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By João Casanova

Soundcare Spikes

The system thanks them

I won't be very mistaken, if I say that all of us that like hi-fi, have been through phases where we wished we could optimise our system's performance; in reality this phase never goes by, it's permanent, and it can be dramatic if we don't have a good dose of good sense. Whether we are dealing with an amplifier, cd player, record deck or some cables – these are usually the worst- all of us have felt the urge to change one of these components or even all- a more radical solution- to obtain that sound that so pleases us.

This effort isn't harmful, quite the opposite, it's part of life; it reflects our way of being, as well as the evolution that we go through. On the other hand it's not very usual to give special importance to the structure where the system is placed, like the rack's and stand's- you have to be part of the audiophile club to have conscience of it's importance- and when one talk's about accessories like these spikes, it's when we realise that this is something for the audiophile nut's, unfortunately.

Of course there are different accessories, some better than others, but when we talk about components like these Soundcare, that represent such a musical improvement, believe it that the "system will thank them"; or that is, us the listeners.

My first contact with these accessories was on the last AudioShow, when I was making my report, precisely on this area. At the time the partnership Paulo Gomes and Rui Palhinha, that created AudioEclipse, the company that represents among us Soundcare, very enthusiastically presented the quality of these products, and gave a general idea of how these spikes worked. In terms of versatility, I immediately realised the advantages that a spike with this configuration would offer, but in terms of sound I maintained some doubts; not that I didn't believe that they had quality and that it's use would bring advantages, it was more in terms of finding out how much different they would be in relation to other similar solutions. As you can see, I was lucky to be the one to test them, fortunately, as you will realise further ahead.

Soundcare is a Norwegian company that apparently reinvented the wheel with a brilliant idea, as are all simple things. To start of they present two solutions supported on the same base: Spike 2 and SuperSpikes.

The principle is simple and well known: a metal surface that serves as a base and a spike, but with the particularity of being wrapped on a plastic casing that makes the whole thing become just one piece, although they are all decoupled among them. That is, in performance they behave as isolated parts but when you are handling or

moving them, they become one object, making the job easier. The base is made out of Zinc, since it's a more inert material, capable of absorbing more vibrations, and in the centre is the contact area, with a small steel cylinder of medium stiffness, while the spike is made of high-density steel and is also wrapped by a zinc layer. Spike2 are two superimposed discs and are designed to be placed under the components, guarantying a good decoupling between them and the supporting surfaces. The SuperSpikes have the same base, but the spike prolongs itself to the exterior and has a thread so that it can be screwed in racks, speaker stands and floor standing speakers. With that objective, Soundcare has made a range of SuperSpikes with four different sizes so that the majority of situations were covered.

The auditions started with the audition of the SuperSpikes on the Thiel 22 speakers, that don't have threaded spikes. But since the smallest thread fitted, I managed to make the test with them. I'm won't say that I felt big sound alterations, since I used to listen to the speakers with their own spikes on, and some supporting plates from Eagle. Even so, I got the impression that the bass was firmer and that in general the sound was more delineated; never the less in terms of moving the speakers, the advantages are enormous, since it's very easy to make small adjustments; it's so practical that they simply won't leave my house, unless it's only for the pictures.

The second experience consisted in the substitution of the one of my Target racks, the one that has my digital transport and preamp. The previous considerations adjust to this situation as well, although the practical side is not so important to me, since the racks are not usually moved around. On the other hand placing the rack, levelling it and moving it around until you find the final position is so simple to achieve with SuperSpikes placed that I would only need this motif to give them a strong recommendation.

I was only left to try the Spike2, the discs that are placed bellow the components. First I tried on the preamp. I placed the three simply in a triangular shape, and started the auditions. Here the results where more evident and immediately

perceptible. After using a reserve shelf, one that I substituted some years ago for a shelf made of granite that I use under the record deck, I made a kind of a sandwich with the two shelf's and the three spikes that served as a support for the preamp, and the results were more obvious, with the sound gaining in definition, presence and authority in the bass. By this time I was already so convinced about the benefits of this solution that I decided to make a 10mm glass shelf and place on it the Spike 2 with the double face adhesive that is part of the set, while on the other surface I placed the felt's and placed it on top of the original rack, what I mean is that I replaced the original wood shelf with the glass shelf. When I placed the preamp on top of this new shelf and started making auditions, I couldn't believe it. I hadn't even sat down and I was already realising the greatness of the voice, I don't even remember very well who it was at the time, since I was so surprised by the transformation that I didn't take much notice of anything else; I couldn't believe it. The most ironic thing in all of this is that because of the level of the preamp, the Mark Levison N°28, I thought that I wasn't going to notice much difference. I was completely mistaken; I think I found the fastest and cheapest way to transform it in a 28S. If you allow me the parallelism, this sounds like one of those commercials about detergents, that they wash much cleaner than the competition, but the problem is that it is very difficult to transmit with precision the transformation that was realised. The improvements were on all levels, from transparency, the feeling of space and the definition of the performers, all of this gained a lot in realism. From one moment to the other it was like I had passed a sponge in the atmosphere and started realising some small perfections of details that previously were hidden and dissimulated in the middle of other sounds. I started having more volume and space between the performers, in a more credible and articulated space. Music gained more life, the high notes here cleaner and more extent, the mid range gained presence and definition and the bass sounded more defined and controlled. This set of Spike2 as you can guess, was become captive and won't leave from there.

With a second set, I returned to the sandwich- it opened my appetite...- and I placed it under the Proceed PDT3 transport, which already has three spikes of it's own', and

on this case they stand on top of some Eagle bases. I registered some alterations although with much less effect. To complete the test I used four Spikes2 and placed them between the upper support bar and the granite that serves as a support of the Avid deck; it's good to remind that this shelf already has spikes from the rack, and because of that I wasn't expecting to obtain some evident improvements, as was truly the case. Even so just as an example *The Dream of the Blue Turtles*, Sting, on a recording from Mobile Fidelity (original Master recording), the metals were livier, with a more natural timbre while the musical atmosphere was looser. The melody of the bass notes was more delineated and the bass notes in general, gained weight and definition. On the other hand the voices also gained in presence and perfection and the various musical planes were more defined, benefiting clearly from the depth of the standstage. On the whole the bass was better defined and stronger, the drums more open and with more presence, the high notes with better perception of the upper harmonics. To sum up, the sound gained consolidation, since the musical structure was more solid.

In whatever circumstance and configuration, I always found more than enough reasons to justify a strong recommendation to any of these products. On top of that for a very small price, one can get an incredible improvement.