

Arya Audio RevOpods Damping Feet

AT WADAX'S REQUEST, I received eight RevOpod Damping Feet made by the British company Arya Audio (the Reference DAC rests on eight footers rather than the usual four). The devices are distributed in the U.S. by Liquid Hi-Fi in Charlotte, North Carolina.

The RevOpod is an intricately built mechanism for dissipating vibration in audio equipment. The conical-shaped device can sit under a component, or screw into the component's chassis in place of stock feet. Each set of four comes with a variety of threaded adapter posts to match the thread size of your equipment.

The RevOpod is built from 35 separate parts and assembled to very tight tolerances. An ingenious feature allows each RevOpod to be height adjusted in 50-micron steps, with the steps indicated by an audible click as a ring is rotated. This feature also allows the RevOpod to adapt to uneven surfaces. RevOpod describes this mechanism: "Rotation of the outer ring moves an inner element up or down, translating the rotary motion of the ring into linear movement of an inner cylinder."

All the structural parts are machined from solid billets of stainless steel, and a Delrin insert couples the pod to the surface on which it sits. The build and finish quality are extraordinary. The chrome-like finish is realized by hand polishing the stainless steel. Black versions are coated with titanium-nitride in a high-temperature vacuum chamber. The rings can be ordered in shiny chrome-like or gold-colored finish. The price is \$1200 per set of four for the "chrome" finish, and \$1295 per set for black.

The designer, Arthur Marker, based the design on the so-called "pot bearings" found in vibration control of heavy structures such as bridges. Marker has an MSc in Engineering Acoustics from the Institute of Sound and Vibration Research in the UK, and a BSc in electrical engineering from University Stuttgart, Germany. The device is reportedly the result of two years of development work.

After listening to the Reference DAC with the stock feet for about a month, I switched to the RevOpods. I heard an immediate increase in clarity, bass definition, and dynamics. Fine details were more clearly resolved, particularly low-level reverberation decay. This contributed to the Reference DAC's three-dimensionality and spacious sound. At \$2400 for a set of eight, the RevOpods should be considered mandatory for the Reference DAC. I look forward to trying the RevOpods with other products.

The lack of glare and grain described earlier extends all the way to the top octave, giving the treble a crystalline purity.

I heard another quality that was hard to pin down, but is best described as a harmonic coherence, or continuousness, from top to bottom. It was as though the music were made up of a single organic whole rather than from a collection of discrete components. The treble didn't sound disconnected from the rest of the spectrum, but rather like a natural extension of the upper midrange. Interestingly, this quality was affected by the output-impedance setting mentioned earlier. When set correctly for my system (75 ohms, in my case), the presentation seemed to have a greater degree of this harmonic coherence.

The effect of these sonic qualities on the listening experience went beyond a greater sense of realism. The Reference DAC induced a relaxed ease that made my ears figuratively "open up" rather than the unconsciously (or sometimes consciously) tensing. It was possible to listen at louder levels comfortably, and for longer periods.

The Reference DAC's liquidity was most apparent through the upper-midrange and treble, the region where digital audio's shortcomings have previously been

the most obvious. But the Reference DAC's reproduction of the low bass through the upper-bass was also extraordinary. The resolution of inner detail, tone color, and dynamic inflection through the bass rendered low-frequency sounds into a

rich and intricately detailed tapestry of tone color, harmonics, dynamic shadings, and rhythmic flow. The bottom end had tremendous weight, solidity, and authority. Left-hand piano lines were dense, rich, warm, and thunderously powerful. The low-tuned toms of drummer Simon Philips' kit on his album *Protocol II* were rendered by the Reference DAC with a physically startling impact, along with tremendous resolution of the attack of the stick hitting the drumhead, followed by the deep resonance

