

ARTISAN GAMING MOUSEPAD REVIEW



INTRO

I wasn't familiar with the Artisan name, but the recent raves I've been reading about, piqued my interest into trying one, and I ended up continuing on to purchase several others.

So instead of doing a review focused on a particular mousepad, I am approaching this slightly differently by doing a comparison of the Artisan mousepads that I have in hand instead. I'll also be sharing collected specs and information, which could hopefully act as a guideline for those looking for their first Artisan mousepad.

The mice used to test the mousepads are Cyborg RAT7s (MMO7 and Contagion). Keep in mind that this is a very heavy mouse and from my experience, using a lighter mouse could give a different feel even when used on the very same mousepad.

PACKAGING



Very simple cardboard packaging, sealed on all four sides. They didn't go overboard with their packaging like the majority of gaming products. I am personally happier with this. I'd rather own a good product than having a good packaging to look at and save myself from worrying whether or not one-third of my money goes into the packaging alone :)

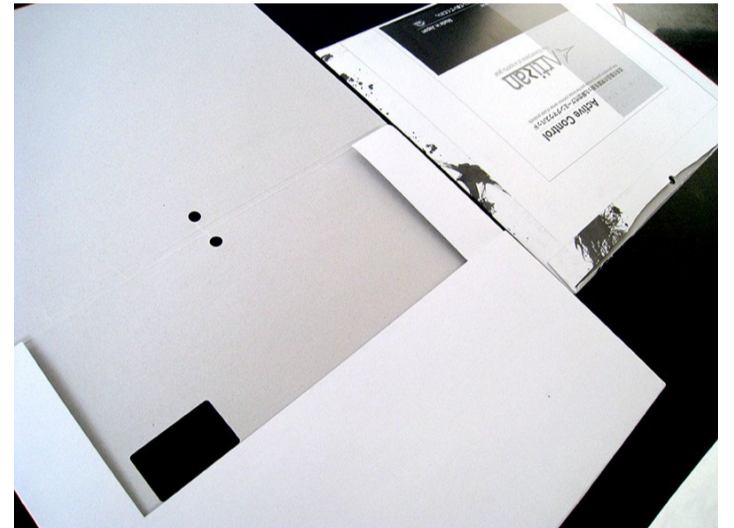


I had an old batch, which is packaged slightly differently. But also in a simple cardboard cover.

Since the older packaging was not entirely sealed, it required to be sealed in a plastic wrap.

However, I personally prefer the old packaging better. Reason for it will be discussed later.

Their packagings, however, consistently keeps the enclosed mousepads flat, unlike most gaming clothpads which are rolled into a tube.



CHOICES

Looking at Artisan's gaming mousepad line up may seem dauntingly overwhelming at first, but there really is only 3 factors to consider.

Its surface type:

[Hien](#)

[Zero](#)

[Raiden](#)

[Shiden](#)

Shidenkai

[Hayabusa](#)

[Hayate](#)

(Most of which will be covered in this review, with the exception of the Shidenkai).

Its backing hardness:

HARD

MID

SOFT

XSOFT

VE

Its size:

L

M

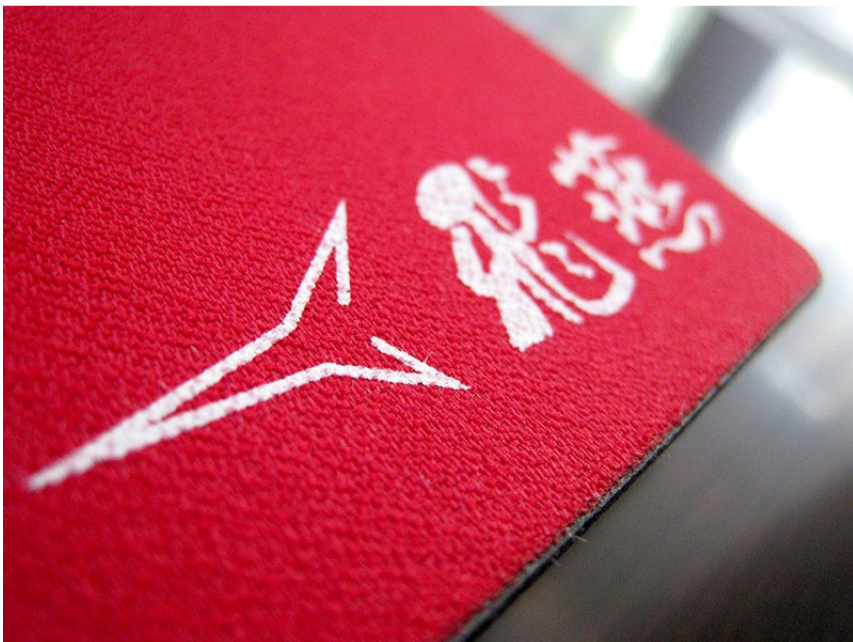
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SURFACE TYPES

HIEN
HARD M



Available Sizes	S / M / L
Available Hardness	HARD / MID / SOFT / VE
Available Colors	Wine Red / Navy Blue / Japan Black / Sakura Pink
Surface & Texture	The HARD Hien I have is somewhat rigid and sturdy for a cloth pad. It does not feel entirely cloth-like. It has a very unique surface that is covered with large grains with rounded "tips", giving it a textured look but not all that rough to touch. The absence of a scratchy feel makes the Hien's surface comfortable to touch and rub your hands against.
Build and Durability	Cut is very clean, no visible fringing and surface remains pristine after prolonged use.
Glide	Albeit on the slower side and being a control type, the glide on the Hien still feels quite effortless. Texture is not overly pronounced but feedback is still present and perceivable. During a glide test, the vertical glide on the Hien is significantly slower than its horizontal glide, oddly enough this difference is not all that apparent on normal usage.



ZERO
XSOFTL



Available Sizes	S / M / L
Available Hardness	MID / XSOFTL
Available Colors	Black
Surface & Texture	Polyester-like material with fairly sparse weaving, giving it a textured and slightly harsh feel to it. The XSOFTL Raiden feels soft and spongy when pressed.
Build and Durability	Cutting is mostly clean with some minor raggedness on some sections. After a week of continuous use, visible thread-like dust gets collected on the surface, and the portion that gets rubbed against my wrist turns whitish. The whitish section can be easily clean by wiping it with a wet cloth. Unfortunately, the same could not be said in regards to the dust. After rigorous cleaning, several dust strands still gets trapped within the cloth's weaving. Here are some before and after photos.
Glide	The Zero provides heavy initial motion and excellent stopping power, giving the user excellent control on mouse movements. All that contributes to making Zero the slowest Artisan mousepad. Its textures give dense but not very pronounced feedbacks. It has uniform horizontal and vertical glide.



RAIDEN

MID M



- Available Sizes M / L
- Available Hardness MID / XSOFT
- Available Colors Coffee Black
- Surface & Texture Its surface seems to be very tightly woven giving a smooth finish with little texture.
- Build and Durability The color on the Raiden appears rather patchy. There are [different shades of streaks](#) running across horizontally. Also, there seems to be a [glue-like substance](#) exposed around the edge of the Raiden and are slightly sticky to touch.
- Glide The tight weaving and smooth surface does collect some dust, but can be cleaned with relative ease.
- Mouse glides slickly on it with very minimal (almost non-existent) feedback. Mouse initial glide is very effortless, but the slickness of the glide and lackness of texture to provide any significant feedback, makes stopping the pointer to pinpoint an object rather difficult, especially on high dpi. But the Raiden should please those who prefers their mousepad to be smooth, without any perceptible texture.
- Vertical glide feels ever so slightly slower than its horizontal glide.



SHIDEN
XSOFT M



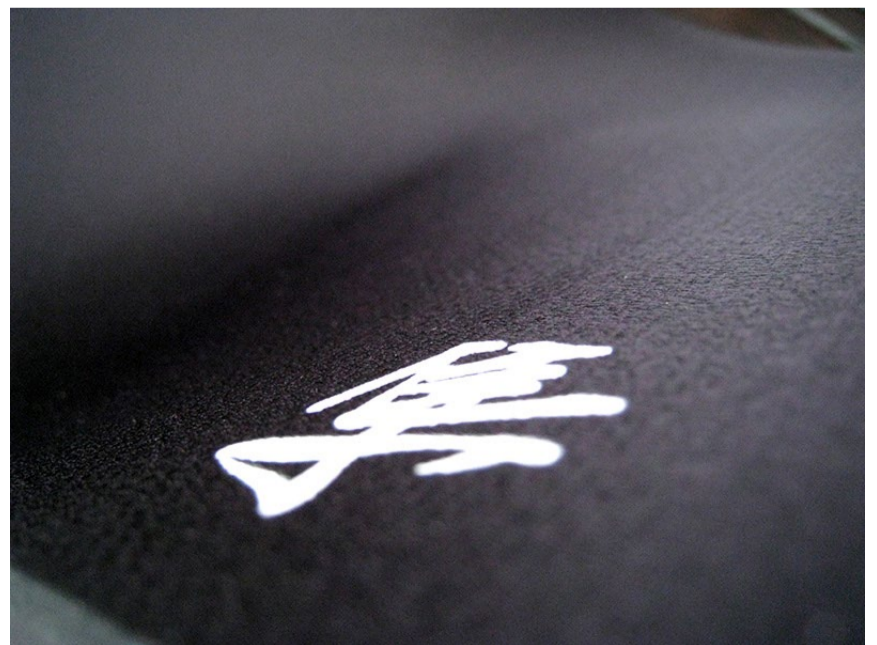
Available Sizes	S / M / L
Available Hardness	MID / XSOFT / VE
Available Colors	Snow White
Surface & Texture	Its surface is very unique. It resembles the surface of a hard-surface mousepad, but yet still pliable. It is said that the surface is glass-coated, which could be the reason why sparkly glitters can be seen all over its surface. It has smooth and dense textures that are pleasant to touch.
Build and Durability	Very clean cut and feels of good quality. Its smooth surface will not trap dust and should be very easy to clean. I have heard of comments stating that due to its white coloring, it gets dirty over time. The older batch that I had did come slightly dirty, but this newer batch is still as white as the day I received it. And it still performs the same too.
Glide	Glide is incredibly fast and smooth, but yet still retain some feedback from the smooth textures. Due to the hard-like surface, gliding a mouse across it could be slightly noisy, but nowhere as noisy as a hard pad. It's as fast as a hard pad, minus the noise, still bendable when needed and still soft to land a mouse on. The Shiden have uniform horizontal and vertical glides.t



HAYABUSA
XSOFT M



Available Sizes	M / L
Available Hardness	XSOFT
Available Colors	Bright Black
Surface & Texture	Surface is very smooth, soft and velvety. Its weaving patterns forms visible vertical lines and gives the surface a slightly glossy look.
Build and Durability	Upon unboxing it, the mousepad feels very soft and seemingly fragile. But the Hayabusa turns out to be quite durable. Its surface has not suffered any change, nor does it trap dust between its weaving. Hayabusa's edges are fairly prickly. And the weaving, or rather, the cutting of my Hayabusa is slightly slanted .
Glide	The glide on the Hayabusa is rather ambivalent. Using my RAT on it, the Hayabusa have a slow surface with a fair amount of drag. However, when I tried a Microsoft Intellimouse Explorer on the Hayabusa, its glide felt extremely smooth. In fact, me along with 2 other friends each did a blind test and couldn't tell it apart from the Hayate. Reason for this will be discussed further later. But no matter the mouse, placing it on the Hayabusa feels very cushiony. Its glide is very smooth and despite having minimal feedback, stopping a mouse on the Hayate can be done with ease. Its vertical glide feels a fair bit slower than its horizontal glide. It is said that some sensors don't work too well with the Hayabusa, but the RAT seems to track fine.



HAYATE
SOFT M



Available Sizes	M / L
Available Hardness	SOFT
Available Colors	Japan Violet (Note: To my eyes, there is not the slightest tinge of violet. It appears closer to a grayish-black).
Surface & Texture	Surface is covered with compact textures and feels slightly rough to the hand. Its material is very unique.
Build and Durability	The Hayate is very nicely made with clean cut and cloth that feels of good quality. However, after occasionally taking the mousepad in and out of its cardboard box (no more than 5 times), the sides which gets rubbed against the cardboard <u>started to fray</u> . This newer packaging design is not suitable for storage purposes, unlike the packaging from the older batch. The major issue with the Hayate is that the cloth fibres tends to trap dust and is extremely arduous to rid of. These dust build up do eventually degrade the tracking performance of the RAT's PTE sensor.
Glide	The glide on the Hayate is very slick but not overly so. There still is the slightest amount of friction and its texture is very perceptible. These attributes makes mouse movements very controllable, even when its glide is considerably fast. It provides very good balance between control and speed. Its vertical glide feels a tiny bit slower than its horizontal glide.



GLIDE COMPARISON

For this test, every mousepads were placed on top of a flat and rigid surface, inclined at an approximate angle of 10° (10.8° to be exact). A wireless Logitech Nano VX with both its AAA batteries removed was used and released to let it glide over the inclined mousepad. The process was repeated on every mousepads, each on a landscape orientation, followed by a portrait orientation to test its horizontal and vertical glide respectively.

Below is the video recording of it:

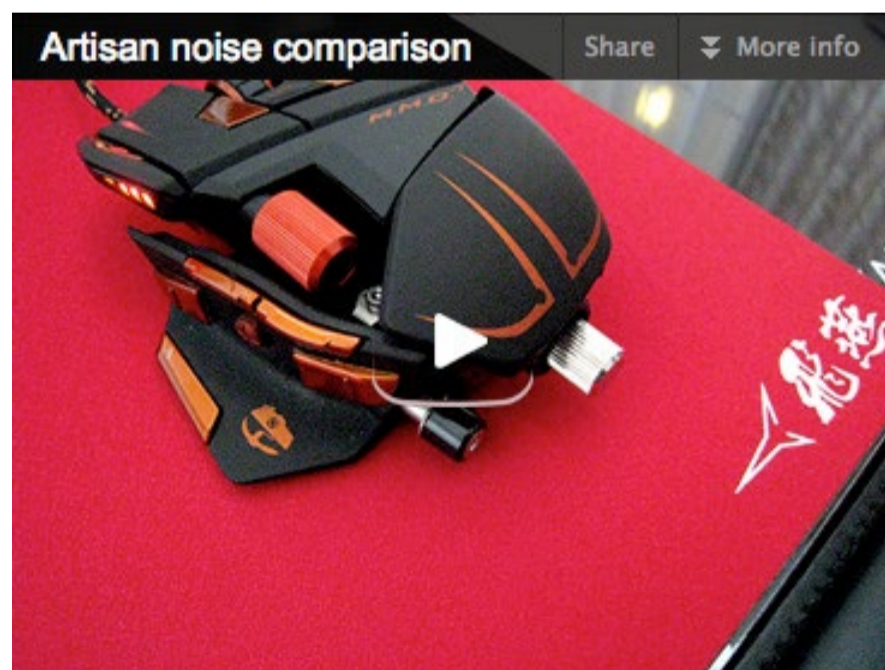


Taking only horizontal glides into account, the video shows the mousepads in order, from the fastest to the slowest. The Raiden looks equally fast as the Shiden in the video (or even faster), but in actual use with the RAT, the Raiden feels slightly slower.

NOISE COMPARISON

For those concern enough with the noise produced when a mouse or palm glides across it, the following video should provide a rough idea.

Adjust your speaker volume such that the mouse clicks at the beginning of the video is about the right level.



LIFT-OFF DISTANCE

There is no remarkable reduction in lift-off distances, however, there are some slight variations between them.

Tests are done using common CD-R CDs and also the clear plastic cover that usually comes with it.

These clear plastic covers look roughly to be 1/2 a CD in thickness.

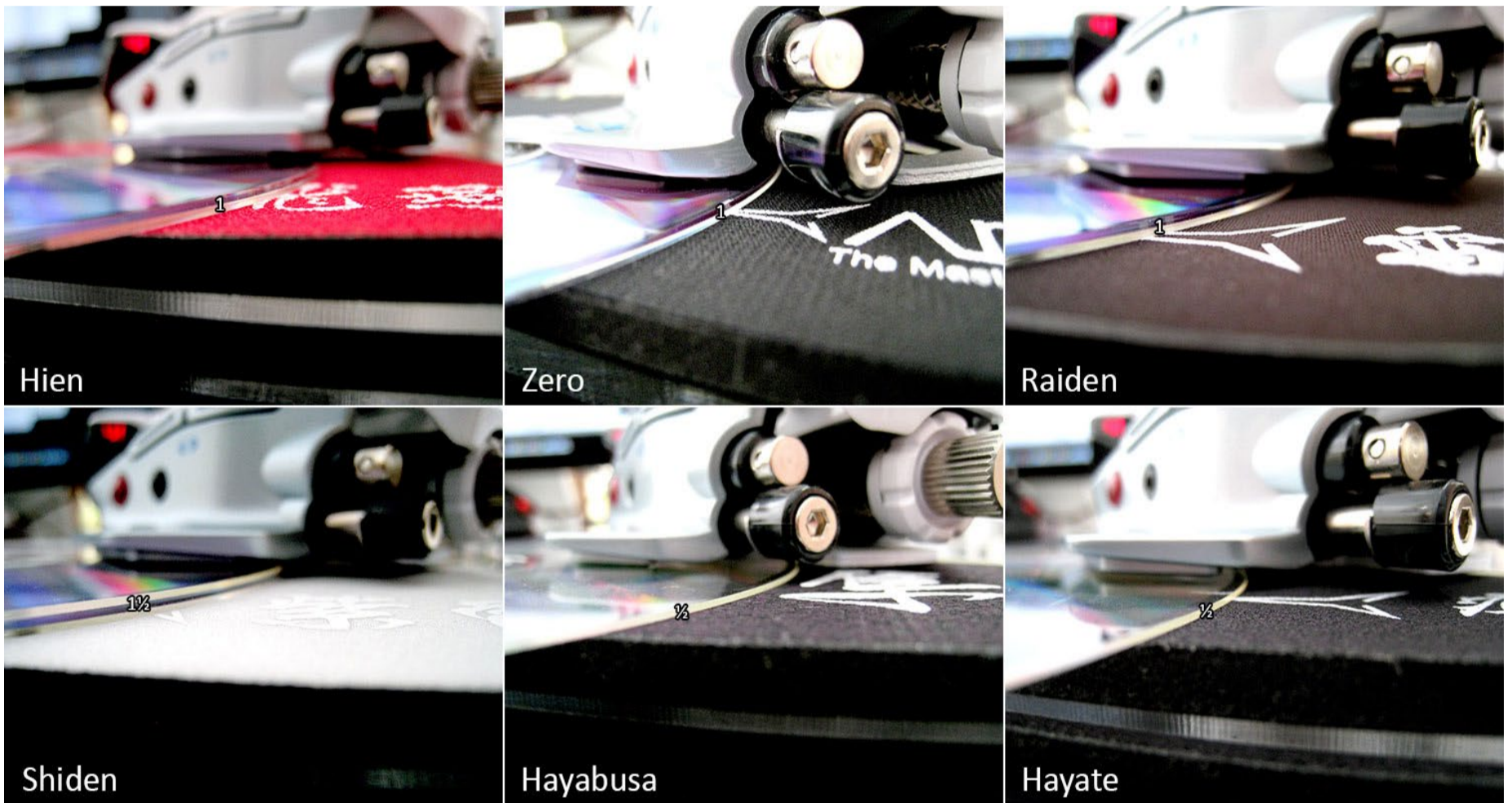
But to be certain of it, I measured its thickness and while a normal CD measures 1.25mm thick, the clear cover measures 0.63mm.

$1.25\text{mm} / 0.63\text{mm} = 0.504$, which I would say is pretty much 1/2 a CD :)

It might be the nature of PTE sensors, but I notice that the sensors on the RAT seem to adjust itself and could eventually track on heights where it previously couldn't.

So my approach was to glide the mouse around on the mousepad surface for a couple of seconds before placing it on the CD stack. Should it not give any sign of tracking within the second, I took the assumption that it's not sensing the mousepad surface and moved on to reduce the CD height further, each time going back to glide the mouse around the surface of the mousepad before placing it on the CD stack.

Below are my findings:



The Hayabusa and the Hayate have a lift-off distance of 1/2 a CD which is approximately 0.63mm.

Hien, Zero and Raiden lift-off distance are at 1 CD which translates to 1.25mm.

The Shiden should be less than 1.88mm because there was a slight delay before it started tracking at 1 1/2 CD.

MISCELLANEOUS

The logo on every Artisan mousepads seem to be screen-printed, and appears to sit on top of the mousepad surface giving a harsh texture. But thankfully, every logo are printed in a very small scale, and also placed at the far bottom-right corner of the mousepad, making it almost impossible to run a mouse sensor over it.

It is also advertised that tracking performance on Artisan's mousepads wouldn't be degenerated by sweat.

I don't happen to be a sweaty person so I went to test this by intentionally dribbling some water on it.

I did experience a slightly slower glide, but it would take a lot of sweat to get it this wet :)

BACKING

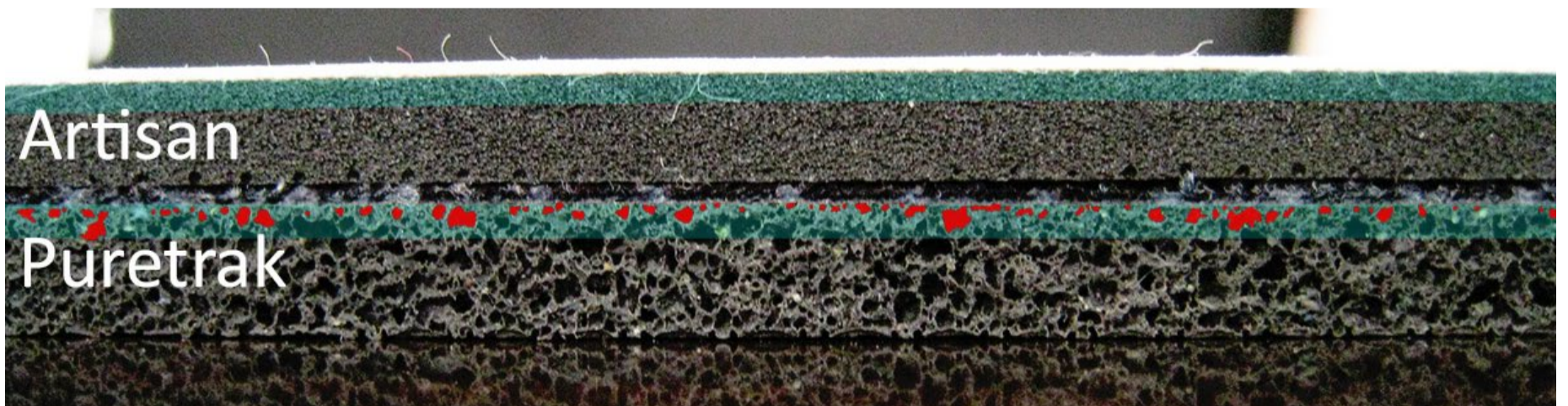
It is said that Artisan's mousepads consist of 3 layers; its surface, middle layer, and bottom grip.

However, these layers aren't all that apparent, except for the old batch Shiden, which had three visible layers and its bottom layer can be peeled.



The current batch doesn't have any visible third layer. So henceforth, to simplify things, I will refer them as the 'backing' layer :)

Artisan mousepads have a unique backing. Its backing layer is very packed, unlike other gaming mousepads, which have large pores on their backing layer. The Artisan's more compact layer is advertised to be part of several aspects that makes Artisan mousepads different.



The areas marked in red are air gaps that are right underneath the tracking surface, and is believed to give irregular tracking. I couldn't comment on how detrimental these are on tracking performance, nor can I sense the difference between them.

BACKING HARDNESS

As previously stated, there are 5 different backing hardness in total: HARD / MID / SOFT/ XSOFT / VE.

The most apparent difference is the softness and pliability of the mousepad.



HARD level mousepads remain rather rigid when lifted. Its denseness and stiffness can be felt when landing a mouse on it. On the other hand, XSOFT level mousepads goes limp when lifted, but mouse placement feels airy and soft.

Performance-wise, these differences in hardness gives the user options to, more or less, fine-tune their mousepad selection because these differences do affect glides to a certain extent.

Artisan's official site categorized glide aspect into 3 categories: Initial movement / Stability / Stopping power.

Surface	Good ————— Std.				
Initial movement	ShidenKai	Shiden	Hayate	Hayabusa	Hien
Stability	Hien	Shiden	ShidenKai	Hayate	Hayabusa
Stopping ease	Hien	Hayabusa	Hayate	Shiden	ShidenKai

Hardness	Good ————— Std.			
Stability	HARD	MID	SOFT	XSOFT
Stopping ease	XSOFT	SOFT	MID	HARD

Initial movement is generally inversely proportional to stopping ease (with few exceptions).

I am uncertain how they define 'stability' here, but my guess is, it refers to the glide resistance that is in relation with the surface rigidity. That is to say stiffer surface such as the Hien and Shiden provides more consistent resistant when compared to the suppler surface of the Hayabusa. This, evidently, is the case especially when a heavier mouse is used.

The different hardness provides users the option to fine-tune their choice of mousepad.

For example, should the user chose to choose a Shiden, but find the MID Shiden's glide slightly too fast, the speed can be slightly mitigated by opting for an XSOFT Shiden. The Shiden MID and XSOFT that I have tried have minimal speed differences though.

Most likely because the Shiden have a stiffer surface and isn't much affected by the different backing hardness.

The peculiarity of the Hayabusa previously mentioned might also be the effect due to its XSOFT backing. The Hayabusa have a soft surface and having a soft backing would mean that the surface form could be easily affected by weight. My guess as to why the heavier RAT mouse feels more sluggish than the lighter IME can perhaps be explained by [this \(?\)](#).

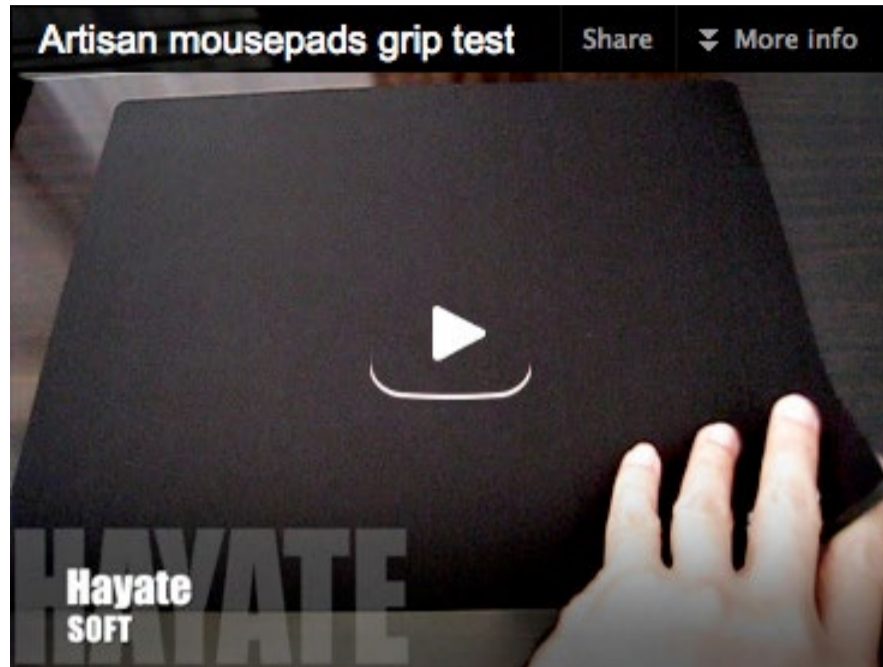
Similarly, the harder the backing, the more stable its glide is. While softer backings, provide better stopping resistance.

GRIP

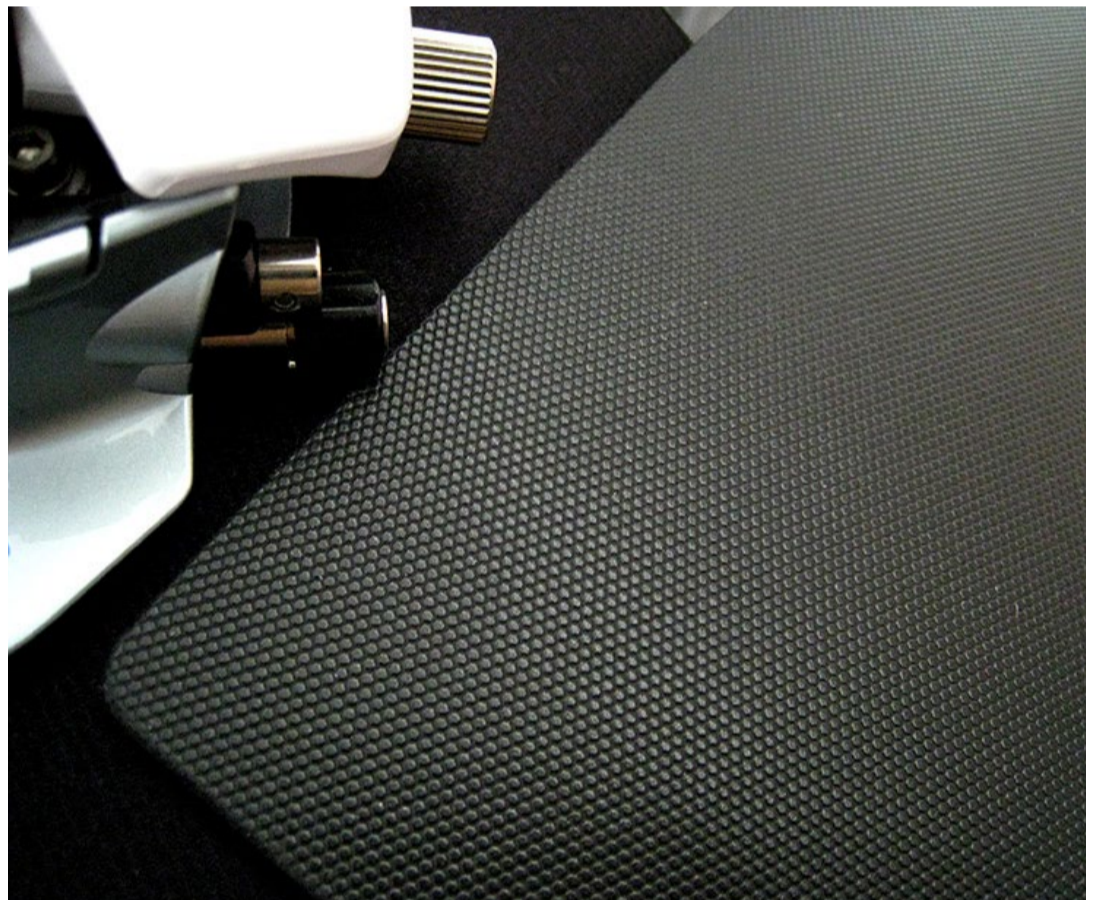
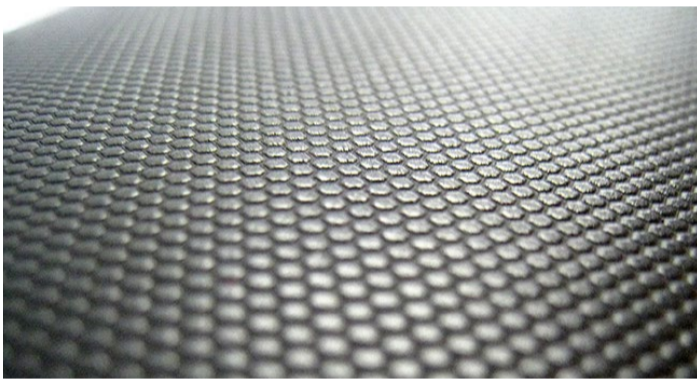
Artisan's mousepads grip varies from hardness to hardness.

But in general, almost all Artisan mousepad grips very securely, to the extent that some of them requires a bit of effort to peel off from a smooth table surface. So it should stay in place very well on most surfaces even on vigorous gaming sessions.

Below is a video demonstrating how well they grip:



With the exception of the old batch (and [the VE](#)), all bottom grips appear to be visually similar.



SIZE

Elaborating their S/M/L sizes would be stating the obvious.

However, it's interesting to note that there is a slight discrepancy with one of the mousepad that I have.

Their site states the dimensions to be as follows:

S – 24.5mm x 21mm

M – 31.5mm x 24.5mm

L – 42mm x 33mm.

My L and most of my M mousepads conform to these measurements fairly closely, except for my M Hien which is slightly wider than the measurements, measuring 31.9mm wide.

THICKNESS

All XSOF, SOFT and VE mousepads are 4mm thick while the MID and HARD are 3mm thick.



SUMMARY & SUBJECTIVE COMMENTS

Artisan's mousepad line offer users a vast selection which should cater every gamers' need, and most of these selections have very unique surfaces and pleasant to use. The amount of attention and research they put into their mousepads really shows. And their approach of giving users further options to choose different backings, and different sizes is also commendable.

These luxuries however, does not come cheap. Most of Artisan's mousepads have a premium price tag.

Also, the Hayate and the Zero in particular, could trap dust rather easily.

It would be great if this issue can be resolved, but should they be priced at a lower price, I don't mind stocking another 1 or 2 of the Hayate, because apart from this issue, it really is an excellent mousepad. Just a step away from being my perfect mousepad :)

Choice of mousepads always comes down to personal choice. But from previous experiences, when doing a review which involve comparisons, its not uncommon to be asked "So which is your favorite?"

I will have that answered with a chart.

Values are in order of ranks; the longer the bar, the higher rated it is.

With that said, having one bar does not necessarily mean it's terrible at the category.

It just happens that, in my opinion, it falls dead last when compared to the rest.

Before I tried Artisan's mousepads, I was using one of the most raved gaming mousepad.

To put that into perspective, even my least favorite Artisan mousepad still outranks it.

That is to say, Artisan mousepads, to me, really is on a whole different tier :)

So here is the chart, showing how I would score them on a ranking basis. And with this, I'll be bringing this review to an end :)

	Glide Speed	Glide Control	Glide Comfort	Texture Feel	Durability	Value	Personal Favorite
Hien	2	4	4	4	5	5	4
Zero	1	5	3	1	2	2	2
Raiden	4	1	2	2	4	2	3
Shiden	5	2	3	3	3	3	3
Hayabusa	2	3	1	5	3	1	1
Hayate	3	2	5	2	1	4	5



Thanks for reading!

*And a Special thanks to Mr. Yasuhiro Gotoda of Artizan
for including me as part of their monitoring campaign.*