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hardware



bassocontinuo

Acordeon Rack

as reviewed by Gary Lea





It is not very often that I find myself reviewing something that simply does nothing except exist. As a matter of fact the whole notion is a bit foreign to me. After all, in simplistic terms, a rack is a rack, right?

Well, yes and no.

Yes, a rack is a rack. All racks are racks and that is it. No, in that they are not all equal or equally desirable. So what should a rack do, and what distinguishes one from another? That is, really, the question when debating the value of any rack system, I would imagine.

First, a rack needs to provide a stable platform on which to place one's audio components (or in the case of old, no longer used racks, things like magazines, plants, empty tequila bottles, and knick-knacks). It is also there to isolate components from unwanted vibrations. Beyond that, it should offer ease of placement, flexibility, and depending on WAF issues, be somewhat attractive. So aside from those issues, what is there to really differentiate various rack systems? There are certainly a number of different thoughts on isolation methodology, materials, and grounding issues. Do I isolate via a suspended platform, or do I go with straight mass? I personally have tried numerous designs over the years, and have even made a few platforms myself, including a turntable platform that contained a number of different mediums for isolation, from sand to inner tubes, and a platform using a suspended shelf isolated by what were essentially rubber bands, all with similar levels of performance. As I have grown older, and require more flexibility with stands, I gravitate towards more modular units that can change configuration without calling in the Army Corp of Engineers to help me re-configure the damn thing.

So why the Bassocontinuo (beside the cool name), read on and I will explain why I like the system so well.

First, a bit about the company and their products overall. As with all things Italian, there is a deep sense of emotion tied to design. As a matter of fact, Bassocontinuo's own tag line is "Build Your Emotions". I rarely have ever seen anything of Italian design that was not a thing of beauty in some way, and that did not strike some sort of emotional response in me. Ever stared at a Lamborghini or Ferrari and not be able take your eyes off it? Since I do not own either of those cars, and with the current economic outlook, it is quite likely that I shall never own one, perhaps an Italian rack will suffice.

To quote the literature of Bassocontinuo: "We know that our items can provoke opposing feelings, but we also know that excellence in design and materials are the basis for the creation of products without half measures. Bassocontinuo articles are the result of these simple precepts, leaving nothing to chance; only developing coherent basic ideas you can create objects that will last forever, maintaining their own value. Bassocontinuo racks evolve as matter in motion, shunning fashion and conventional

GARY LEA'S SYSTEM

LOUDSPEAKERS

Von Schweikert VR4 MKIII, Odeon Elektra Horns, Compact WZSE Collector's Edition, Usher 6311 and AAD Silver Reference 1.

ELECTRONICS

Tube: Jolida Music Envoy 211 tube monoblock amps and preamp (main reference).
Solid-State: ShengYa PSM-600 monoblock solid-state amps and matching CS6 tubed preamp.

SOURCES

Digital Front End: Grant Fidelity Reference Tube 1000 CD player (main reference), Cary Audio DVD 6 used as a CD, Wadia i170 iPod Deck and 160Gig iPod.

Analogue Front End: Consonance Droplet 5.2 MKII with ST600tonearm (main reference) Nottingham Analogue Hyper Space and Arm with Wave Mechanic. **Montegiro Lusso with DaVinci Noble and SME 5009 tonearms.**

Cartridges - Koetsu Azule Platinum(main reference), Koetsu Urushi Vermillion, Goldnote Baldinotti, Dynavector 17D3 cartridges. Phone Stages: Goldnote Pamphili (main reference), Blue Circle Fon Lo Thingee, Musical Fidelity V3, and Koetsu Step up transformer.

CABLES

XLO Signature 3 interconnects speaker cables and power cords (main reference cables currently). Furutech DIY interconnects. Kimber Kable Monocle XL speaker cables and Select Interconnects. And a bunch of cables I am too lazy to list.

ACCESSORIES

Grant Fidelity RPF-120 MKII Reference Power Conditioner. Misc doodads and tweaks and loose parts like all audiophiles.

words."

Big claims to be sure and while I admire the marketing poetry, I doubt they will last forever, and I do not see them as matter in motion. As a matter of fact, the last thing I want in an isolation rack is for it to be matter in motion. I want the thing absolutely still and immovable! That aside, I do see them as high quality isolation components, with a fit and finish that does please the eye, and adds a certain *savoir faire* to my audio room. In the end, that, in and of itself, can be the sole reason for choosing this system over other similar racks. This is a very easy to live with, easy to re-configure system, that is exceptionally pleasing to the eye on top of doing a damned fine job of isolating.

So a bit about the rack itself, no?

All Bassocontinuo products are handmade in Italy. There are five lines of rack products, and materials range from solid stainless steel in the support legs, and spikes to MDF, multilayer birch wood, and Plexiglas for the shelves. The rack system in this review is the Accordeon model. They state that there are over 1500 possible combinations, so fitting your needs should not present itself as any sort of difficulty. All systems can be upgradeable in the future.



Described as an Isostatic rack that comes with double sided shelves, the Accordeon rack is made up of three solid steel support legs, with heavy duty adjustable machined spikes supporting, in the case of the rack I have, an MDF shelf approximately 21.5 inches deep by 23.5 inches wide, and 1 inch thick. The shelves have a rather sculpted look, and taper somewhat toward the rear of the shelf, with a width across the back of 20.5 inches. I did not find this to create any issues with the components I tried on the rack, and it does add a little flair to the appearance. The machining of the legs is outstanding, and the spikes are easy to adjust. The shelves are finished in a number of available colors, based on shelf material chosen. This rack came in a beautiful pearlescent blue called nacreous blue. (I had absolutely no idea of what a nacreous was, but evidently it is another word for iridescent.) The finish is actually quite stunning, and plays into my blue room theme perfectly. As someone who builds guitars for a hobby, and deals with a variety of paint finishes, it is not particularly easy to get a smooth even spread of pearl particles on large surfaces, but the paint on the Bassocontinuo shelves is exceptionally uniform. The shelves each have elastomeric washers under them at the point where the spikes rest. Each shelf is rated to handle up

to 80kg or 176lbs. That is a pretty hefty amount of support.

You can actually go online to their site and use their *configurator* to build a system, and then contact the dealer to put it together for you. The test rack also came with three of Bassocontinuo's Decoupling Steel Discs (DSD), which is made of AISI303 stainless steel, with a nitrific rubber O-ring for damping. I have carpet, so I was not able to try these under the stand on a hard flooring surface. I did try to use these under the Ayon CD-7 player, but unfortunately there were only three, and they are too slim, so I could not test them out. (A note to the manufacturer... include a fourth disc.)

The rack was very simple and straightforward in setup and placement, and ultimately would be rather easy to add onto, so much for that Corp of Engineers thing. The rack also gathered a number of exemplary compliments along the way, for its elegance and color. I found, through a lot of testing, that it did an excellent job of isolating, and Bassocontinuo does make a turntable specific stand that would be interesting to try out. Even at fairly serious SPLs, I could not detect any vibration making it to the components through the stand.

The real eye opener for me was that I moved components from another rack (not my reference rack) that I thought was pretty stout, and placed them on the Bassocontinuo. In listening to Bebel Gilberto's "Cancao de Amor" from the *All in One* CD (Verve BOO13353-02), I immediately noticed an improvement in detail, especially at moderate to higher volumes. Not a monumental difference, but definitely noticeable to my ears. I heard a more ethereal quality to her voice, and a better feeling of her being in the room. Since nothing else had changed, I attribute that improvement directly to the Bassocontinuo. The configuration of the Bassocontinuo, with the stainless steel vs. aluminum support legs of the other unit, seemed to do a better job preventing any energy transfer during the knuckle wrap test on an adjoining shelf. Unlike the other rack, which did transfer a good amount of energy, the Bassocontinuo seemed to very effectively isolate the vibration transfer and also significantly reduced vibration to the shelf being tapped in comparison to the other rack.

The more I listened to various types of music, including Heart's "Red Velvet Car" from the CD of the same name (Legacy 88697 7 73800 2), there was definitely a bit more smoothness to Ann's voice on certain softer passages, and a bit more grunt on some of the bottom end. I was just very aware that this rack was a significant improvement in overall sound and enjoyment from the rack it replaced. Clearly, not all racks, no matter the cost, are created equally. In all fairness to the original rack, it did cost half of what the Bassocontinuo cost, but by comparison it was less than half as good at controlling vibration, and it is also butt ugly! Now that I have heard the difference, it too will be relegated to holding things other than Hifi gear.

If I was in the market for a new rack, the Bassocontinuo would certainly be at the top of my list. After living with it for a few months I have grown to appreciate how it goes about doing its job. The only attention it draws to itself is its physical beauty. Coupled with an almost infinite expandability, I cannot think of another shelving system that is so flexible and offers any more than the Bassocontinuo Accordeon. Add to the performance, one cannot discount the looks of something you spend so much time staring at. On top of that there is that iridescent, no make that, "nacreous" blue color... **Gary Lea**

Bassocontinuo Accordeon Audio Rack