

Ernst Hansen

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Mr. Virgil Warren
Warren Quality Systems

Dear Mr. Warren,

As a fan of high-quality music reproduction, it took a number of detours and helpful encounters before I finally got some satisfaction. For this I would like to express my personal appreciation to you and your fine products from HARMONIX and ENACOM. In light of the years spent on an odyssey through the harsh world of the most varied tuning products, please let me take this opportunity to inform you and other interested music aficionados about how I finally discovered clarity amid this hi-fi jungle and how you can distinguish that incomparable HARMONIX effect when compared to other products.

Despite first-rate individual components, I was still not entirely happy with the sound of my system – especially in light of how much money it had all cost.

Although replacing the Wilson Audio loudspeakers (Watt Puppy) with the outstanding and significantly better Zoltan speakers from Peak Consult, not to mention the excellent new Wadia 781i SACD player, vastly optimized the sound, it still did not produce the definitive result that I was looking for. Countless trials with cables and tuning feet from expensive and well-known manufacturers did deliver audible changes in the sound, but still no decisive improvement. Problems remained, particularly in the higher vocal ranges, the resounding of the bass, an inadequate platform, and a sound that seemed unable to fully free itself from the speakers. These problem areas changed only slightly, if at all.

And yet the crucial breakthrough only came from a consistent, strict and complete switch to HARMONIX products (starting with tuning feet, spike bases, room tuning and then cables): a level of quality that I had always dreamed about and mistakenly assumed would readily be achieved by premium electronics equipment and speakers alone.

The very complexity of the numerous trials, tribulations and diverse range of tested products makes formulating my experiences rather difficult, so let me break it all down into four steps to describe how I found my way to HARMONIX.

Step 1: Tuning Feet

The Copulare rack, speakers and each of the separate components on the rack now rest on HARMONIX tuning feet. To make the fine positioning even better, the TU-666ZX and the TU-606Z also have RF-900 tuning spike bases placed precisely under the corners of the devices. What's more, I also put the SACD player, Copulare rack and speakers on the new HARMONIX SYN-100 spikes, which rest on the big RF-999MT MK2 bases, which in turn are decoupled from the floor using the flat TU 303 EX tuning insulators.

This step led to a vastly improved resolution, silkier highs and a much tighter bass – a major jump forward in quality that all the other dampers and bases I tested (Stillpoints; fast audio; Ceraball and many other top-quality products) came nowhere close to achieving. Above all it was the trio of SYN-100, RF-999 and TU-303 EX that proved to be absolutely unbeatable in its effect and one that delivers a texture, swiftness, balance and naturalness in the sense of being the best “analog sound.” Let me also point out that it was your invaluable tips about always ensuring the exact alignment/positioning of the HARMONIX tuning feet on those resonance-critical corners under the individual components (SACD, power strip, amplifiers, speakers and rack), which contributed so much to the fantastic overall results.

At first I thought that placing it all on one HARMONIX tuning foot and the substantial gain in sound quality it produces would certainly be enough, but then I experienced nothing short of a small miracle when I noticed how multiple HARMONIX feet mutually enhance one another to an even greater excellence. And although the speakers in this trio come across a bit higher, the bass is not diluted, but is instead more powerful, cleaner and deeper – just simply more authentic. As an extremely discriminating fan of high fidelity with years of practical testing experience under my belt, I couldn't believe the results myself at first. Working backwards several times quickly brought to light how the achieved level of sound quality became noticeably worse each time a single HARMONIX component was removed.

Step 2: Room Tuning

Other manufacturers, which had surveyed my listening room and certified it as being prone to rumbling, had only one recommendation: You have got to put in several large absorbers to help wean the bass away from resounding. The absorbers certainly trimmed down the bass and in turn made it less booming – yet at the same they

severely restricted the sparkle and caused losses in the high and mid-ranges. And they filtered out most of the sound's emotion and fervor that was present before. It didn't take long until I made the decision (also for the reasons of appearance) that the absorbers have got to go. Still, the question remained: How can you achieve non-rumbling and balanced music reproduction in difficult room conditions?

What made absorbers totally unnecessary was the interaction of the HARMONIX room tuning discs (my old RFA 78i ones with the new and more robust RFA 7800 tuning devices, along with the smaller RFA 80i discs on the rack and the edges of the speakers) in concert with loudspeakers carefully aligned within the room and placed on tuning feet. The bass, which because of the design of the room was often resonant and overlapping, is now – especially because of the RFA 7800s – tight, more vibrant and, above all, more precise and distinct. And yet the results went far beyond just bass response: Not only did the transparency and clarity in the midrange and high frequencies improve, there were unmistakable benefits to the depth, width and height of the sound, as well as to the almost “live” integration of the listener into the musical landscape. In comparison with the Acoustic System Sound Elements (Gold, Silver, Platinum) from fast audio that I had been using, it became clear to me that the HARMONIX discs work more flexibly and effectively and, what's more important, without exception improve the sound – particularly when it comes to vocals. In contrast, the Sound Elements not only cost much more, but often lead to a detrimental shift in the frequency spectrum.

The bottom line is that I now have a listening room (40 square meters, also serving as the living room), which despite its challenging architectural characteristics (a large pane of glass behind my listening position, a window on one side and an opening to another room on the other side), is acoustically “perfect” in every way. This compelling outcome was achieved merely with the help of those small, room-enhancing adhesive discs from HARMONIX – with no need for costly sound elements, enormous absorbers, bass traps or other “monstrosities.”

Step 3: Fine Tuning with the RF-57 MKII

At that point I thought that everything was done and had been perfected as far as could be. What might I possibly hope to gain by so-called “fine tuning”? Expecting nothing in return, I started out by placing five tiny RF-57 tuning bases on the surface (4 sides and the middle) of the WADIA 781i SACD housing. A violin concerto was playing when the big surprise came: The delineation and naturalness of the violins, as well as their “emancipation” from the sound of the orchestra, improved dramatically. Everything became much clearer, more authentic and much more at ease. As a result of this

revelation, there are now any numbers of RF-57s attached to and under all the equipment, which really do wonders for the tube amplifiers in particular.

But that was not all. Thanks to the outstanding support of Mr. Wilhelm (formerly of 38 TONE TOOL, now with HARMONIX North) and your help, Mr. Warren, the Zoltan speakers have now undergone extensive fine tuning (removed all eight loudspeaker chassis; placed RF-57 tuning devices on the magnets, the resonance-critical spots in the speaker and then from outside on the edges of the reinstalled chassis).

Hint for those that might be interested: Don't be afraid of doing "surgery" on the loudspeakers. I encountered no problems whatsoever and the resonance-enhancing effect of RF-57 devices, when positioned essentially at the source of the sound, is nothing less than overwhelming. Clarity, vitality and three-dimensionality increased remarkably. The same was true for the fine tuning that was then done on relevant spots inside the WADIA. Just when you think that things can't get any better, you discover how much of an improvement can still be obtained with these inconspicuous RF-57s. The RF-57 devices ultimately enable the electronics components and the speakers to present their true potential and their full resolution. In other words: Never before have the new WADIA, the tube amplifiers from Conrad Johnson and the Danish Zoltans from Peak Consult sounded so good.

Step 4: Cables

I had installed the HARMONIX Studio Master power cords (for the amplifiers and the WADIA CD) at the time I acquired my first HARMONIX tuning feet. HARMONIX Studio Masters are simply better than power cords from Purist Audio, fast audio and HMS – namely more robust with fuller tonal color and more space. Early on I had also installed various ENACOMs (to the mains, loudspeakers and amplifiers). In terms of value for the money, I am convinced that they deliver outstanding results with an enhanced quiet, perception of individual sound nuances and naturalness in the music reproduction.

I intentionally chose a different product for the speaker cables (bi-wire) and the connecting cord between the WADIA SACD and the amps: Reference cables from the American manufacturer STEREOVOX, which I feel are even better than the Valhalla by NORDOST. What's more, the Zoltan speakers use STEREOVOX wiring, so everything pointed towards continuing to go with STEREOVOX outside the speakers (especially in light of how superbly it sounds). And then you came along, Mr. Warren, and recommended that I do a comparison by adding HARMONIX's finest cables (the RCA HS-101 Golden Performance LF interconnect cable, along with the new Exquisite and SLC speaker cables) to my system, which had already been optimized quite thoroughly with a number of other HARMONIX products. And so, with little to no enthusiasm, I

proceeded to “switch out the cables” while wondering to myself how in the world it could possible sound better than with my STEREOVOX ones.

At first I just couldn't believe it was true - BUT it did sound better with HARMONIX cables; and not just a little or only in nuances. The piano and cello on the jazz XRCD played with an authenticity and sweetness that I had never heard before. What exactly was the difference? The sound color delivered by the HARMONIX cables was indisputably closer to the original and allowed the individual tones to evolve and taper off more succinctly. It was simply a delight to listen to the kind of enhanced sound dimension that can be experienced with the system. The fact that this comparative cable test produced such clear results is no doubt also attributable to how well-tuned the rest of my system was with HARMONIX. Since I have no desire to go on forever “enjoying” music without HARMONIX speaker and interconnect cables, I now know what's next on my shopping list.

Résumé:

It was this latest result from having compared the cables that led me to the same overall impression that had long been hinted at during my testing sessions: When it comes to HARMONIX, every product you employ will prove to be a genuine step in the right direction on the way to greater transparency, naturalness, substance and musicality. The decisive thing, and what sets it apart from all other manufacturers' products, is that in my opinion, HARMONIX tuning – and only HARMONIX tuning – is capable of producing such a quality of sound with all its emotions and nothing less than the feeling of it being a live performance (and not just some transpicuous encounter with individual sounds). Put differently: With HARMONIX, music is not influenced in just certain areas or frequency characteristics, but “harmonized” throughout, so that each HARMONIX product complements the others and enriches the sound geometrically.

The lesson from all of this: Be careful when using mixed cables and tuning elements, all of which impact the soundstage in totally different ways and in completely different places, and which all too often lead to a degradation in quality. In contrast there is the holistic HARMONIX philosophy, which intelligibly elevates the sonic landscape step by step into divine regions of hi-fi that other products simply cannot reach.

Of course you won't gain these kinds of experiences in just one or two comparative listening sessions. Consequently – and as I pointed out at the beginning – it is with some three years of in-depth and recurring practical testing experience with the most varied range of tuning suppliers under my belt that I can now so unconditionally recommend HARMONIX as being the best line of tuning products, which if at all possible should not be combined with any others.

Those extremely precise and clearly written test reports by Mr. Kirbach (STEREO magazine) have been a regular source of orientation along my journey and have regularly dealt with the unique effects of HARMONIX products in a highly informative way. Regrettably, his kind of quality hi-fi testing analysis is extremely rare in German audio magazines.

Such high praise of HARMONIX is truly not over the top, but simply the expression of the satisfaction and enjoyment I find during my evening music sessions. Having said that, it is also important to bear in mind that HARMONIX products come at a cost.

HARMONIX tuning is more than worth its price not only in relation to the substantial costs of acquiring high-end system components (CD players, speakers and amplifiers), but also in comparison to the “diffuse” effects of other tuning products – especially when you consider the outstanding gains in musical quality that only HARMONIX can deliver.

Sincerely yours,

Ernst Hansen

Enclosure - Components (including HARMONIX / ENACOM tuning products):

1. System:

- Speakers - Zoltan from Peak Consult
- CD Player - WADIA 781i
- Tube Amplifiers - Conrad Johnson Premier 12
- Rack - Copulare
- Power Conditioner - Transparent PowerBank Ultra Extended

2. Cables:

- Speaker Cables - STEREOVOX Reference LSP-600 LS
(2 x for bi-wiring)
STEREOVOX Reference Jumper JC 600
- Cinch Cables - STEREOVOX Reference SEI 600ii
- Power Cords - 3 x HARMONIX Studio Master
WATTa Gate X-DC10 SM-350

3. HARMONIX Tuning:

- Spikes - Synergy Point SYN-100
- Feet - TU 303 EX
- TU 220 MT
- TU 666 ZX and TU 606 Z
- Spike Bases - RF 900, RF 900 MKII, RF 999 MT MKII
- Room Tuning - RFA 78i, RFA 7800 and RFA 80i
- Other - RF-11 CD tuning sheets
RF-57 MKII tuning devices

4. ENACOM:

- AC ENACOM (5 x for outlets in the home and in the power strip)
- Speaker ENACOM (2 x bi-wiring at the speaker connections)
- Line Cable ENACOM (between the amplifiers and the interconnect cables)
- ENACOM Tuning CD CSS-1

5. Power Connection:

Separate power supply from the house electric service connection (AHP Klangmodul III G (gold) as circuit breakers) to the HMS wall outlets with gold contacts in the listening room. Special fuses from HIFI-TUNING in CD, amps and sound module.