

REAL TRAPS

Mini Trap and Micro Trap

Real Traps' new acoustic-treatment systems have top producers like Nile Rogers very excited indeed... **Huw Price** discovers why.

MINI TRAP, MICRO TRAPManufacturer **Real Traps**Price **Mini Trap: £280****(single); £999 (for 4)****Micro Trap: £220****(single); £400 (pair)**

Contact

Sonic Distribution**01525 409560****www.sonic****distribution.com**

Real Traps' Mini Traps and Micro Traps are made from slabs of a dense

Rockwool-type material covered in acoustically transparent fireproof fabric and encapsulated in a metal frame. The fibreglass insulation inside offers greater absorption power than acoustic foam, and they work even more efficiently when mounted away from walls. An air gap behind the panels enables sound to enter from the back as well as the front, and the vents in the metal frames open up the sides, too.

Tapping the front of the panels produces a clear note, because each trap has membranes tensioned across the front and back. This is designed to extend the useful frequency range down to 150Hz when hung on a wall, or 90Hz when corner mounted. So, in effect, these are membrane bass traps with a substantial absorbent layer to widen the effective bandwidth.

Tried and tested

We started testing in a room measuring 317cm x 286cm, with four ceiling-mounted Auralex foam tiles above the listening position and a pair of large transmission line speakers extending down to 30Hz. The walls were solid, with a thick wool rug covering around 66% of the laminate floor. Typically, the room had substantial bass build-up near the walls and in the corners, with an obnoxious flutter echo in the highs. Listening tests revealed flabby bass with indistinct harmonic content and a boxy resonance to lead vocals. Although the sound was lively, high frequencies were harsh – female vocals sounded edgy and sibilant.

Starting off with two Mini Traps in the corners, the bass tightened up immediately, but the overall sound became a little top heavy. Adding another pair of corner traps balanced the sound, and although things seemed quieter, the edginess started to disappear. Music flowed from the speakers and imaging was much improved, with low-level details like room ambience and subtle

reverb effects becoming easier to discern. Getting closer to the suggested layout that Sonic Distribution provides for every customer, we added two more panels to minimise reflections from the side walls. Imaging became even sharper and kick drums became punchier, but the music seemed a little 'speaker-bound' and lifeless. Putting the two Micro Traps on the side walls finally cured the flutter echo, but the extreme bottom end still varied dramatically throughout the room. Old-school engineers who grew up in heavily damped control rooms might feel perfectly at home, but subjectively, the listening experience becomes less enjoyable.

Further experimentation produced our optimum layout, with both front corner panels moved to the back wall. One Mini Trap was placed on its side along the side wall, with the two Micro Traps upright on the opposite wall. The remaining Mini Trap was placed sideways behind the speakers and four foam corner wedges were placed behind the corner panels. Throughout the tests, the optimum listening position appeared to be around 1.5m from the speakers, but our only practical working position was 1m away and this final layout made this possible. Compared to the Auralex foam tiles, the high frequencies were less dramatically curtailed and overall frequency balance was better. In addition, dark foam panels can have an adverse effect on the vibe of a small room, whereas the white Real Traps we tried are far less obtrusive.

A moving experience

Real Traps are designed to absorb, and they do their job very efficiently. Their portability enables you to fine-tune your room without covering the walls with messy glue, plus you can completely remove the panels if you decide to alter your room acoustics for recording. Sonic Distribution recommended six Mini Traps and two Micro Traps for our room, but an over-reliance on



A relatively small outlay can dramatically improve the sound in your studio.

absorption does make music sound lifeless. A little diffusion might prove equally effective, complementing the absorbers while retaining a natural sense of liveness and ambience. **MTM**

SUMMARY**KEY FEATURES**

- Metal-clad membrane absorbers
- Mini Trap: 2ft x 4ft or 2ft x 2ft
- Micro Trap: 2ft x 4ft
- Weight: 16lbs (Mini Trap), 9lbs (Micro Trap)
- Thickness: 3.25 inches (Mini Trap), 1.25 inches (Micro Trap)
- Black or white finish

WHY BUY

- Efficient and effective absorbers
- Better than foam at low frequencies
- Easily mounted and removed
- Can be cleaned with sticky tape
- Absorb sound, not dust
- White colour is unobtrusive
- Flameproof and easily cleaned
- Installation plans provided

WALK ON BY

- Much cheaper in the USA
- Less effective at very low frequencies

VERDICT

Real Traps makes extremely effective and beautifully constructed absorption panels for wall or corner mounting.

**METHOD SPOT**
Standing tall

Real Traps can be attached to upright microphone stands by threading Jubilee clips through special eyelets on the rear of the metal frame. You can then place them anywhere in your control room, or move them into a difficult live room to control the recording space as required.