

Bassocontinuo AEON X equipment support

Alan Sircom

Forgive me, Audiofather, for I have sinned. At a show, I looked at Bassocontinuo's leather-topped Reference Line and dismissed it as 'nice-looking furniture'. Then I got the AEON X from the company's Revolution X line and realised how wrong I was. Yes, it looks lovely, but it also performs exceptionally well.

Based in Bergamo, Italy, the Bassocontinuo brand has made equipment support systems since 2008. It now has five lines and takes a combined science-led/style-led approach to racks, platforms, and accessories. In short, it's a company that strives to eliminate vibration and look great while doing so.

Radar Love

The company loves its radar charts (also known as spider graphs), with each line scored one to five in terms of performance, modularity, tailoring, load capacity, price, market position and set-up difficulty. AEON X, with its extensive use of carbon fibre, scores highly in performance and market position, is low on set-up, tailoring, and load capacity, and is about middle in modularity and price. It seems to fit its actual place in the world; it looks good, sounds great, and can take a substantial 60kg load, but it isn't designed for amplifiers made of concrete and I-beams and is a little tricky to put together.

I say 'a little tricky' because long ago, I had a Benbo tripod for photography, which was like trying to wrangle an angry steel squid while it was fighting a set of bagpipes. So, getting washers, collets, and damping pads in place to visco-elastically connect the solid steel uprights to carbon-fibre cross-members holds no fear for me. But in comparison to an Ikea-driven world of 'it just screws together', this requires black belt assembly skills.

The stand's compliant nature means you deliberately don't tighten it as much as you might expect. AEON X is built 'finger-tight', which upsets some stand builders who take pride in applying thread-stripping degrees of torque

to their equipment supports. That compliance also means the pocketed carbon-fibre platforms flex a little when laden. However, when you realise just how compliance and flexion help mitigate vibration effects, you begin to understand just how good the AEON X really is.

Building up

You start with a bottom shelf, with a shelf of either Racing Black or red-sewn Le Mans carbon fibre and uprights of all silver, anthracite/lead with contrasting bronze inserts, or an optional copper with contrasting silver inserts. From there, you choose the height of the next shelf, going from 100mm to 350mm in 50mm steps. They all have a working platform size of 600x515mm, in a rack size of 660x560mm. I selected a 250mm lower platform and 200mm upper space in the all-silver and Racing Black livery. You could mix and match finishes, but only if you want to make something elegant look weird. »





Your system sounds more integrated and coherent and can be played louder and quieter without complaint.



» The initial test of any equipment support is to sit a turntable on its top shelf. A turntable could be thought of a 'backwards seismograph' so the reduction of any external vibration is crucial to the turntable's performance. The AEON X doesn't just ace that test, it sets new standards. Normally, this works in the over-used 'quieter silences' manner, and while the AEON X does that, it's the stand's delivery of leading edges and the overall coherence that highlights how significant the impact of vibration has on a turntable. It's more like your turntable (in my case a Kuzma Stabi R with 4Point 9 arm and CAR-30 cartridge) just got a significant upgrade in performance across the board. Already fast and coherent, this deck sounded more integrated and 'right' sounding.

Vinyl is the easy option for listening to stands, but the performance 'bump' is consistent across the board with the AEON X; your system sounds more integrated and coherent and can be played louder and quieter without complaint. The 'loud' part came as no surprise, as an equipment support system that takes on vibration will help most when there's a lot of air moving around. But the late-night, low-volume improvement was entirely unexpected. Volume controls – even the best ones – get inconsistent and uneven at whisper-quiet levels. Still, when sitting on the AEON X, there seems like more resolution and scope available to the listener.

Played at normal listening levels through your existing system, more music comes through the loudspeakers. There's less of that electronic background hash or brashness, imaging is improved, bass tightens and deepens... the works. I played everything from Aphex Twin to ZZ Top (with meaty chunks of Beethoven and Miles Davis and a delicate spread of Christy Moore in between). These

recordings all unveiled new secrets, but always naturally and musically. In particular, the solidity of instrument sounds within a 'right-sized' soundstage is a consistent AEON X trait, irrespective of what rests upon its carbon fibre shelves. Yes, the more 'turntable' or 'tubular' the component, the more immediately noticeable this effect becomes. But it improves the sound consistently and does it irrespective of component cost.

I can't help but hear Colin Chapman's words running through the AEON X: "Simplify, then add lightness." But, unlike a racing Lotus of the 1960s, the AEON X won't break down or throw you into a tree at 120mph. Instead, the Bassocontinuo AEON X has that Lotus-esque ethos of using the least amount of 'stand' to achieve the best possible performance.

No bragging

The only downside to the AEON X is a slight lack of audiophile bragging rights. Some enthusiasts define quality by weight alone. So, even though the AEON X is elegant and sounds like your system took a big step forward, the 'Where's my oil rig?' brigade will always whine, even though AEON X is 'reassuringly expensive.'

Let's not kid ourselves; this is not cheap. Only the Ultimate eclipses AEON X's price tags in Bassocontinuo's range of already somewhat 'spendy' systems. However, that makes the partnering equipment choice self-sealing; it will be the top end of audio components on its carbon fibre shelves. Those components already deliver stellar performance, but the AEON X will take them to the next level. And if one of those components is either a turntable or has tubes, prepare to be amazed! +

Price and contact details

As Tested (Silver finish)

Bottom platform £3,350

200mm risers with platform: £3,320

250mm risers with platform: £3,425

Total cost: £10,095, \$19,000

Manufacturer Bassocontinuo

🌐 www.bassocontinuo.biz

UK distributor Boyer Audio

🌐 www.boyeraudio.com

☎ +44(0)330 223 3769