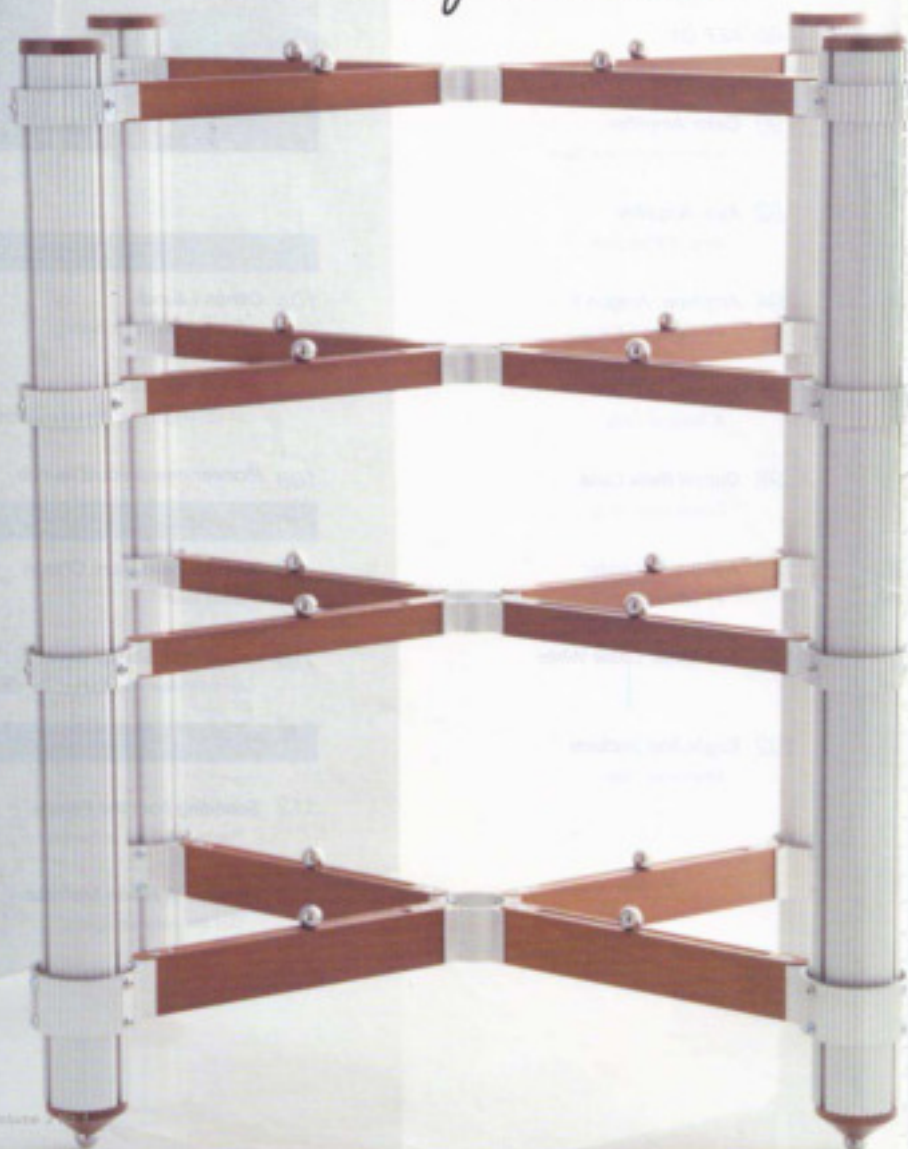
**Rack of
Silence**

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Cover Story

Solid Tech

Rack Of Silence



Cover Story

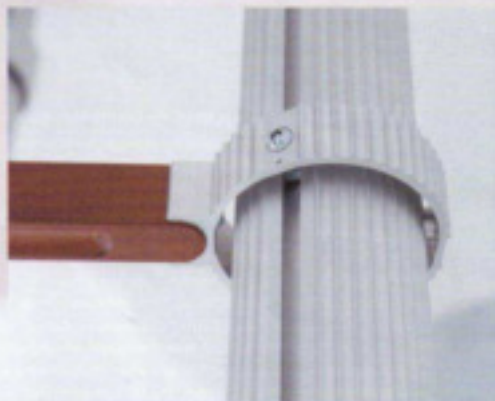
Solid Tech's new Rack of Silence audio equipment rack employs a low mass concept to enable resonance from the equipment to be quickly and efficiently dissipated through the cross braces and into the four corner pillars. It is said that the traditional heavy, or heavily damped designs tend to store energy within its structure, rather than dissipate it away. The result of those 'older' designs is a compression of dynamic contrasts and a generally more 'fuzzy' sound.

Apart from the sonic aspects, the Rack of Silence has to be one of the most futuristic-looking, and desirable audio equipment rack systems that I have seen! The first thing that caught my attention were the four beautifully machined anodized aluminum corner pillars that form the foundation of the rack. They really make the whole item stand out and look, to me at least, like a piece of art. Onto these four pillars are attached the shelves that come in the form of cross-braces made of solid beech wood (available in a choice of Cherry wood or black textured finish), and which can slide up or down to fully accommodate the height requirements of your individual equipment. The fit and finish was excellent, and rivaling other brands costing up to three times its price.

Unlike conventional audio racks, the Rack of Silence eschews platforms. Instead, they supply four stainless steel ball bearings for each shelf to 'couple' the equipment to the cross-braces, thereby bypassing the hard rubber feet that are found under most components. This enhances the ability to drain away whatever resonance originating from the components themselves. Even the bottom of the four cast-aluminum pillars incorporate ball bearings instead of the more traditional spikes. Apart from causing less damage to the flooring, they are also claimed to be just as effective if not more so, as isolation devices.

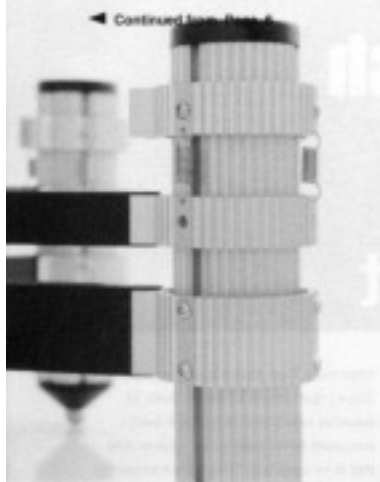
However, what makes the Rack of Silence really unique is the fact that the middle braces can be suspended from special springs that add an extra element of isolation. According to Solid Tech, the suspended braces are designed to isolate resonance on both the vertical as well as the horizontal plane and replicate the amazing effect that their highly acclaimed Feet of Silence isolation devices has on various audio equipment. The total effect of the Rack of Silence is to enable equipment to perform at their best, free from the harmful effects of vibration that is caused by the equipment themselves, or from vibrations borne through the air and originating from the speakers.

After transferring the components of my hi-fi system from another rack on to the Rack of Silence, the immediate impression I got was that there was more sense of space or



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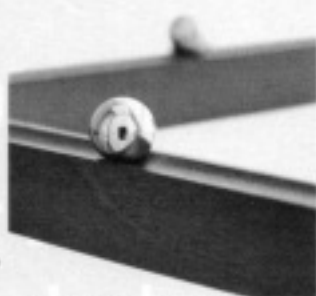


ambience, wider soundstage, more front-to-back depth and layering, and greater separation around the individual instruments. This 'airy' effect was immediately evident and not subtle either. Pretty amazing, as I have never heard such a dramatic improvement attributed to a hill rack! In addition to this, the ebb and flow of

the music seems just that much more rhythmic and tuneful. It reminds me of the clichéd 'ice-tapping' phenomenon that reviewers are prone to talking about every now and then.

After playing through my usual list of 'reference' CDs, I could also detect that musical contrasts were less compressed than before, namely the soft passages were quieter and the climaxes were subtly louder without becoming noisy. The music as a whole held their shape better when played at loud volumes, instead of deteriorating into a mass of noise. Bass response was extended but well controlled, and tending less to boom. Guitar riffs had more 'bite' and 'attack' while percussions and high hats had more decay, all in all contributing to a very lifelike presentation of the performance.

The Rack's wonderful isolation properties even extended to the vocals where female singers for example, exhibited far less sibilance and shrillness even on commercial CDs. This is not to say that the Rack of Silence tended to mask low-level information or roll off transients. On the contrary, equipment when placed on



the 'Rack' showed forth minor nuances more vividly as the noise floor seemed to be lowered even more. The result being details projected more vividly in front of a blacker background, and yet still managing to sound incredibly relaxed.

After all is said and done, can I say that this is THE perfect audio equipment rack? I don't know. I have to admit that I have not even tried out every rack that is available on the market. However, if judged on its marvelous sonic performance, aesthetics, flexibility and reasonable price (I know of some power cords that cost more than this!), I eagerly pronounce the Rack Of Silence from Solid Tech as the one audio rack I would proudly own if I had the cash. In my book, it's a sure winner!

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Whether you would choose a 3-gun CRT, LCD or DLP, there are some important technical details to watch out for. First there are data projectors and video projectors. Data projectors are used in business presentation of a computer screen. Like a desktop monitor, it has higher resolution than your normal TV. Computer monitors display pixels while TV display interface screen lines. So the priority for data projectors is resolution. Video projectors (sometimes referred to as Multimedia projectors when it can project



at least SVGA or XGA) however display a wide range of colours and must be able to give the picture some depth. Resolution and sharpness gives way to colour balance

and gradation. While all data projectors can project solid colours eg a pie chart, it is limited in its ability to produce say, a range of greens when showing a picture of a farmland. Skin tones are the most obvious when comparing Data vs Video projectors.

The measure of Lumens is NOT an indication of quality. The best LCD or DLP video projectors have less than 1000 lumens typically 600-800 Lumens is more than sufficient. 3-gun CRTs generally have no more than 400 lumens and hence would need a

darkened room for best results. A less bright projector is more comfortable to the eyes and gives a more natural balance. Unless you need to use the video projector in a large venue such as a 25-seater theatre, high lumens means nothing so do not use lumens as a gauge of quality!

More important is the measure of the projector's ability to project high contrasts. Low contrast projectors tend to give a very 'flat' image with little resemblance of depth. Contrasts measures the different measurable/visible levels of brightness from totally black to total brightness (white). As the contrasts levels improve, the picture has greater realism and impact. Contrasts is achieved with qualitative improvements in the projector's video processing ability while lumens is a quantitative improvement via higher voltage lamps and power supplies. Generally LCDs manage a contrast ratio of about 300:1 and higher range models may go up to as much as 500:1, which is excellent by any standards. DLPs can easily manage anything from 500:1 to as much as 1500:1. It must also be stated at this point that for video projectors, it is necessary to maintain only low ambient light so as to optimize the contrasts levels. Even the best DLPs with super high contrasts of 1000:1 will be washed out when viewed in broad daylight!

A less important point for projectors especially LCD and DLP is the viewing distance. It is recommended that your viewing position be at least 2X the screen diagonal. For instance if you use a 84" (7 ft) screen, you should ideally be seated some 14 ft away. Any closer the pixel structure will be visible though you can defocus the lens slightly to remove the artifact. It is not a flaw of the projector but a characteristic of all pixel based digital projectors. 