

Electronic Musician®

Reprinted from July 2003

Quick Picks

AURALEX ACOUSTICS

MoPads

By Michael Cooper

Close-field monitors are usually placed on studio furniture that also supports a mixing console, DAW, and various other components. Although that placement offers several advantages, it poses one serious drawback: the supporting structure can become a physical extension of the vibrating speaker cabinet and may begin to resonate sympathetically. That often results in flabby-sounding upper-bass frequencies and weak transients and may cause the mix to sound muddy, boxy, unfocused, or lacking in punch.

If you're unaware of the source of the problem, you could spend hours trying to correct it by applying EQ or dynamics processing or by reducing the reverb level in an attempt to tighten up the mix. But those approaches are futile. What you really need to do is decouple your vibrating speakers from the furniture that they sit on so you can hear the true sound of your monitors without extraneous resonance—and that's what Auralex MoPads do.

Welcome to My Pad

MoPads are sculpted pieces of high-density, open-cell, polyurethane foam expressly designed to decouple your monitors (or any other vibration-sensitive gear, such as CD players, turntables, or disk drives) from the surface that they sit on. To use MoPads, you simply place a pair of them underneath each monitor. (A set includes two pairs.)

MoPads are cut at an angle that tilts the monitors slightly downward (forward) to compensate for the vertical lift that the pads provide. Alternatively, you can face the MoPads

backward to tilt the monitors slightly upward, if they're sitting a bit too low. An additional foam wedge is provided with each MoPad, which when added on top of the base pad doubles the angle of tilt or (when faced in the opposite direction) levels it off. Depending on how you place the wedges (or leave them off), you can make your monitors tilt upward or downward by 4 or 8 degrees or have the speakers sit flat. That simple but clever arrangement makes MoPads highly suitable for a variety of studio settings.

A/B Testing

I initially tested the MoPads by placing them under a pair of Yamaha NS-10M monitors that sit on the top shelves of my Omnirax MixStation/02R (a studio desk that accommodates a mixing console, outboard gear, close-field speakers, and a computer monitor and keyboard). I usually place mouse pads under my NS-10Ms to decouple them from the MixStation/02R shelves, but I found MoPads to be far more effective for that purpose.

With the MoPads in place, there was a clearly audible—though not dramatic—improvement in the tightness and clarity of the upper-bass frequencies. The MoPads seemed to cut down vibrations in the shelves by nearly half. The sonic improvements were not quite as impressive as when I placed the NS-10Ms on large, heavy monitor stands, but MoPads cost only one-twentieth as much as the stands and don't take up extra floor space. A full set of MoPads (enough for two monitors and including the additional



Auralex MoPads greatly reduce sympathetic resonance caused by studio monitors, revealing the true attributes of the speakers and improving the monitoring environment.

tilt-adjusting wedges) costs a mere \$29.95!

Next, I tested the MoPads with a pair of Earthworks Sigma 6.2 monitors (very high-end close-fields) placed on the same MixStation/02R shelves. This time, the results were surprisingly dramatic. The MoPads greatly improved the accuracy and tightness of the upper-bass frequencies. I could hear a significant improvement in the transient response as well. The MoPads definitely kept the sound from being seriously degraded by furniture resonance. They also held the heavy Sigma 6.2s (each weighing 32 lb.) firmly in place without slipping. (According to Auralex, MoPads can hold up to 100 lb.)

Get Mo

Based on my tests, it appears that MoPads can tighten up the transients and upper-bass frequencies to a greater extent when used with high-end monitors that offer a more refined audio reproduction to begin with. But you should also hear a noticeable improvement in your monitoring environment even when MoPads are used with low-cost monitors. In short, MoPads are an inexpensive, simple solution to a widespread problem shared by most studios. For less than \$30 a set, you can't lose!

Overall EM Rating (1 through 5): 4.5

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