

## *Accessory of the Year*



### **Critical Mass Systems CenterStage<sup>2</sup>**

Although Critical Mass Systems is best known for its large and heavy rack systems, perhaps its most important product is the CenterStage<sup>2</sup>, a range of three equipment support feet designed to correct physical impedance mismatching to greatly reduce vibration moving upward from the floor, the reduction of the noise inherent to the materials used to fabricate the foot, and a means to transfer entropy out of the component. To these ends, each CenterStage<sup>2</sup> footer represents an ideal combination of damping, elastic modulus, and thin rod speed. The three model are designed to accommodate different sizes and weights of components, although there is a good/better/best performance aspect, too.

The curious thing about the CenterStage<sup>2</sup> is that you know when it's working because it makes the system sound a lot worse, at first. Until the footers harmonise and begin to correct those impedance mismatches and beyond, the sound of the system goes thin, light, bright, and the soundstage and dynamic range all but collapse. Then, as it begins to settle, the sound undergoes a quick and significant change for the better, and it keeps getting a lot better. We felt that "You notice this change by a shift in your internal dialogue. 'I'd forgotten just how good that really is!' (referring to both record and equipment) seems to be the first sign. About an hour later, you find yourself composing a thank-you email to the designers of the components in your system. Although it's the bass that first comes back, it's the midrange that seals the deal: the enhanced clarity, the walk-in detail to the soundstage, which seems to not change a thing, all the while being far more enveloping than before. This is no small change, and as the listening progresses, you begin to find this feeling of being immersed in the music."

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