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IPC's Acoustic Equalizer Panels

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[My IPC reviews have been appearing in [StereoTimes.com](#) and this magazine. The Acoustic Equalizer review below appears in La Folia only. Ed.]

Mike Silverton

[July 2013.]



Perfectionist audio: a charming euphemism for batshit-crazy zeal and expenditure. In the quotidian world in which we dwell, a good 40-inch hi-def TV costs less than \$800. Ours operates flawlessly. A recent review of a Japanese preamplifier, which I assume operates flawlessly, mentions among its specs a \$42k ticket. A sufficient number of upward-striving audiophiles will doubtless have made its manufacture worthwhile. And it's probably safe to say that they will have applied it as an upgrade to sound systems the cost of which buys a very large Mercedes, perhaps even a pied-à-terre. For chasms such as these, we speak of mass and niche markets.

I'm not exempt from the perfectionist taint. I drive an old Buick – my he's-just-a-regular-guy cover – and bask in the elitist glow of an elegant sound system. Which brings us to this: the cost of an optimal IPC installation falls within the high end's low end. For now, five Acoustic Energizers, a Sound Power line conditioner, a Disc Energizer, and four Acoustic EQ panels add up to \$18,000 MSLP. (Mine is a CD-only system; thus the \$3900 LP Energizer's omission. An across-the-board price rise is due in September.)

Let's spice things up with a provocation: In your reporter's opinion, this IPC array will deliver a greater improvement to a perfectionist's audio system than any upgrade of electronic essentials or cabling. I can almost hear it – "Oh, really?" Yes, damn it, really, and I'd be most interested in learning how an exceedingly expensive preamp or other plug-in replacement to a high-end system compares in effectiveness. If you're in a position to make the comparison, be kind enough to share your findings.

Remember, we're all subjectivists. You're among chums.

Down to cases

A pity, really, that the term "presence" raises memories of presence controls. As with bass and treble controls, they usually made matters worse. Nothing short of divine intervention ameliorates an inadequate recording, restores sight to the blind or honesty to politics. The word needs to be rehabilitated. Now that four Acoustic EQ panels have arrived on the premises, I've had a fretfully happy or happily fretful time shuffling, shifting and.... Well, it never does stop, does it? Or, once having achieved a convincing sense of presence, perhaps it does.

Good news for the thrifty: It pleases to report that, in this listening-living room, two Acoustic EQ panels more than suffice. And that would be, to review the totality, five Acoustic Energizers, a Sound Power line conditioner, a Disc Energizer and, of course, the two EQ panels: an IPC suite to melt a skeptic's heart. The stale debate about conflating recorded sound with live has no place in these remarks. However, if you hold to the idea that audio is best when it takes live sound as its measure, what does apply is verisimilitude – presence, lifelikeness.

My listening preferences lean toward small ensembles, old and modernist classical, improvisational and free-form jazz. This is of interest only in that recordings of this kind are for the most part made absent studio gimmickry – in other words, simply. They're excellent at revealing differences, which is not to ignore good large-force recordings. The emphasis remains on good. If, for example, an orchestral performance has been badly recorded – if it hangs in a two-dimensional sound stage like a cheap tapestry – this IPC array cannot enhance what isn't there, which would be dimensionality, dynamic finesse and harmonic largesse. To the contrary, you'll have a better view of all that's wrong.

As an implementation of picotechnology, Euphoria Technology, the name for IPC's "Proton Vibration Alignment Field," purports to work on digital discs by way of the Disc Energizer and all else (power cords, cables, electronics, speakers, and most especially, the room's air) via the Sound Power line conditioner, Acoustic Energizer pods and Acoustic Equalizer panels. If "purports" suggests doubt, I can only report that certain claims in this big, bad world one takes on faith and that what I'm hearing delights. It would be a matter of indifference to me if Euphoria Technology owed its success to the machinations of trained bedbugs. No question about it, this stuff does its transformative, utterly mysterious thing, all the more mysterious in view of the panels' on-off switches. As most of us understand it, turning something on and off involves a source of power, e.g., the Acoustic Energizers' batteries and the Sound Power's connection to incoming electricity. Not so with the EQ panels. The source of their potency absolutely baffles.

And with their addition, the stereo image has become more vivid and expansive. I recall a series of TV commercials in which feisty old Clara demanded to know "Where's the beef?" A good deal of it resides in the EQ panels. The pair I'm covering for this review (and keeping) contributes what I can best describe as an extra measure of presence.

I address these perceptions to those whom normals regard with indifference or suspicion. Normals normally listen to whatever, paying little mind to where the sound's coming from. In diametric opposition, we audiophiles are at pains to perfect an inner sanctum arrived at after much experimentation with speaker placement, room treatment and such, and, having arrived, typically temporarily, at what we seek, gaze from the sweet spot at a sonic image. When it's a really great sonic image we like to say that the speakers disappear. This is not easy for normals to understand or participate in. Those normals who do may be not quite normal. (The most interesting people rarely are.)

So, fellow obsessives, when I choose to celebrate (again) a cherished two-disc set, **mode 216**, of Morton Feldman's **Trio** with Marc Sabat, violin; Rohan de Saram, cello; and Aki Takahashi, piano, as a beautifully recorded and played performance made all the more engaging thanks to IPC, as kindred spirits, you will understand what peculiar pleasures such an experience delivers. This 1980 work marks the beginning of Feldman's very long, very quiet, quasi-repetitious masterworks ideally suited to the recording medium. Nor is this the first time I've played **Trio** with my IPC goodies place. With the EQ panels' addition, dynamics, spaciousness, timbral textures, lingering decays (so important to Feldman's chamber music) – everything's just a little bit better.

At 28:11, Paul Lansky's **Threads**, performed by the four members of Sō Percussion, is a joyful demonstration of percussion's allure (**Cantaloupe CA21064**). Filling the room as if with color, the bedazzling matallophones produce an effect remarkably close to synesthesia; similarly beautiful, the drums' virile authority – as ideal a demo disc as I've lately heard. And, need I say, via Euphoria Technology's full panoply, deeply satisfying. (Best Beloved's reaction to a passage with metal percussion: "It's all over the room!" It's true, it was.)

On a jazzy note, **Gramavision GCD 79517, Love Henry**, with the Clusone 3 (Michael Moore, alto sax,

clarinet, melodica, pan flute; Ernst Reijseger, cello; Han Bennink, drums, percussion, piano, voice), "Recorded live at the 27th German Jazz Festival, July, 1996," in a pretty good taping of the trio's interests, madcap to tender. Bennink has little patience for solemnity, his way with gunshot outbursts foremost, all the more impactful under IPC's full-spectrum spell. To this and all the well-recorded jazz I've been listening to, the EQ panels are an invaluable add.

As if a further verification were needed, the better the recording, the more obvious the benefits. The Clusone 3's **Rara Avis, hatOLOGY 523**, superbly recorded by Peter Pfister, takes the trio on a tour of birds, including "Yellow Bird" and the Peruvian folksong "El Condor Pasa," the latter of which the trio plays in all inventive sincerity, manic antics elsewhere obtaining. I have never been so enchanted by this disc's colors and textures.

Let's end on that: enchanted.

Note: The panels' rather flashy curvilinear stands are being replaced by a simpler, less visible design.

The basic sound system: Integris CDP CD player / preamp (AurumAcoustics.com), NuForce Reference 18 mono amplifiers, Wilson Sasha W/P speakers, Nordost Tyr speaker cables, Nordost Valhalla balanced interconnects, Nordost Brahma and Vishnu power cords, Nordost Quasar Points for the amps, Acoustic Revive Air-Floating Under-Board for the CDP.

* * *

Acoustic EQ Panels, \$2500 each (\$2950 beginning in September)

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Ellen MacDonald-Kramer

Don't Shun the Teenage Soprano

Modern opera enthusiasts may sneer at the likes of Jackie Evancho, that irritatingly angelic 'popera' sensation... It may come as a surprise, then, that this wasn't the case 200 years ago.

July 23, 2013



Signor Scardanelli

Scardanelli's Motley

Morton Feldman's 1979 Violin and Orchestra – this being the only major-label performance I know of – engages on a couple of counts.

July 21, 2013



Grant Chu Covell, Mostly Symphonies

Mostly Symphonies 23.

Presumably Russians have an emotional view into the symphony that Shostakovich began composing during the siege of Leningrad. Compared to his earlier recording, Gergiev is mellower, with the Mariinsky sounding warmer and more sensitive.

July 20, 2013



Grant Chu Covell, Pieces de Clavecin

Pièces de Clavecin 7.

Arriving at Kim's D'Anglebert selections after Marchand, Le Roux and Février feels like coming home. I have never listened as closely or enjoyed D'Anglebert as much.

June 28, 2013





Beth Levin

A look at Schubert's Sechs Moments Musicaux, Op. 94, D780

Our lilting introduction: a sweet opening in C major and in unison, as if arrived from nowhere.

June 8, 2013



Grant Chu Covell, Mostly Symphonies

Mostly Symphonies 22.

Intended as a response to Brahms' four, this symphony could be the primordial soup from which Hamburg's greatest son emerged.

May 28, 2013



Howard Grayson

A Single Breath: Beethoven's Last Three Piano Sonatas

"The sonatas, written in 1820, 1821, and 1822 respectively, were conceived together as a unit and so might be regarded as one, especially when heard together."

May 21, 2013



Grant Chu Covell, Rambles

NMC Ramble

Highlights of Davies' nine-piece collection include Isis in which a leading saxophone gesticulates enthusiastically albeit fruitlessly over a 15-person chamber orchestra.

June 16, 2013

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