

Hi-Fi Racks Ltd

Podium Slimline support rack

HI-FI SUPPORTS HAVE to combine good looks with a structure that performs well acoustically, and as such are unlikely to be stocked by your favourite furniture supplier. Leicestershire-based Hi-Fi Racks Ltd produces a range of equipment supports that can be adapted to suit your own requirements. All of its products are designed and handmade in the UK using high-quality solid hardwoods.

Adding to its established Podium and Akorner Reference range, is the recently released Podium Slimline modular rack system that can be expanded as your system grows. The Slimline shares many features with the Podium Reference, but in addition to being sold as a standard four-tier rack, it is also available in the dimensions of your choice.

One size doesn't fit all

To complement its standard range of supports, Hi-Fi Racks also produces matching storage systems for CDs, DVDs, Blu-rays and LPs. The company believes that "one size does not fit all" and, as each unit is handmade to order, it is possible not only to have any size required, but also a combination of hi-fi racks and media storage.

I opt for a Podium Slimline rack that also houses part of a record collection, as well as supporting some heavy valve-based audio equipment. Alas, nowadays, it is virtually impossible to buy something 'off the shelf' that has both storage for records and shelves for hi-fi in one unit, so a bespoke design seems to be the answer.

Following discussions with the company, a design is put together that includes space for LPs on the bottom of the unit, shelves above for valve equipment and an overall width and depth appropriate for placing a turntable on the top.

The Podium Slimline legs and shelves are secured together with threaded rods, making it very sturdy and easy to put together. I go for oak with a satin finish, but black,



cherry, mahogany and walnut finishes are available at extra cost.

The bespoke unit takes a few weeks to manufacture (the standard four-tier model can be delivered within 48 hours) and the unit arrives in several flat-packed boxes with plenty of protective packaging and a couple of photographs showing the finished unit to assist with construction. Assembly is simply a case of screwing threaded bolts into the metal inserts in the supports and then threading the bolts through the holes in each shelf. The correct method is to build the unit upside down. You start by inserting the bolts into the top shelf, then fitting the supports, then inserting bolts into the bottom of each support. Next you place the second shelf over the bolts then screw on the next set of supports. Continue until you have fitted the bottom shelf and finish off by screwing on the four legs. Turn it upright and it's ready to go.

The racks are beautifully made and have a superb finish. Each vertical support is made from a single piece of oak and the shelves are manufactured from planks of oak that have been bonded with the grain 'concave to convex' for rigidity and acoustic properties. This construction also eliminates the risk of warping.

A heavy and sturdy design is an essential requirement for audio equipment supports in order to

eliminate resonances and dampen any vibrations from the equipment, and here the Podium Slimline scores. Further upgrades can be retro-fitted, including spare legs (made to any length at no extra cost), spikes for the legs and floor protectors for the spikes. The standard four-tier model pictured includes the floor spikes.

Rack's the way to do it

With my system placed on the rack and listening to my 1979 pressing of Tchaikovsky's *Capriccio Italien*, which is on the 'B' side of the legendary Telarc *1812 Overture* digital recording by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra DG-10041, the bass kettle drum that resonates through the military march segments is significantly tighter and each impact of the drum punches you in the stomach! Another classic LP is Branford Marsalis' *Romances for Saxophone* on CBS M 42122 and listening to his arrangement of Satie's *Gymnopédie No. 3*, the haunting saxophone stands out more clearly from the plucking of the double basses and everything is more controlled than before.

The Podium Slimline represents excellent value for money. It can be custom made to your requirements and also upgraded and modified as your hi-fi system changes. The sonic improvements are likely to be a considerable plus, too! **NR**

DETAILS

PRICE
From £349
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OUR VERDICT

