

A Sharp Spike in Sound

Ever wish your speakers were less piercing and produced greater color and staging? Then try placing them on spike bases from Harmonix – and you may just behold a small miracle.



Those of us who are seriously interested in properly setting up and positioning loudspeakers have experienced this before: You put the speakers on spikes and immediately notice less restraint and better precision, but mostly the latter and not just in the lower ranges. And anyone who has experimented with different spike bases – whether for reasons of improving the sound or protecting the floor – knows full well of their impact. Apparently every tiny detail matters at that crucial junction of the speaker and whatever foundation it is resting on.

Break-in exercise for harmony

This is exactly where and why Kazuo Kiuchi comes in. As chief executive of the Japanese Combak Corporation, he is not only famous for seemingly going to extremes with his ingenious Harmonix accessories, to which some have attached the voodoo label, but is also re-sponsible for those likewise highly regarded and

uncompromising Reimyo electronic components.

We chose four sets of spike bases representing different price and quality categories from that rich range of what are in part outlandishly expensive bases that culminates in the exorbitant Dinosaur compact speaker stands for a whopping 3,650 euros a pair. We then tested each set beneath three different spike-equipped speaker systems that had previously been standing on a unique flooring of their own: the Triangle Antal 30th Anniversary (ca. 2,400 euros/pair, medium-hard linoleum), Verity Audio Leonore (ca. 17,400 euros/pair, hard tile floor) and our top reference, the Wilson Audio Alexia loud-speaker platform (ca. 53,000 euros/pair, soft bast mat).

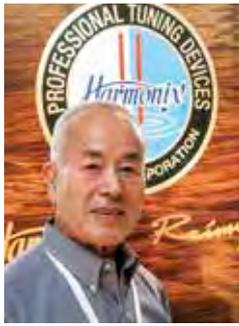
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Verity Audio's Leonore benefitted from the Harmonix spike bases on hard tile flooring, here seen atop the flagship version.



Regardless of the surrounding conditions, these bases, whose engineering is said to hinge on the findings of primary research into the resonance behavior of musical instruments – particularly that of legendary violins – produced a very similar effect, which indicates how universally applicable these devices are.

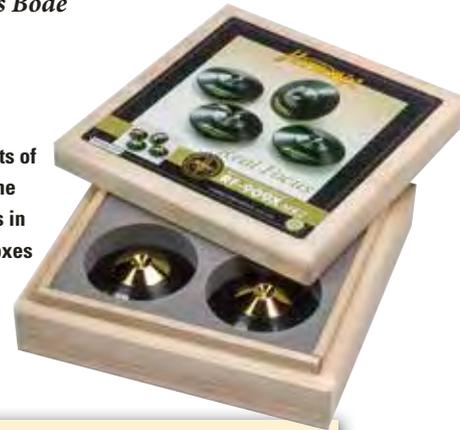


Kazuo Kiuchi, a fanatic for sound and accessories

unconstraint mentioned earlier were noticeable almost immediately, tonal “harmonization” and coherence came of age more gradually. The best approach is to give these immaculately constructed devices a little time. At the very latest, you’ll appreciate what they can do when you switch them out. But please have two people do it, so as to prevent the speakers from shifting even ever so slightly.

It was with pleasure, and amazement, that we devoted our time and energy to these Harmonix spike bases, which can clearly help every price point and

performance category of speakers reach their full potential. They also fully satisfy audiophiles’ demands that accessories make good equipment sound even better. We can forgive Harmonix for “needling” us about how marvelous its products are.
Matthias Böde



All bases come in sets of four with the larger ones in wooden boxes

Say what you want, there really is something to Kiuchi’s advice that his tuning bases need a few days of break-in time until certain of their properties reach full form and performance. Whereas the improved spatial imaging and sense of

RF-900 (set of four in black or gold, about 180 euros)

Unlike the larger spike bases, the approximately 30-millimeter-diameter entry-level model RF-900 is not a combination of choice woods and metals, but is made instead of one harmonious alloy. Nonetheless, they still demonstrate the important thing about Harmonix: Unlike the simple way of coupling spikes to the floor, these bases beneath the Triangle Antal and the Leonore speakers from Verity Audio allowed each to render greater ambience, flow and dimension to the reproduction and were vastly superior to the less-sophisticated stoppers in terms of separating the sonic spectrum from the cabinets. Jane Duboc’s fantastic recording of “Lady Jane” on the Best Audiophile Voices IV compact disc gained remarkably in finesse and lightness. Wilson Audio’s heavyweight

Alexias were the only speakers we didn’t try out on the RF-900s, which have an “authorized” weight limit of 100 kilograms and are recommended for smaller speakers anyway.



RF-909 X (set of four, about 330 euros)

Once you switch your speakers from the RF-900 to the 13 millimeter taller and 40 millimeter wider RF-909X bases, you’ll not only experience greater spaciousness in tonal imaging, but also that pleasing acoustic resonance that comes from a more full-bodied range of fundamental notes. The Harmonix bases neither accent nor exaggerate this sensation; it is instead the harmonization of the tonal balance and the concentration of energy that causes this impression – an effect that in fact strengthens gradually and is therefore all the more apparent when you remove the bases. This popular “classic” set of four within the Harmonix program, which provides solid placement for several hundred kilograms, also promotes a richer image of the natural breath of the soundstage and cuts a classy figure even beneath speakers from the truly high-end segment.



RF-909 X MK2 (set of four, about 750 euros)

The MK2 version of the RF-909X, with a thickness of 23.5 millimeters and a diameter of 55 millimeters, is not just taller, wider and more expensive, but represents a giant step forward in terms of sound. This series marks a break in both pricing and quality within the Harmonix program. When placed on these bases from the “Real Focus” series, our test speakers released considerably more energy and charisma, and seemed louder and more vigorous, despite the identical volume settings. Even the big Alexia from Wilson Audio was not “undersized.” The less-pricey test speakers clearly improved in presentation and brought forth more contour and body while on the MK2s as compared to the basic RF-909Xs, and even sounded a hint crisper and straighter than on the premier model, although not quite as vivid and uninhibited.



RF-999 MT MK2 (set of four, about 1,300 euros)

Could it be magic? Kiuchi-san would say no and refer you instead to studies about resonance tuning and optimization. The fact is, however, that on no other Harmonix bases did our test speakers reproduce music in a manner that was more homogenous, delicate, vibrant, or richer in detail. Available in two color schemes (see photos), these 22-millimeter-high and 77-millimeter-wide spike bases give life and articulation to the music of the piano – while the instrument is also precisely delineated within the soundstage. Altogether, the higher-end, and thus more expensive models rendered greater three-dimensionality and joined the bass more coherently and consistently to the midranges than did those of one size smaller. These are the hot tip not exclusively, but especially, for superior speakers.

