

Bits & Pieces

PAUL MESSENGER AND MARTIN COLLOMS ROUND
UP A NUMBER OF ACCESSORY COMPONENTS

PAUL MESSENGER

High End Novum PMR

Many readers will doubtless be offended by the very concept of the High End Novum *Passive Multi-Vocal Resonator* (PMR), so when Andrew Uter of UK distributor Sonaris Audio reckoned I'd agreed to try one when we'd met at the Bristol show, my own serious scepticism quickly surfaced. However, he seemed sincere enough, and I've always considered myself game for a laugh, so was therefore at least prepared to give the PMR a go.

I've tried small passive resonators a couple of times, with negligible effect, but the *PMR Premium* is something altogether different. Developed in Germany by Michael Jungblut and his associates, it's effectively a large and somewhat flattened 'bell', 35.4cm in diameter, 8.6cm deep, more than 6kg in weight, made in a bronze alloy, and supported by splayed bronze tripod feet.

It's actually a rather attractive object, consisting of six distinctly angled concentric sections when viewed from the front (five from the rear). Much is made of the specifics of the alloy and the (sand) casting process, including the casting temperature, and the cooling rate, with reference to the techniques adopted in making church bells. And it is indeed a bell, as tapping clearly reveals. Apparently it has to be hand finished to a very high standard of accuracy, and is deliberately loosely mounted onto the tripod, and is positioned with the mouth facing towards the listeners.

Spend £1,850 on one of these very substantial items, plonk it down in your listening room (fitting the bronze feet takes only a minute), and it's supposed to improve the sound quality of the system. "Just like that", as Tommy Cooper might have said. The idea that placing such a device within a room can improve the sound of a hi-fi system seems entirely counter-intuitive or, to put it less politely, mumbo jumbo.

The suggestion was that it could be placed anywhere, but would work best between the speakers at the same height as the drivers. I couldn't quite manage the height for fear of blocking the TV screen, but put it midway between the speakers on a 48.5cm stand topped by a granite slab, which provided a firm base. The system used at first mostly consisted of a Naim *CDS3/555PS* CD player and *NAC552* pre-amp feeding Howes *PX4* monoblocks and Voxativ

π loudspeakers, but involved numerous changes over the following weeks. [Incidentally, much smaller *Initium* 'bells' (£995 each) arrived, but too late to be included in this report.]

Unexpectedly confounding my scepticism, there's no denying that the *PMR* actually does seem to work. It somehow 'tidies up' and 'sweetens' the sound, so that the music makes more sense and hangs together rather better as a coherent whole. Image focus seemed significantly improved, the degree of general untidiness and 'hash' was significantly reduced, and it also seems to add a richness to the proceedings. And although I'm fully aware that the Voxativ π has a decidedly bass light balance, I became less aware of this defect when the *PMR* was in place. Curious.

At £1,895 this accessory is expensive by any standards, but I reckon that in the context of a high end system it's well worth checking out. I'm not recommending anyone purchase one (or more!) merely on my say so, but do suggest that people with serious hi-fi system pretensions should try and check it out for themselves. (I'm sure those with appropriate systems will find it possible to arrange a home dem and/or loan.)

In my opinion and system the effect was entirely positive, and sonically comparable perhaps to (and no more costly than) arranging good quality support furniture. The bottom line is simply that the *PMR* somehow manages to make my hi-fi system sound more pleasant and relaxing, so much so that I'm seriously considering purchasing it, even though I still don't have the remotest idea of how or why it works.

I'm reminded of the couplet from *The Red Telephone* on Love's classic *Forever Changes* album: "I believe in magic; why, because it is so quick". A small corner of my consciousness has always believed that this aphorism held at least a germ of truth, and maybe that helps explain the *PMR*. Who knows? *PM*



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