

## Mad Scientist Audio BlackPod Ceramic Footers

by Nicholas Ripley

**M**ad Scientist Audio is the small husband and wife team of Bob and Kay Prangnell, working out of Auckland, New Zealand. Bob Prangnell has been a keen audiophile for over 40 years, and, when not designing electronics hardware and software, he loves nothing more than a spot of left-field experimentation.

A couple of years ago, Prangnell hit upon what he calls 'Black Discus', a proprietary epoxy-based composite, which is said to eliminate the demon RFI, but I think is more successful as a constrained layer damping material.

Mad Scientist's BlackPod Ceramic Footers are like a solid Oreó with a filling of Black Discus, with one face of the Oreó sandwich containing a ball made of one of three materials; Alumina ceramic, Zirconia ceramic, and Tungsten Carbide cermet. Prangnell prefers the sound of different kinds of ceramic ball in test, and you'll either buy a set of two Alumina and one Zirconia or spend \$30 more and buy a pair of Zirconia with one TC ball. We were given precisely five to test, two each Alumina and Zirconia, and one Tungsten Carbide, allowing us to build two different sets for comparison.

You can place anything audio-related (and less than 80kg) on three of these feet, with the ball facing upwards or downwards, typically depending the relative hardness of the surfaces. Mad Scientist suggests starting with source components or valve amps, and recommends a lot of experimentation to find the ideal layout. I found it best using the odd one out of the three directly under the centre of the power transformer, and the other two placed to minimise wobble on one component (balls up – literally, not metaphorically), while on a CD player, the lone pod was best under the transport mechanism (facing ball down) while the other two were at the rear of the player with balls up again. Clearly, experimentation is key.

Typically, I've been wary of using aftermarket footers because they often tangle with the tonal balance, pitching the treble forward and bright. These don't; even in standard Ceramic Footer guise, they retain a neutral balance throughout. As you experiment, you find the sound becomes smoother in some positions, more dynamic or more taut in



others. You'll go through a couple of weeks of *audiophilia nervosa*, then settle down for the long listen.

Regardless of fine-tuning, the sound takes richness, dimensionality, and tonal beauty throughout. Bass is powerful and controlled, too, and this is where spending that little extra on the TC/Zirconia trio comes into its own – the standard guise gives greater bass weight at the expense of tempo and bass precision, while the better set restores temporal precision throughout.

The acid test for such components is more on their removal – do I miss them enough to put them back? With the standard Ceramic BlackPod, the answer was 'probably', but the TC ball version, they were a definite worthwhile inclusion to the system, with no great downsides. That represents something of a footer first for me! Strongly recommended, especially in the TC version. +

### DETAILS

**Mad Scientist Audio:** BlackPod Ceramic Footers

**Price:** \$179 (Ceramic BlackPod), \$209 (Ceramic BlackPod with TC Ball)

**Manufactured by:** Mad Scientist Audio

**URL:** [www.madscientist-audio.com](http://www.madscientist-audio.com)