



GIK Acoustic Panels, Bass Traps and Diffusors

By Stuart and Linette Smith

Room treatment is often seen as a dark art a somewhat expensive process. Stuart and Linette Smith try three products from GIK Acoustics including bass traps, acoustic panels and diffusors

GIK ROOM TREATMENT PRODUCTS



If you don't know GIK then let me fill you in a little. They're based in the UK with offices around the world and they manufacture room treatment products and that's all they do. GIKs products are used extensively in recording studios and even in the world renowned Abbey Road studios in London. They offer a free service where you can measure your rooms acoustics using a free little program and you can send the results in to GIK and they'll talk you through the treatments they recommend for you.

We added treatments in stages and listened for changes in the sound as we went along. Now, our room is a normal living space (be it quite a large space) and is acoustically not ideal and so I'd been itching to have the room treated for a few years. Don't get me wrong, it's not terrible, but as fellow enthusiasts will appreciate, there is always room for improvements.

Now, I'm sure there are going to be many reading this that will say, "But I'll never get away with having huge bass traps and offensive looking wall panels in the front room!", but fear not because GIK offer a wide range of colours, sizes and you can even have images printed on the acoustic panels. With regards the latter I went and had a series of abstract photographs printed on them and the results are pretty spectacular. However, I sort of wish I'd gone for all the panels in the bright red that the other panels I have are in as they immediately add a statement to the room and, to mine an Linette's minds, they look really rather

cool – sort of instant decorating. All the products are relatively lightweight and very easy to position, move about and the panels are a doddle to hang on your walls with all fixings being included in the packaging.

I'll go through the order in which we added each of the treatments and give you my thoughts on the benefits or otherwise of each.

TRI- TRAP BASS TRAPS

The bass traps we have installed are £252 for a pair including VAT and measure 120cm in height and are 58.5cm wide. They are called Tri-Traps and, as their name would suggest, they are a triangular prism in shape as you look down on them – obviously designed to fit in corners. We have two stacked on top of each other in each corner behind the loudspeakers (we've had a few pairs in during the period we've been experimenting with GIK room treatments). They weigh 6KG each and as such are easy to position. The Tri-Traps are designed to absorb frequencies in the bass end from 50Hz up to 5000Hz.

What I was expecting was any bass boom in the room to be dealt with and the overall effect to be one of reducing the perceived amount of bass in the room. However, what actually happens when you pop these in the room is that you get more perceived bass...this threw me for a while to be honest. The bass is more pronounced in the mix, but it is also tighter, faster and without any

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flabbiness. Anyone who reads my reviews regularly will know that overhanging bass is something I loath and the Tri-Traps just tighten everything up really nicely.

We listen to a lot of bass heavy music (Techno and Dub in the main) and despite our speakers having onboard DSP there was still a propensity to have a bit of a boom in the room – the Tri-Traps cured this most effectively! I could waffle on about listening to this record and that CD but there's no need to and I reckon I've outlined what these things do pretty effectively.

242 ACOUSTIC PANELS



The acoustic panels we have are the larger ones measuring 60cms x 120cms and costing (in their plain coloured form) £185.40 including VAT for three panels. You have the option of adding a scatter plate, a boom stand bracket, a wooden or metal stand or brackets for mounting on the ceiling. Other sizes are available being 60cm x 60cm and 30cm x 120cm and so you really should be able to accommodate these pretty easy in your room. Initially we had two panels mounted on the wall behind the speakers and more on the side walls at first and second reflection points on the two side walls. To find the reflection points you sit in your listening chair and have someone walk down the side wall with a mirror until you can see the speaker in the mirror...easy and the "reflection" point name sort of gives it away really. GIK have a video that'll walk you through this too. They fix with a metal wire that you screw onto the back of the panel and this hangs on a hook/screw you screw into the wall...again dead simple to position and hang and once positioned they sit flush to the wall.



They are designed to absorb the entire frequency range and the effect is one of tidying everything in the mix up. Tough to describe in any way other than to say that it's a bit like focusing a camera from out of focus to a pin-point image. The aural effect is to add a dimensionality to the stereo image that now has greater depth and width, with instruments sitting in the soundstage in a more accurate and three dimensional manner. Stereo becomes more stereoscopic if that makes sense. Of

course, this is why these panels are used extensively in recording studios, but they have the same effect in the home and as such pretty much invaluable if you are serious about your listening.



POLY DIFFUSOR

The Poly Diffusors are a polycylindrical diffuser and absorber in one unit. Basically speaking they look like a panel with a curved front which GIK says allows for "virtually perfect spatial diffusion". They're 120cm high and 60cm wide and at their deepest point 15.5cm deep. They hang onto the wall using the included little gizmo that fits to the back of the unit and also screws into the walls. It's not difficult to do and even this committed non-DIYist managed to get them up in a little more than ten minutes. The fixing gizmo allows the diffusors to be taken off the



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wall should you need to pain or whatever. They're £240 for a pair.

We have two of these diffusors and they are positioned on the back wall where we previously had a couple of the 242 acoustic panels positioned. Their effect is similar to the panels we had in place in that they clean up the soundstage and add focus and dimensionality to the stereo image...only a little more so. They also seem to further tighten the bass but this effect is not so pronounced as when you first add the bass traps.

CONCLUSION

I've read a lot of crap on various forums about the efficacy of room treatment and its place in the domestic audio set up, but all I can say is you need to hear what these relatively inexpensive panels can do. Anyone who is not convinced is either fooling themselves for whatever reason or needs to take themselves to the ear-doctor without passing go and without collecting their £200. The weakest part of your hifi is very likely to be the speaker and room interaction and, short of having your listening room built from scratch, the only way to get this sorted is to use room treatment products.

GIK's panels do what they say on the tin, their service is terrific and for the money I'd suggest that they represent astounding value for money given the increases in resolution, accuracy and clarity you will get from your hifi.

We have invested in the panels I've written about above but will be investing further in the future, initially on more of the 242 acoustic panels for a cloud on the roof and then more for the side walls and then finally a couple more of the diffusors so we can stack them behind the speakers.

I have absolutely no hesitation in putting these through to Linette for her thoughts on these and to see if they get our Outstanding Product award.

Perhaps the most cost effective upgrade you can make and if you have spent a good deal on your hifi you really should be aiming to get the very best out of it. You can start with a few panels or a couple of bass traps and go from there... as we have and will continue to do.

LINETTE GIVES HER VIEWS

I must admit to being a bit sceptical about the idea of room treatment and

acoustic panels, however I am definitely a convert since we got the GIK Acoustics gear into the listening room. I would second everything that Stuart has said. These are well priced, great looking panels that just work. I was particularly impressed by the effect on bass, making it really tight. I love the fact that you can have your own artwork printed on them too, the interior design possibilities are endless. Importantly for us, we can move things around depending on what gear we are using, the flexibility is important. They were very easy to put up, even for my somewhat DIY challenged husband and they make your listening room look very professional. The products are extremely well made, from environmentally safe materials, our floor-to-ceiling bass traps have actually had kittens run up and down them with no ill effects! GIK are a very approachable company which is run by down to earth, knowledgeable and friendly people and they are very happy to give advice and help on getting the best sound in your room. Not just for home use, the products are used in commercial settings and professional studios too, which to me reinforces their reputation.

For all of the above reasons I think that GIK Acoustics thoroughly deserve a Hifi Pig

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AT A GLANCE

Build Quality: Well put together and attractive. Feel solid and look smart. The ability to have your own images printed on will appeal to many.

Sound Quality: They obviously don't have a sound of their own, but they clear up, focus and improve all aspects of your listening experience. The most effective and draw-dropping improvement is when adding the bass traps

Value For Money: What can you say? If you have spent good money on your hifi then these represent excellent value for money given the improvements you will experience.



Pros:

They do what they are supposed to

They represent great value for money

Well made and good looking

Cons:

I seriously can't think of anything other than they could be difficult to accommodate if you live in a very small flat

Cats love to climb the bass traps