

→ TOOLS

Auralex PlatFoam

BY DENDY JARRETT

There are times when I see new products (and I see a lot of crazy inventions) and think, "Gee, why didn't I think of that? It's so simple but so effective."

In drum circles, rumors have been flying around for a couple of years regarding such a product, Auralex's PlatFoam. A variation on the company's Studiofoam, this sound absorption material is strong enough to support a significant amount of weight. When attached to a wooden platform, what you get is essentially a drum riser that floats on a bed of foam, hence the name PlatFoam.

The product arrived in a box about the size of a small casket. Inside was a do-it-yourself kit containing 24 foam strips measuring 2"x4"x18". The instructions suggested I go to a home center (like Lowes or Home Depot) and purchase a solid piece of plywood to serve as the floor to my PlatFoam. In most cases, these 4'x8' sheets will fit the bill for the size of your kit. Because the foam can be trimmed, you (or your home center) can cut the plywood into any size that meets the need of your kit. Also included were tubes of Auralex Foam Adhesive, designed specifically for attaching the porous foam to a solid surface. The instructions were very easy to understand regarding placement of the strips, which mount to the underside of the board where they act like shock absorbers underneath the plywood.



Kenny Aronoff's PlatFoam riser.

The next step was to apply a carpet of my choice on top of the plywood. I chose a speaker cover type of material with a foam backer already attached to it. Voila! I had a PlatFoam!

So how did it work? Read my lips: This product is super! Before using it, I had designed my studio with all kinds of sound deadening devices—picture an Igloo cooler if you will. But even with all that treatment, the thump of my bass drum could still be heard outside the studio. Enter the PlatFoam. Problem solved! Now, the sound escaping my studio is nearly inaudible. Additionally, annoying overtones have disappeared.

I did not want to base this review solely on my own experience so when I heard that Kenny Aronoff had beta-tested this product, I e-mailed him. Here is what he said: "The main benefit of the PlatFoam riser is that it

makes my drums sound better when they're on the riser. I immediately heard a big difference when I started playing. The drums had more definition, more punch and a fatter, clearer low end."

Currently, I am unaware of any other product on the market that is designed for this specific purpose.

The great thing about this product (other than the fact that it delivers) is the price. (Of course, there is the additional expense of a sheet of plywood and the carpet material you choose to cover the top.) And while you may need to enlist a friend to help manhandle the plywood and assemble the foam and carpet, for me it was a fun adventure that produced great results. Now, if I can just figure out how to make a portable version, I will take one everywhere I play!

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SOUND CHECK

The Gear:

Auralex's PlatFoam and GRAMMA

Who They're For:

Sonic isolationists

How Much:

PlatFoam: \$179

GRAMMA: \$59.95

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It Sounds Good In GRAMMA's House

Drummers aren't the only ones who have sonic resonance problems. As we have written about in the past (see Baker Lee's piece on hollow stages in the April 2001 issue of *Gig*), many club stages are little more than hollow boxes which will naturally resonate and can make even a great band with a great sound system seem boomy or muddy. Another Auralex product called GRAMMA allows you to isolate guitar and bass amps, speaker cabs and even mics from the floor—all but eliminating those resonance problems.

GRAMMA (Gig & Recording Amplifier & Monitor Modulation Attenuator) is, unlike the PlatFoam backed HoverDeck, completely portable and ready for gigging. What you get is a 23"x15" carpet-covered wood platform. Attached to the bottom is a wide strip of Studiofoam—the same type you see in virtually



every studio. On either side of the Studiofoam are 4" wide beams of PlatFoam that are dense enough to support most amps without collapsing. On one end of the GRAMMA you will even find a recessed handle so it's easy to carry.

My band used this with both bass and guitar amps, and the increased clarity of sound was very noticeable. In fact, I would like to pick up a few more for monitors and perhaps even drum mics. Bottom line is that the GRAMMA has made it onto the list of products that I simply refuse to gig without.

—BILL EVANS