



LP STABILISERS Furutech Monza

More than just mass

The potential benefits of what is known as a record clamp, or an LP stabiliser, are widely known. They range from improved tracking and reduced resonance to a lower noise floor, improved resolution and finer imaging.

However, I say 'potential' for a reason. The effects of these devices vary greatly, depending on the specific application. Suspended or solid-chassis turntables, different tonearms and cartridges – all of these factors, and more, have an impact on how effective a LP stabiliser can be.

Enter the Furutech Monza, a nicely finished but innocuous-looking item that could well be nothing more than a nicely presented paperweight. As it turns out, there's more to the Monza LP stabiliser than sheer mass.

Roughly conical in shape, with a flat bottom and a reverse-tapered raised centre, the Monza looks vaguely like many other such products. However, Furutech claims that this one harnesses a lot of advanced technology.

The stabiliser actually consists of a number of components. The base is manufactured from non-magnetic stainless steel, and is separated from the top module by a damping layer of carbon fibre. The bottom surface of the base features 16 concentric grooves made of a piezo-electric damping material.

And it's this layer that sets the Monza apart from other weight-driven stabilisers. The bottom layer contains nano-polycrystalline, ferro-electric ceramic particles that can display electro-generative properties. More specifically, the mechanical pressure of the stabiliser on the vinyl disc creates an electrical charge.

Meanwhile the carbon powder has thermal-conductive properties. Mechanical and electrical damping is achieved as a result of the Monza crossconverting thermal, mechanical and electrical energy. Or so Furutech says.

I tried the Monza on an Avid Diva II/OL Encounter/Benz Micro Wood L deck, and a Linn Sondek LP12/Ittok/Ortofon Cadenza Black combo. And against my own expectations, the effect was instantly audible.

The effects were more pronounced in the case of the LP12, which would have benefited from the Monza based purely on its mass, and the resulting improved contact between

■ Vital Stats ■

Construction.....Non-magnetic stainless steel. Piezo-ceramic damping sheet, multi-layered carbon fibre

Dimensions 79 mm diameter, 27,5 mm high

Weight 350 g

VERDICT

Effectiveness depends on various factors, but audibly beneficial in most instances. Tauter low frequencies, improved detail, reduced noise floor the most obvious improvements.

PRICE.....R5 289

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The atmosphere of that all-time great recording, 'Friday Night in San Francisco', combining the talents of John McLaughlin, Paco de Lucia and Al Di Meola came across more electric than I remembered, and the frenetic guitar riffs were rendered with poise and precision.

On 'Live In Paris', Diana Krall's voice had more texture, her breathing was more pronounced, and the drum kit's cymbals and hi-hat had more presence. At the same time, the music was projected with greater intent than before.

Similar results were achieved with the Avid Diva II, although not as pronounced. The deck uses a hefty screw-down stabiliser as standard, so certainly, the benefits of the mass loading were already factored in. However, a reduction of the noise floor, improved resolution of detail and an airier soundstage were still noticeable.

I'll admit to being a sceptic when it comes to some of the more exotic audio accessories. But the Furutech Monza stabiliser makes an audible, positive difference, every time. The price is steep, and I'm not sure what the impact of the extra weight will have on the LP12's sprung chassis in the long run.

But if I had the money, this would be one accessory I'd invest in.

Deon Schoeman

