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PREMIERE

[THUNDER MELODY, a Polish audio brand, was established in 2020. It was founded by Mr. KONRAD RASIA and Mr. RAFAŁ HŁADZIAK and specializes in vibration damping products, noise reduction and conditioning of the supply voltage. We test its ESTACADE BLACK cable supports.]

see the AUDIO CABLE STANDS **more and more often**, both in the pictures of the systems I get from the readers and at audio exhibitions. Products of this type are offered by more and more specialized companies, but they differ in the solutions used in them and the area in which they try to improve the operation of connection cables - most often power and speaker cables.

IT IS SO THAT SPECIFIC SOLUTIONS translate into specific changes in the sound. This is not a rule of thumb, but it works so often that it can be used as a guide. It is no different in the case of Thunder Melody products. The Estacade cable supports are their third product I listened to, and they affect the sound in a similar way to the previous two. In a less overwhelming way than it was with the Monument platform, and yet firmly enough to **speak of a new quality**.

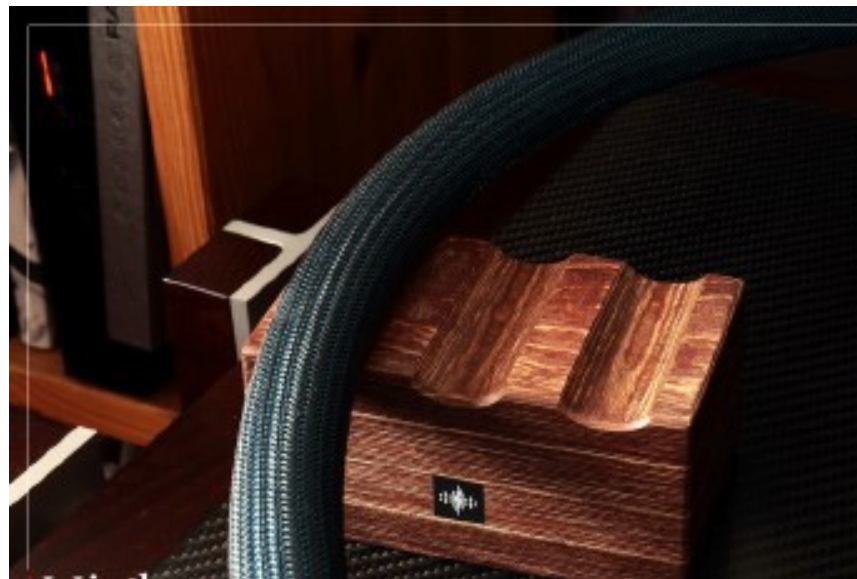
Their influence is related, first of all, to the **deepening of the background in the recordings**. MARTIN TAYLOR from the *Kiss and Tell*, played from a copy of the Reference CD-R, intended for circulation inside the Columbia label, sounded with them a bit as if he was placed further from me, with greater depth and - paradoxically - greater tangibility. It is an album where acoustic instruments, such as guitar and saxophone, are accompanied by synthesizers, creating a "background" for them. With the Estacade it was placed further away from me and the instruments had more space.



This is not yet a "mandatory" piece of equipment, because - for example - you can not see them in any photo from the listening room of the Japanese magazine "Stereo Sound", not all rooms used them during this year's High End show in Munich. **The trend is clear though.** And that's good: everything "works" in audio systems, and the better we protect the cables against the effects of vibrations, electromagnetic fields, etc., the better the sound will be. It's simple physics.

Estacade Black

ESTACADE STANDS ARE USED to support cables. Their task is to eliminate their vibrations, but most of all they **work like a passive conditioner**, similar to other products of this company, and similarly to passive filters from Verictum. They are available in two versions - Silver and Black. They differ in the way they are made and the price: for Silver



What happened to the bass was also very interesting. The bass guitar in the opening track of this album is deeply and very dynamically recorded - it has a clear start and stop. With the tested stands this sequence **was stronger and clearer**. And the bass itself was better controlled, it could even seem lighter. And yet it was not, I would even say that it descended lower. But this is what is interesting: apparently there was less bass, and actually there was more.

Following the increased vividness of the sound with the Estacade, I reached for the two-disc sampler *Jazz Hi-Res CD Sampler*, released by Universal Music Japan on CDs and MQA-CDs. Let me explain: I needed it to verify the sound of CD players with the MQA-CD decoder. Plus, there's a lot of great music on it. Anyway, the publisher proposes to compare **a regular CD vs. MQA encoded**. But this is not a fair comparison - the one recorded with the MQA signal is the Ultimate

we will pay PLN 1700 per piece, and PLN 2300 for the Black. Which is a lot. Thunder Melody's products are not cheap, however, and are intended rather for expensive and very expensive systems.

The manufacturer says that the technical know-how they contain costs the most, but also the materials used, hence they can not be disassembled. After two previous tests, I know that it really works - the MONUMENT platform <https://highfidelity.pl/@main-1072&lang=en> was one of the best products of this type I have had in the system, just like the **VACUUM INFINITY BLACK** filter.

Estacade stands are designed to work under any type of cable: power, signal, analog and digital. As the manufacturer says, you can also use one or two of them **to put small devices on top of them**, such as a router, a small linear power supply, and a DAC. You can also put Estacade *on* such a device, because, as I read in the e-mail sent to us, "anti-vibration properties work in every direction". The stands will then function similarly to the Monument platform.



A few simple words...

KONRAD RAŚ
Owner, designer

ESTACADE CABLE BASES are a **classic element of an audio system today** (emphasis - ed.) of every audiophile, who cares about the multifaceted improvements to the sound of his system. Our implementation of the stands is a continuation of the Monument anti-vibration platform product line, which has confirmed its impact on

HQCD, three generations more accurate than regular CDs, even from Japan, and the other is an ordinary Compact Disc.

The difference was huge, in favor of the latter. With the Estacade stands it was even bigger, which says **about the improvement of the system's resolution**. At the same time, however, it was clearer that an ordinary CD has more energy in it. As if MQA encoding was taking away some of it.

Take, for example, track number 6 on the aforementioned album. ANITA O'DAY, singing *Old Devil Moon*, sounds bright, even shrill. Probably **it was recorded with a ribbon microphone** which boosts some of the upper midrange. Also the master was prepared as for AM radio and low-quality turntables, with which music fans did not get treble. The stands made both versions more acceptable. It was still a recording of this type, but the limitations of the recording and mastering itself were better audible. It's just that I didn't tie them so much to the system, they were more independent of it.

| Our albums

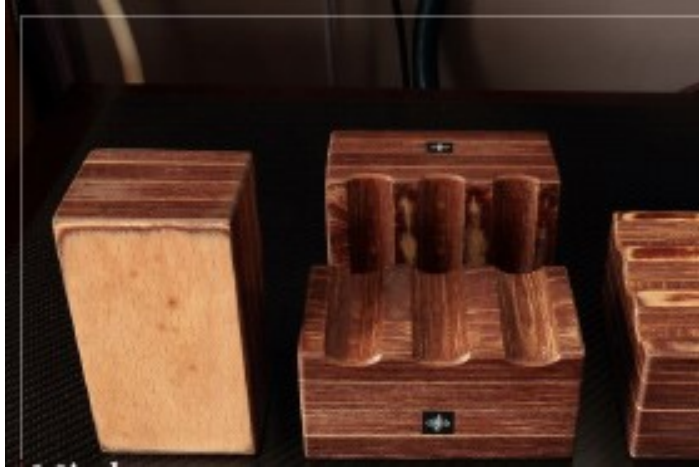
∖ VANGELIS *Blade Runner*

soundtrack, rež. Ridley Scott

Atlantic Records/Audio Fidelity AFZ 154

„Limited Numbered Edition ∖ No. 2398”, SACD/CD ∖
1982/2013

performance of several systems, as well as on the working environment of devices' electronics provided by the Vacuum Infinitum filter.



The basics of operation and the solution used are the same as in the Monument platform, except for its functionality related to the grounding. ESTACADE is the de facto a Monument platform **cut into several pieces**, like a large cake into smaller pieces. The inspiration was the desire to transfer the effects of using the platform to a wider group of customers. This is because the costs of the platform are high and few customers can afford it. But dividing these costs by 10 makes our products more accessible.

It should be noted that the effects are not only the 10% effects known from the Monument, which I hope will be confirmed in tests. The ESTACADE stands are also a good "sample" for customers interested in the Monument itself, but **transport and rental** of the former are much easier and cheaper for them.



PRESENTED IN 1982, the Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* was one of the titles that made a huge impact on SF filmmakers. Based on a short story by Philip K. Dick *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, the story continues to inspire, not only because of its visuals, but also music. It was written by **Greek composer Evángelos Odysséas Papathanassiou**, known as VANGELIS. However, he had to wait for the soundtrack to be released until 1994.

The album includes **some of the musical themes known from the movie**, but most of them were omitted. Conversely, a large part of the material on it did not fit on the official film track. Vangelis's music was composed and recorded by himself in his London-based Nemo Studios at the turn of 1981 and 1982. As his biographers testify, it was created without any preparation, almost "live", while the composer watched selected fragments of a film from a VHS tape on a small TV set.

In addition to the Steinway concert piano and the Fender Rhodes electric piano, the most important instruments on the disc are the analog synthesizers: the Yamaha CS-80, which we hear in the opening

The platform has a large surface area and weight. A single **stand is much smaller and lighter**. This division of a large product has its advantages. Monument is dedicated to a specific device. On the other hand, the Estacade stands can be used in many places at the same time. Thanks to this, it is possible to model the sound and find the places, devices, etc. most susceptible to their effects. The scalability of this solution is another advantage and makes it possible to spread such an investment over time.

Estacade **has three grooves by default**. For power cables, we usually use the central groove, but sometimes also signal cables have to run close to each other, then we use the side grooves. Sometimes there are also other signal cables behind a preamplifier or DAC, so we can use all three grooves. Obviously, it is not recommended to mix power cables with signal ones, or different types of signal cables. But... Contrary to appearances, placing many different signal cables next to each other on the **stands may be more advantageous** than puristically separating them, but without the stands. The grooves are designed to increase the contact between the base and the surface of the cables. If it were a flat surface, the surface would be only a tangent times the length of the cable run. In our case, we maximize this area. [KR](#)



ESTACADE STANDS are large cuboids with three grooves. Unlike usual, they do not run along the length of the stand, but across it. The stands look very nice and this is the first time that I **have no comments** to make quality of a product of this company. It is impossible to get inside, so I can't tell you what solutions the company uses. However, I assume that they use a mixture of materials with piezoelectric, ionizing and vibration absorbing properties.

sequence, as well as the VP-330 Vocoder Plus and the Roland CR-5000 electronic drums. Some of the tracks **have been mixed with excerpts from the dialogues** from the movie. The Vangelis studio was equipped with a 36-channel Quad/Eight Electronics 'Pacifica' mixer and a 24-track Lyrec TR-532 tape recorder, the same on which he had previously recorded the music of the Oscar-winning film *Chariots of Fire*.

The musician's Ampex ATR-100 mastering tape recorder was a two-channel one, and Scott's film was to be shown in cinemas in Dolby Stereo, and for that **four master tracks** were needed. So the label lent the composer a tape recorder of this type - one of the Studer's models. So the final mix was done twice - first in four channels, then in two. It used dbx Type I noise reduction for multitrack recording, and Dolby A for master tape recorders.

And it's one of the best-sounding electronic music albums. **Power, scale, mood - we get it all**. There is also a low extension in the bass, there are also high, strong cymbals. The best release comes from the American label Audio Fidelity, which in 2013 released *Blade Runner* on both the hybrid SACD/CD and red vinyl; mastering for both was done by KEVIN GRAY from Coherent Studio.

If you would like to hear **almost all of the material** that was created back then, as well as other tracks that Vangelis wrote under the influence of this film, you should reach for the 2007 version, with three discs: *Blade Runner Trilogy . 25th Anniversary*. Note: its Japanese version includes European pressings and only adds obi to them.

On May 18th 2018, the Audio Fidelity label ended its activity, and almost exactly four years later, on May 17th 2022, **at the age of 79, Vangelis passed**. These two events resulted in a significant increase in the price of this label's releases; the SACD version costs about \$ 300 (including shipping), and the LP disc costs \$ 100 more. But it's worth it,

The material used for the construction of Thunder Melody stands, as well as its other products, is Panzerholz, i.e. **plywood with anti-vibration properties**, in a dry version, which is produced for this brand upon, as its creators say, "strictly defined order". It is a specialist material, which is why the company receives it approx. 3-4 months from the order. The material is seasoned immediately after production and after making, so that it retains its properties for many years. The company has its own professionally equipped carpentry workshop, the staff of which, as we learn, has 30 years of experience in the craft.

The size of the stands **can be set individually**, so they can be slightly lower and a few cm higher. If we do not significantly increase the height (and keep the footprint), the starting price won't change, there will be no extra cost. Thanks to this, it will be possible to adjust the stands to a given device, taking into consideration the height of the power plugs, signal cable bundles behind the devices, etc. If, however, completely different sizes are needed (a different footprint), the price will have to be agreed individually with the manufacturer.

The stands came to me **in a metal case**. It is an increasingly popular form of packaging for Polish products. It looks nice, aesthetic, and the product is well protected. In the case of Thunder Melody, the padding could still be improved.

■ SOUND

HOW WE LISTENED Estacade Black stands were tested in the HIGH FIDELITY reference system. I have been using the Acoustic Revive RCI-3 stands in it for years, the **Pro Audio Bono PAB CERAMIC 100 CABLE SUPPORT** [PL] made a very good impression on me. The stands in my system work **under the speaker and power cables**.

it's really worth it ... ♦

YET ANOTHER COMPARISON OFFERED SIMILAR RESULTS, this time I listened to **two versions of the soundtrack** from Ridley Scott's film *Blade Runner*. Recently, one of my friends borrowed both versions from me, i.e. a hybrid SACD disc, prepared by the now defunct Audio Fidelity label, and a digital remaster released on the 25th anniversary of the film.

The friend said that the latter is better. Which, listening to them with the Estacade stands, I could not believe. The Audio Fidelity version is, in my opinion, a way more refined. It shows more information about space, colors, etc. The voice of Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford) is placed further away with it, and the reverberation accompanying the movements of the photo scanner is much longer. It was clear with the Acoustic Revive stands, but it was the Thunder Melody stands that **pushed these differences even further**, showed even better the momentum of the American analog remaster.

This is because everything came to life with them. Clearer sound of instruments, whether played with a double bass string in the opening of THE OSCAR PETERSON TRIO'S *We Get Request*, or guitars from *The Dark Side Of The Moon* by PINK FLOYD, each time the sound was more dynamic, better, better differentiated.

∖ 2 x 2 ↔ 2 x 4 Because the Estacade deepen the sound, move the back layers of the stage further away, discipline the bass, but also extend the frequency response. The presentation with them is **better differentiated and more pleasant**. Not that I would complain about my system without them - it's not like that. But it was just even better with them. And despite the fact that it was an additional cost of PLN 4,600 (for two), and then of PLN 9,200 (4) to a system costing over a million zlotys, i.e. a small percentage, the change in the sound was clear, permanent and very



The test methodology this time was different than usual because Mr. Raś wrote:

“ Since the scale of operation of a single stand is, in our opinion, more than clear ;), we have a suggestion to start testing with a minimum number of stands, i.e. a single one under the power supply. It would be best to do most of the test with a single stand compared to the reference. If the reference includes a greater number of stands, e.g. 2 or 3, we suggest that you compare them to ours, but just to one. The scale of an influence of a single stands is really big, and the costs are considerable.

It is not all. As the materials used in Estacade change the properties of the materials they come into contact with, minimizing surface charges, even after their removal, their effect is **still felt even after some time**. This makes a direct A/B/A comparison with a short time lag unreliable. Therefore, this time the test was conducted as follows: cables without stands → cables with ACOUSTIC REVIVE stands → cables with a

desirable.

I've mentioned using two and four stands - the test consisted of two stages. Two stands already gave me all that I mentioned. They can be used in parallel with the ones we have, while waiting for more. Because **it's worth the wait**. The next two deepened everything that was mentioned without changing the timbre. I mean, there was a change, but it resulted from an even better resolution and an even better differentiation, not from its correction. Therefore: 2 x Estacade = very good, but: 4 x Estacade = even better.

∨ **PLATFORM** Finally, I tried the stands as a mini-platform under the Wattson Audio Madson DAC and file player. The relatively inexpensive device **sounded much better** than when it only stood on the Acoustic Revive R-5005 discs. The sound got deeper, smoother and better differentiated. It is important that the bass was weighed down and more closely resembled what I get from my reference player. It was a big change, not a cosmetic fix.

SUMMARY

THUNDER MELODY seems to have found a formula that makes **its products clearly better** than most other products of this type. You also have to pay much more for them, but that's the norm in audio. It is a fairy tale that for two zlotys you can make something "similar" to expensive high-end products. Such claims are not true, or actually - a lie.

single ESTACADE stand → cables with two ESTACADE stands.



I dedicated a separate listening session to the WATTSON AUDIO MADSON file player placed on two stands.

Recordings used for the test | a selection

- ∨ MARTIN TAYLOR, *Kiss and Tell*, Columbia | Legacy 62210, „CD Rerefence”, Master CD-R (1999).
- ∨ *Jazz Hi-Res CD Sampler*, Universal Music Japan UICY-40226/7, CD + MQA-CD (2018).
- ∨ VANGELIS, *Blade Runner Trilogy. 25th Anniversary*, soundtrack, Universal Music K.K. (Japan) 550689 4, 3 x CD (1998, 1991/2007).
- ∨ VANGELIS, *Blade Runner*, soundtrack, rež. Ridley Scott, Atlantic Records/Audio Fidelity AFZ 154, „Limited Numbered Edition ∨ No.



Estacades are a good example of this. I have never heard **better-sounding cable supports** and only the excellent Pro Audio Bono supports, mentioned at the beginning, can be compared with them under the same conditions. Which is amazing, because both are Polish companies that offer technologies and solutions developed by them.

The Thunder Melody stands deepen the presentation, extend the perspective and energize the sound. This latter is also **smoother, more pleasant and more natural**. This is top-high-end and the product is a complete, finished one. Hence our highest award, **GOLD** FINGERPRINT. ■

2398", SACD/CD (1982/2013).

∨ THE OSCAR PETERSON TRIO, *We Get Request*, Verve/Lasting Impression Music LIM K2HD 032, K2HD Mastering, „24 Gold Direct-from-Master Edition UDM", Master CD-R (1964/2009).

∨ PINK FLOYD, *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, Harvest/Analogue Productions CAPP 81033 SA, SACD/CD (1973/2021).

„Limited Numbered Edition ∨ No. 2398", SACD/CD (1982/2013).

∨ MIE JOKÉ, *11 Songs for Music and Sound Lovers*, Ultra Art Records UA-1001, UHQCD (2017).