



Rack & roll

It might not be especially affordable, but **Neville Roberts** can't help but be impressed by this innovative hi-fi stand

We've come a long way since the mid-seventies when hi-fi racks were made from thin, laminated chipboard. These era-defining supports often came with castors fitted to the legs to enable the system to be moved round the room, with some designs having two modules to allow one to slide underneath the other, so that they could fit neatly into the available space. Back then, this type of furniture would have added considerable colouration to the sound and offered little isolation from external sources of vibrations.

Nowadays, we take audio equipment support much more seriously and racks provide a sturdy support while also reducing the possibility of transmitting unwanted vibrations from one piece of equipment to another. Apart from the obvious benefits of a well-designed rack with sensitive turntables, CD players also benefit with proper support reducing mechanical vibrations that can cause an increase in jitter.

This is precisely what the new Professional Rack System (PRS) from Blue Horizon is designed to do, as well as looking great in a domestic environment. Available in single and double-width shelves, you can combine any size or number of shelves. The shelf-height spacing can be configured to accommodate any combination of audio equipment to suit your needs. It

can be upgraded at any time by adding component shelves and spike isolation between tiers, as well as Blue Horizon Sanctum isolation platforms, which are useful for sensitive equipment such as record decks and CD players.

The shelves are made from a bamboo laminate triple-layer multi-grain composite. The thin top and bottom layers have the grain running in opposing directions and the thick central lamination runs vertically. This creates what Blue Horizon calls a "chaotic structure", designed to stop standing waves within the shelf and to control resonances. Each tier is supported by solid machined stainless-steel uprights, terminating in spikes that act as shock absorbing elements for draining resonance, without adding any sonic signatures themselves. The rack incorporates a cable management system to keep loose wires under control and it also allows signal and power cables to be kept separated (see the *Hi-Fi Tidy Up* feature in *HFC 425*). It is available in bamboo, piano black and piano white finishes.

Sound quality

When placing my hi-fi equipment in the PRS rack compared with standing it on a normal table, I immediately detect definite audible improvements. In particular, when playing an LP of Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No.5*

performed by the Virtuosi of England, the bass has distinctly more attack and punch and it is noticeably tighter. The music seems to flow more effortlessly and I find that silences during natural pauses in the music are so much more tangible. The flute in the opening allegro is melodic and flows more effortlessly, while the tinkling of the harpsichord is clearer and more precise. The improvement in the bass is very evident when playing a recording of Beethoven's *Symphony No.4 in B flat major*, performed by the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra and conducted by Rudolf Kempe. The allegro vivace is powerful and exhilarating with the bass elements much more refined. The stirring and majestic performance is splendidly conveyed to the listener.

Conclusion

Some may find this a considerable outlay for a hi-fi support system, but the PRS is a very well-made unit with great modular flexibility that can grow as your setup does. Available in a choice of three attractive finishes, it has real sonic benefits with the ability to make music sound natural and to free it from external interferences ●

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Blue Horizon Professional Rack System

ORIGIN
UK/Slovakia

TYPE
Hi-fi support rack

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
Single-width shelf:
600 x 30 x 450mm
Double-width shelf:
1,140 x 30 x 450mm

FEATURES
● Laminated bamboo construction
● Stainless steel uprights
● Customisable configuration

DISTRIBUTOR
Sound Foundations

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Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★ **LIKE:** High-quality build; modern styling; useful design features

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★☆ **DISLIKE:** High price; styling may not suit all

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★ **WESAY:** A versatile rack system that offers clear sonic improvements

FEATURES
★★★★★

OVERALL

★★★★★