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Finite Elemente Pagode Signature

After seven years the Finite Elemente Pagode E series is now getting a successor that will certainly also become a modern classic in audio rooms. The Pagode Signature promises an even better sound experience - not least because it comes with all the best extra features from its predecessor fitted as standard.

by Cai Brockmann

The rack specialists at Finite Elemente had somehow felt the pressure from below from their successful model Pagode: it seemed that the puristic and inexpensive Spider (image hifi 4/2001) was practically snapping at the heels of the performance of the Pagode basic model, whereas at the other end of the scale the innovative Pagode Master Reference (image hifi 2/2002) was beginning to vanish in much higher sound spheres. It was therefore time for a thorough upgrade of the Pagode range, to clearly distance it from the surprisingly good Spider rack and at the same time not to lose sight of the Reference.

Luis Fernandes and Bernd Brockhoff, the minds behind Finite Elemente, equipped the former E series, now appropriately called Signature, as standard with all of the extras that had previously been on the list of available extras, but were ordered by the majority of the customers in any case. The new Signature model therefore is already factory-fitted with the better shelves - a triple-layer sandwich of MDF and plywood - and their support on spikes, in addition there is the cunning fixing of the shelves in the frame. And guess what: although the price of the Signature would initially seem clearly higher, it turns out

instead to be a net zero increase in view of the cost of the appropriately tuned predecessor model. Instead of a price increase, what you get is a much better equipped basic model.

The structure and design of the Pagode Signature are clearly based on the Master Reference, but Finite Elemente dispenses with the complex resonator technology and with double side uprights. The Signature uses a single T-strut made of solid aluminum for the connection and stabilization of the rack.

The basic fundamental starting point of any Pagode Signature rack is a wooden frame gently tapering off to the sides, inside of which the shelf makes contact via four spikes to the sturdy frame. The floor coupling is made using four M8 spikes, that are screwed into corresponding threaded sockets, and then balanced and locked. The enclosed small hollowed pads can be fitted to protect sensitive floors from scratches. The particularly stable bottom level is also available separately as a platform and is especially suitable for heavyweight power amps thanks to a load capacity of 50 kg. The Finite Elemente logo can then be fitted depending on the shape of the components - either wide or deep - at the correct position on the platform.

With the complete Signature rack the sides of the bottom shelf are mounted on two striking aluminium uprights, which are variable in heights of either 60, 85, 93.5 and 140 centimetres and stabilized above the top shelf by a crossbar of solid wood. These aluminum supports - available either in silver grey anodized or high-gloss polished - have a double row of holes with 30 millimetre spacing, enabling the tension fitting of up to six shelves using conical side spikes. Incidentally the Signature is now available in the wide version that can also easily accommodate 19 inch components.

Finite Elemente states the maximum load capacity at 25 kilos per tensioned shelf. This figure strikes me as being very much on the conservative





A optional must: Ceraballs optimize the performance with the Pagode and Spider (Special version left) - and elsewhere

side and is probably considerably higher if the loading is evenly balanced. And whereas the overall finishing of the rack is, as expected, top class, the Signature also comes into its own with a dramatically increased rigidity - which also has a positive effect on the sound. However, in spite of its rather extreme design the top levels should never be used as handles! But you don't carry your record player around by the pick-up arm, or do you?

The shelves of the Signature rack are always kept in an exactly central position, even when tilted for transport: Four damping disks of microcellular rubber, screwed connections with perfectly tailored locking nuts with the appearance of chrome-plated disks, ensure not only an extremely constant joint gap between the shelf and the frame, but also a defined pretensioning of the sandwich on four spikes, which dissipates any parasitic vibrations into the tensioning frame.

The relatively lightweight, cleverly designed Pagode Signature already has its own easily comprehensible, uniquely positive effect on the sound performance of a hi-fi component. Which is something I personally would not claim for certain other highly praised competition products, that dampen the sound to death using lead or sand - resulting in leaden sound, which is not always the perfect choice for a living room...

With the Pagode Signature the inner and outer dynamics of the music improve audibly, the bass

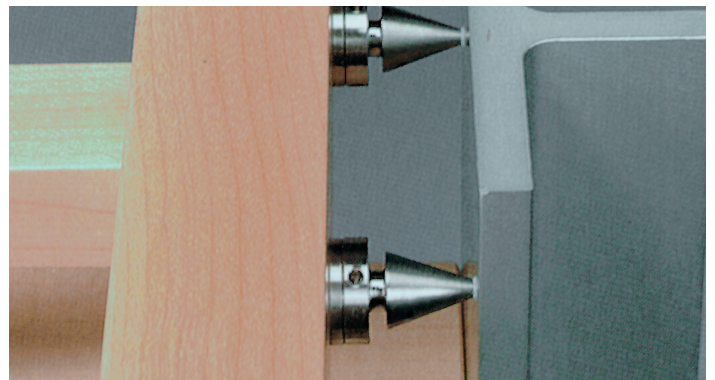
and fundamental tonal ranges appear slimmer and more level, but not emaciated. They are clearly defined and integrated better into the flow of the organised happenings. And the virtual spatial expansion appears greater and more transparent, with the acoustic form and focussing of the individual instruments and vocals being more clearly outlined.

Tonally the Signature is very reserved and does exactly what I expect from an excellent piece of audio furniture, namely nothing. Much more it shows the tonal character - or if you prefer the term: maximum neutrality - of a hi-fi component even more so to its best advantage.

It is however possible to increase such qualities even more, and it couldn't be more simple. The Finite Elemente Ceraballs are a great opportunity to finally get rid of the indifferent rubber feet mostly fitted as standard to audio components. A set of four of these effective Ceraballs cost around 90 euros - a first-class investment that has a positive effect on practically all surfaces and a clear benefit not only for the Signature. Incidentally: Whereas the design of the Spider rack means that four Ceraballs are required per audio component, with the Pagode Signature I often only need three Ceraballs to produce excellent results. I haven't yet bothered working out when the saving of one Ceraball per component would offset the higher investment costs of the Pagode Signature ..



Vibration dissipation 1: Spikes in the wooden struts



Vibration dissipation 2: Horizontal tensioning in the aluminum side pillars

Image x-tract

The completely revamped "E-Class" from Finite Elemente is called the Pagode Signature, convincing with its intrinsically clever design, and the overall impression is excellent with its full range of extras fitted as standard and with its superior audio furniture quality. This rack easily achieves the status of an audio component as regards sound improvement. Anyone not willing to invest so much initially should certainly treat himself to the brilliant Ceraballs.

image infos

Rack Finite Elemente Pagode Signature

Dimensions (W/H/D): 66/ from 60/54cm

Useable component area (W/D): 49/44 cm

Load capacity: per shelf 25 kg
bottom shelf 50 kg

Finishings: Canadian maple natural or stained or with black pearl structure lacquer, side uprights aluminium silver gray anodized or high-gloss polished

Special features: component level adjustable in 30 mm steps, special colours on application

Warranty period: 60 months

Component feet Finite Elemente Ceraball

Height: 25 mm

Contact surfaces: 15 and 35 mm

Finishings: Aluminium silver-gray or black anodized, optionally available with completely smooth bottom or with side guides for the Spider