

soundbites

ISOTEK ULTIMATE SYSTEM SET-UP DISC

This disc from power supply specialist IsoTek has a few rather unusual features. There is an assumption made by the manufacturer that you already realise that your speakers should be mounted with the tweeters at ear height, in your normal listening position, with the listener sitting at the point of a triangle with the speakers at the other two points. Beyond that, no audio knowledge is required. The instructions are simple, and the test tracks are well thought out and make their point obviously. The spoken voice is accompanied by a castanet which carries a surprising amount of sonic information – it allowed me to identify a slight timbral imbalance on my upstairs system and proved easy to focus on. This proved useful during the 'Soundstage' and 'Stereo Image Depth' tests.

The most unusual of the tracks involved the sound seeming to complete a 360 degree sweep around the room, including appearing to go behind the listener - I am happy to report that both of my systems passed satisfactorily. Further on are a series of ascending and descending frequency tones spread across ten points between 20Hz and 20kHz. I was most pleased to discover that the Quad/ Kelly set up upstairs produced the 20Hz quite clearly and solidly (I also felt it through the seat, despite the Kellys standing on 50mm thick granite plinths) albeit with some reduction in perceived volume level compared to the 43Hz tone which succeeded it. The final six tracks are choices from releases on the Opus 3 record label, each chosen to demonstrate a certain aspect of the sound, be it spatiality, rhythm or dynamic range. They range from Bach's 'Tocatta and Fugue in D

Minor', to 'Tiny Island' by Vaquero, recorded in a church, and involving a rainstick and a steel guitar. I found this disc to be well thought out and practical in the track choices offered. Another must for the toolbox! **TB**



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