

Tape Op Gear Reviews



Primacoustic *Primakit Studio in a Box* *acoustical treatment*

My control room, built into an old engine factory, has some odd shapes and features that make it fairly non-rectangular. Therefore, when we designed the room, we knew that if we used an off-the-shelf acoustic treatment, it would have to be extremely customizable. Primacoustic makes a series of highly-modular, ready-to-install Primakits that make specification and installation incredibly easy, whether you have a normal room or a non-standard space like I do. Five different types of foam modules are included. The installation manual and product brochure (both well-written and informative publications come in the kit), recommend numerous installation patterns and include a good explanation of expected benefits. Engineer and audio-hacker Rachel Uwa and I followed the instructions and had the 13 ft x 18 ft control room treated in four hours. In addition to the foam modules, our London Studio 16 kit came with more foam-safe Liquid Nails adhesive than we needed. Installation onto drywall and brick couldn't have been easier. And sure enough, the different module styles—assembled into “walls”—made for a professional look, despite the “challenging” architecture.

After installation, we ran the same FFT and RT60 tests we'd done pre-Primakit. (See www.kimcheerecords.com/articles/studioacoustics/ for charts, photos, and Rachel's comments.) More importantly, we listened with our own ears and heard an obvious difference. Mud gone. Imaging cleaned up. And as Rachel described the control room sound before we installed the Primakit: “I even had to search to find my low end because the high end was so harsh and distracting.” After installation: “Now, the highs are crisp, the midrange is well defined, and the low end is right where it should be.” The previous week, I'd recorded drum tracks using a minimal mic setup. With lots of mics on the drums, I oftentimes have to fight the crunchy harshness of the hi-hat bleeding into all the mics—a result of “phasey” comb-filtering. In the pre-Primakit control room, the hi-hat sounded harsh, despite the minimal mic'ing. Post-Primakit, that harshness in the hi-hat completely disappeared. Turns out the phasey-ness that I had heard was a result of uncontrolled reflections in my control room, now subdued by the Primakit.

What about competing products? There are two characteristics of Primacoustic foam that make it stand out as the best of the breed. One I've already mentioned: extreme modularity. The other: unlike other foam treatments, the Primacoustic foam has far less “marketing shape” to it. Anechoic wedges and pyramids made of foam are far less effective than broad sheets or angles (of the same outer dimensions) — with open-cell foam, more material equates to more absorption, and with Primacoustic foam, you get twice as much material. What about rigid fiberglass? Fiberglass has better acoustical properties for a given thickness (and is fire-rated), but I couldn't find a system utilizing fiberglass that's as modular and easy to install as a Primakit. So when it came to choosing an acoustic treatment for my control room, it was an easy decision: Primacoustic Primakit was the clear winner. (\$450-\$750 MSRP; www.primacoustic.com) -AH