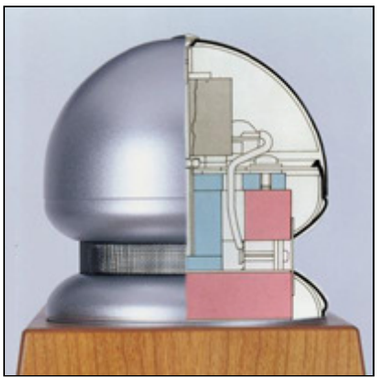
Playing the room. Like LF which ride room modes for boom nodes, the 4pi Plus.2 plays the room with its deliberate reflections in all directions. But unlike LF, it cannot cause resonant problems which would impinge into and muddy up the vocal range. Its wavelengths are far too short. The only issues are fixing the high-pass and output level relative to the mains with the precision switch controls. Here the Elac is rather less fussy to get right than a subwoofer; or integrating a passive 'full-range' speaker into a setup for most linear powerful bass without hot spots.

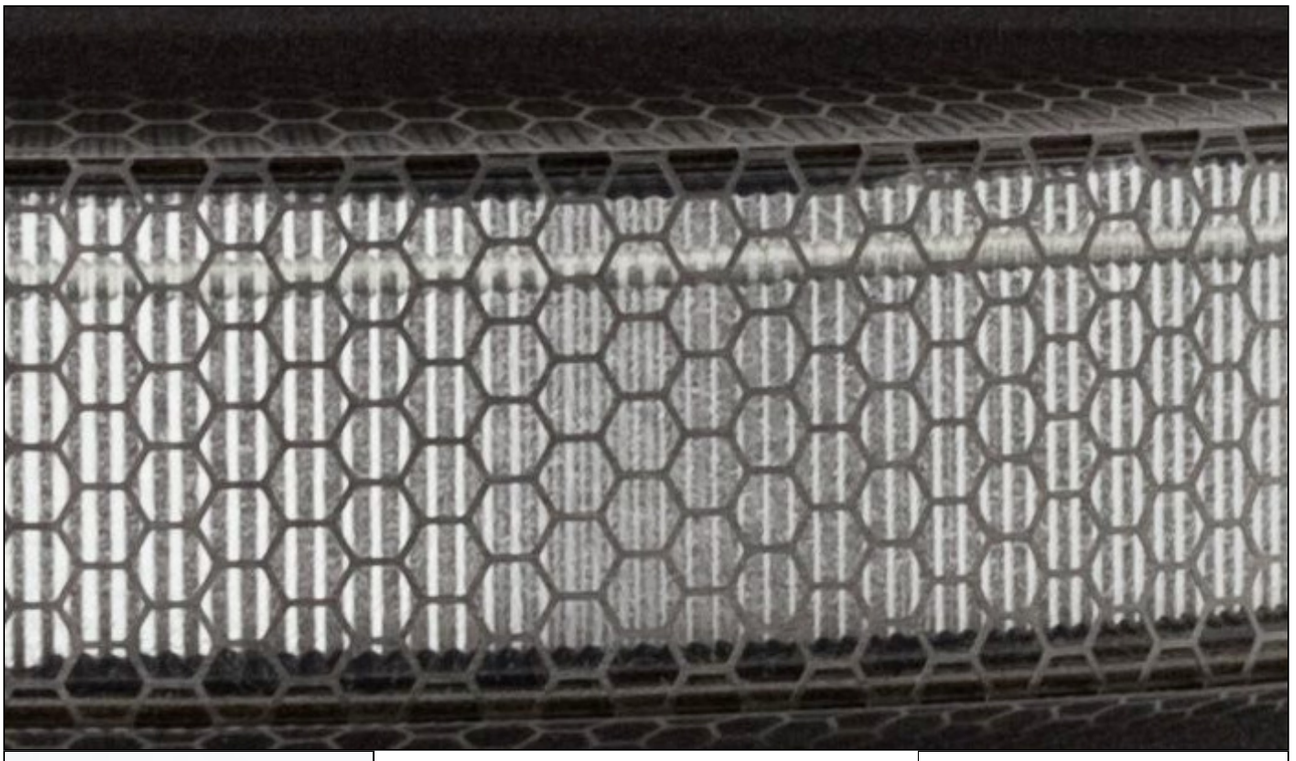
Conceptually Mark & Daniel tread the same path with their upfiring ambient AMT dubbed *Omni Harmonizer*. The obvious difference? Theirs must first reflect off its 45°-scattering dispersion lens. The 4pi Plus.2 achieves its radiation pattern with direct output and far lower moving mass. Technically it would appear to be the more sophisticated and advanced solution to go after the same effect.

The 4pi Plus.2 is intended to broaden the dispersion of your main tweeter above 7kHz where the latter collapses. That's exactly how Rolf Janke explained they do it for their two flagship models. Since the mushroom's output is too attenuated in the presence region to interfere, the main tweeter still locks in all the usual directivity and image localization cues it usually does vis-à-vis the midrange. A bit flippantly, you might say that the 4pi Plus.2 is a saint maker. It's in the popish business of adding ethereal space halos around our virtual performers. Now some final tidbits.

By 1998 all but one vendor they'd sourced



magnets from had moved to China. So Elac took on magnet production to control this vital part of driver manufacture. That's true vertical integration. Why Elac's 4pi hasn't more press particularly online will be due to its 30-year run next year. It's ancient news. But nobody really has come up with anything better since. It's still fresh as dew and arguably more relevant now with the raised HF ceiling of high-resolution music files. Nobody dreamt of those five decades ago when Elac still built cartridges.



For that we look at October 29th, 1957. This date marks the day by which Elac had sold an astonishing 3 million KST103 phono cartridges. The display at left memorizes that achievement. Elac's auto changer from 1948 at right reaches even farther back.

Such roots show commercial resilience. Now we have a fuller picture against which to assess their long-lived super tweeter.

Sœur Marie Keyrouz's *Psalms for the 3rd Millennium* were recorded in a church. They not only feature her Oriental Ensemble de la Paix but also the Ensemble Orchestral de Paris with chorus. The 4pi Plus.2 accomplished a few things. It increased depth of field. There clearly was more spatial grandeur. Without dissecting the choral voices into cutouts, it cast a more persuasive sense of multiplicity, of many different voices singing in unison. And it better differentiated the solo vocals from them whilst also bestowing a quasi halo of recorded reflections around the sister to illuminate her against space. Saint maker indeed.

On Aytaç Doğan's glorious *Deva* album of popular Turkish songs instrumentalized for

qanun and accompaniment, the "Khallık Fernını" opener sports very wispy cymbal and brush work across a widely spaced drum set. Some of it is so fine as to nearly fall below the treshold of audibility. The 4pi Plus.2 lowered that threshold and with it lifted a small damper on decay lengths. Then it physically raised these sound makers up a bit for increased height. That's because the ribbons sat a hand's width above the main tweeters.

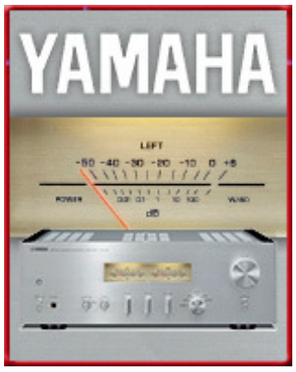
As had the choral heads on the otherworldly Keyrouz album, the massed strings on Omar Faruk Tekbilek's riveting desert soundtrack for *Kebelek*|*The Butterfly* showed rather more individuated 'white caps'. The illusion of paralleled performers playing the same notes was heightened. The breathiness of the solo bass ney was enhanced as well. Close-mic'd piano had clearly more overtone action, more energy spray off the strings. With Javier Perianes' inspired reading of Blasco de Nebra's *Piano Sonatas* [Harmonia Mundi], this effect was much subdued due to more farfield microphones. Now I had enhanced depth of field again.

Nagra's HD DAC treats all signal as DSD. Here the Elac omni restored treble liveliness. Compared with standard PCM converters but also Lindemann's musicbook:15 whose AKM 4490 silicon treats DSD with its own circuitry, '1-bit' has its own softer more mellifluous flavour. If you miss PCM's shinier top which polishes more gloss on tone textures, the 4pi Plus.2 is that Carnauba wax. Don't mistake this for brightness. It's not. This Elac action occurs *above* the region where a misjudged response telegraphs as bright. It's not about the Lowther shout domain. It's the realm of air.

Another fringe benefit was better distinctiveness at lower levels. No matter what, reducing SPL fogs over the hifi window. It's not a matter of if but of when. This top-end loss and its various consequences are the things which classic tone controls—more or less crudely perhaps—compensated for. With the 4pi Plus.2 in the mix, the onset of this clouding over was delayed. Given that we do a lot of listening at lower levels, this was most welcome.

Besides enhanced spaciousness, air and slightly glossier tone colours—plus all the obvious isolated stuff of better visibility for steeper more brilliant triangle hits and fierier violin flageolet—the perhaps primary benefit for visually oriented listeners should be a keener sense of 'holography'. That is about a level of *distinctiveness* and how individuated sounds peel out of their surroundings and against silence. Clearer separation is one aspect of it and as such most apparent on dense material. It's like turning up overhead lights to

increase contrast. It's the inverse of what happens at a symphony concert. Before the conductor flicks his skinny baton for the first mark, the lights gradually dim. With it visible contrast diminishes as does separation. We're supposed to rely less on eye sight and make our ears the primary participants.



With playback, actual sight doesn't factor one iota. Turning some virtual overheads up by a few dB compensates. It makes things more *specific*. That's not a poetic term. It reads quite dry in fact. Yet the actual effect isn't dry but fluid. So let's return to something seemingly basic but well recorded. Even more importantly, it's played brilliantly. With the long solo opener of Rafael Cortéz's *Cagiñi* [Herzog Records] and the omni tweeters in play, it became easier to appreciate the many fine nuances of tone modulations which this amazing guitarist coaxes from his red instrument.

With the same set of strings, there is a surprising breadth of timbre variations on hand. These elements are easier to appreciate and fall into as a natural byproduct of attentive listening. One can simply follow the melody and leave it at that. Or one can listen more inclusively and pay attention to these tonal shadings as well. It's up to the listener. With the Elac, it is a bit easier to *get* into harmonic shifts and admire this element of artistic self expression.

Wrap. Once you really *think* about its tech, the resultant dispersion pattern, its operational bandwidth and what elements of playback it addresses, the 4pi's effectiveness comes as no surprise. It is perfectly logical and predictable. The real surprise is twofold. One: why haven't we heard more about this brilliant invention? That'll be due to its first iteration having launched in 1985. Two: Since Gallo discontinued their top-mounted spherical tweeter which sat as a mohawk atop a spun aluminium sphere, only mbl have anything like it. Being trade show regulars which many folks have heard and many commented upon, associating Elac's 4pi Plus.2 super tweeter with *that* type of presentation seems most à propos and intuitive.

Naturally it only factors for the very top. mbl's omni approach extends far lower in frequency. But as a pointer on what to expect, it seems fair to say that with the 4pi Plus.2, you'll have *some* of that air/space thing going on with your far more conventional speakers too. Hopefully this report has made Elac's omnipolar super tweeter newsworthy, again. Relative to my Aptica, it did add the Mythology M1 treble magic I thought it might. In closing, I'm no expert on this breed of device. I've for example not heard the AudioSmile, muRata, Tannoy, Tonian or Townshend though some of these were written up in our pages. What I do know is that all standard tweeters are good to the limits of my hearing. Adding another beaming direct-radiating tweeter doesn't add much. It's Elac's 4pi radiation which makes the decisive difference. Because mbl's driver tech isn't available as an add-on and would likely be very inefficient and even costlier if it were, the 4pi Plus.2 occupies a league of its own. In my book, that makes it an especially *super* tweeter indeed.

Srajan Ebaen

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