

# hi-fi+

REPRODUCING THE RECORDED ARTS

**„At a cost of £ 59 for four that makes them an absolute bargain. Highly recommended.“**



## finite elemente Ceraball

Great name, great product. No sooner had I completed the review of the Pagode Signature rack and returned the review sample than another, in some ways equally interesting product arrived from finite elemente. Or rather, from Audiofreaks, whose fearless leader Branko Bosic is particularly scathing on the subject of anything he sees as unnecessary tweakery. For him to endorse such a product is praise indeed.

By Roy Gregory

The Ceraball feet consist of an aluminium base and cap, separated by a ceramic ball, I saw something similar a few years back when the inimitable Lars from Nordost (he of Pulsar point fame) showed me a prototype aluminium cone, tipped with a ceramic ball supporting a hollow, conical cap. That never saw the light of day, but the Ceraball has both much in common with it, and a couple of nice wrinkles all of its own.

The first thing you notice about the finite elemente feet is just how solid they feel. Despite being only an inch high they are surprisingly weighty, while the small top surface makes getting a solid contact with the supported unit dead easy. Larger feet often suffer interference from grilles, screw heads or other fixings, but the Ceraballs are simplicity itself to use. The other thing is that despite consisting of two entirely separate parts, they can be handled as one. That's because there's a rubber O ring around the shaft of the base, damping any wobbles between it and the top-cap, and incidentally, holding the latter in place. They are also beautifully finished and available in sets of four, in black or silver.

Place three or four Ceraball feet under anything from a pre-amp to a turntable power supply and you'll be astonished at the improvement they produce. Designed to provide a ready route for the efficient removal of unwanted vibrational energy, they seem to suck it out of electronics quicker than a Dyson vacuum cleaner sucks dust. Of course, all that energy has to go somewhere, and a good rack able to dissipate it is an essential part of the equation. I used my Clearlight Aspect racks in the absence of the Pagode Signature and the combination worked spectacularly well.

So what did the Ceraballs achieve? The improvement in low-level resolution was dramatic, with increased focus, transparency and separation. You can hear much further into the soundstage with far less effort. For example, the ability to separate multi-tracked vocals like the echoing chorus that fades out Shawn Colvin's "Diamond In The Rough" is dramatically improved, the two recordings being sepa-

rated spatially (laterally and in terms of depth) and tonally. The sound becomes quicker and much more articulate, so that extended melodic lines become far easier to trace, as do subtle pushes and emphases on the part of players. The convoluted meanderings of Coltrane (Love Supreme or Lush Life) are obvious beneficiaries, but with melody being one of the fundamental musical building blocks, even the simplest arrangements (Lou Reed's "Perfect Day") also benefit.

Indeed, in some ways, the simpler the structure, the easier it is to hear the effect. Slurred vocals are also far easier to unravel, making it much easier to hear what's being said, and just as importantly, with what emphasis. As I said at the beginning, the Ceraballs are a fascinating product, not least because they're something that every body can afford. Which, unfortunately, the superb Pagode signature racks aren't. But, as I also said, a quality track is a vital part of the Ceraballs' performance and the way their benefits dovetail with those of the Pagode Signature is particularly fascinating. On the one hand, the racks handle

the macro aspects of musical reproduction brilliantly, keeping everything under control and in proper proportion. On the other, the Ceraballs handle the micro-dynamic and low-level arena with aplomb. I'd have loved the opportunity to use the two together.

Not surprisingly, I suspect that the combination would be spectacular. In the meantime, the Ceraballs join the Titanium Pulsar Points at the top of my personal support tree, doing for transparency, focus and resolution what the Nordosts do for weight and dynamic range, and just as spectacularly.

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