

## MILLENNIUM Silentor and CD Enhancement

<http://www.enjoythemusic.com/superioraudio/guiltypleasures/1209/>

### Digital Enhancements

The CD era was already a few years old when I reluctantly took the plunge. I didn't really like the sound, which remained generally hard, cold and glary for several more years, but as more and more labels abandoned the LP it became a matter of CD or nothing for a lot of music I wanted to hear. I feared we were entering the age of "Crappy Sound Forever."

Given the state of digital audio in those early years, it was no surprise to find CD tweaks becoming a significant segment of the audio marketplace. Remember Armor All? Or the little rubber damping bands we used to put around the edges of the discs? For a long time, it seemed to me that just about *anything* you did to a CD was likely to make it at least a little more listenable. I'm not sure I could even remember at this point every spray treatment and damping disc I've tried over the last 20 years — although most of them were at least somewhat beneficial.

Digital audio has gotten a great deal better, of course, as we learned more about dealing with jitter, adjusted recording methodologies, and developed higher-resolution formats. It now seems inevitable that these shiny little discs will fade into the sunset before too much longer, as hi-rez downloads and Internet-based on-demand hi-rez playback become more commonplace. But in the meantime, there are still myriad tweaks to improve the sound of discs. Here are two of the best I've found:

### Millennium M-CD Carbon Fiber Disc Damper

Like the LP mat, Millennium's M-CD damper is only 3 mm thick (with no fabric backing). That thinness makes it suitable for use in virtually any transport, top- or front-loading. I first heard about it when an audio buddy raved about how much it had helped his Metronome player. For a couple of years I had been using the Marigo damping disc, a lightweight device made of treated (with what I don't know) stiff paper. But the improvement with the



Millennium was immediately apparent, and most exciting. With every disc, regardless of musical genre or age of the recording, the M-CD damper improved the sound. Deeper and more precise bass was most immediately noticeable, but it didn't take long to perceive a more organized and coherent spatial presentation and more beautiful tonality on voices and instruments — and, importantly, a wider, less compressed dynamic range.

This thing has benefits beyond simple disc playback. Because it is so thin, I can use it when ripping a disc onto my iMac and burning CDs from the computer. For instance, I ripped the Ivan Fischer Mahler Fourth — a wonderful-sounding SACD that was one of my 2009 Blue Note Award choices — onto the iMac, and burned a Redbook (16/44) CD of it.

Comparative playback over my Modwright/Denon player was fascinating. I had previously ripped and burned the same performance before receiving the Millennium damper, and had found that the copy I burned from the iMac, though Red Book rather than SACD, was *very* close in sound to the SACD layer of the original disc. With the new Millennium-aided copy, or when playing the performance from the iMac through a USB DAC, there were only fairly inconsequential differences between the original and the ripped or burned versions — except that here and there I thought the copies sounded a little better! HIGHLY recommended — but let me emphasize that for ripping/burning discs, I've used it only on my iMac. For any other computer, proceed at your own risk.