

We have already written about the work of Mr. Kazuo Kiuchi many times (see: HARMONIX in "High Fidelity"). He has been committed both to music (he professionally deals with state-of-the-art stringed instruments and his wife is an opera singer) and CD production (he is a co-owner of the XRCD patent), as well as to the consumer/hi-fi side of things (he is a manufacturer of audio devices, speakers, cables and accessories).



Within its mother company, the **Combak Corporation** offers complex system solutions. Under its Reimyo brand, it offers a CD transport and a DAC (K2), a pre-amplifier and two power amplifiers (a tube and a transistor one). There is also a mains filter – it's electronics. Speakers are produced under the Encore! brand (this used to be the Bravo! model/brand), The Enacom brand encompasses a series of mains, speaker and signal line filters, whereas Harmonix comprises a few series of cables, as well as a whole range of tuning products, including the TU-666M „Million” Maestro tuning feet.

The feet were made to celebrate the 20th company anniversary. Initially, their production was to be limited to 200 sets (four feet in each). Having sold out the series quickly, Mr. Kiuchi-san decided to make another one, until he ran out of the materials. Owing to this, music lovers outside Japan have been able to obtain products from the high-end "Millennium" Maestro series.

Mr. Kiuchi-san does not devote too much attention to materials in a direct conversation or on his website. However, this does not mean that he does not care what his products are made of! The key thing for him is the combination of appropriate materials, in appropriate proportions and shapes. It is something that can only be achieved when you laboriously compare different prototypes at home, in your own audio systems.

The thing is that the owner of Harmonix, like any other artist, thinks that the technology behind a work of art (a product in this case) is not important for the audience. What should matter is the effect. He told me once directly that product technical details blur the picture for many people and distract them from what is most important – music. And music is all that matters to him. I have an impression that, if it was possible, Mr. Kiuchi would give up using all sound-reproducing products and move on directly to the layer of music. Unfortunately, our world does not make it possible. It is good for me, though. It is part of my hobby and my way of living – an integral element of perfectionist audio.

So, everything that can be said about these very expensive feet is only based on our sensory perception. The feet are sold in sets of four. They are packed in a nice wooden box decorated with a golden ribbon. People in Japan pack gifts for their friends in a similar way. Each foot weighs 37.9 g, so it is quite heavy. Its length is 33 mm and the diameter (ø) is 50 mm – when measured at the point of the foot's maximum thickness. The maximum load that can be placed on the feet is 80 kg. The bottom part unscrews, thanks to which the foot's height can be adjusted. Although it is impossible to determine this for sure, it seems that the feet are made of some type of chrome-plated brass with wooden elements – a flat piece at the bottom and a thicker layer on the top. So, both the feet and the product which is placed on them rest on wood. Each foot has its own metal plate with its name, the company logo and the information that it was made in Japan. In a broader context, the feet are part of a whole Harmonix tuning system, in which we also have the RSB-1 tuning platform and a whole anti-vibration audio stand that can be constructed using a few such platforms. Such a system may cost €20,000 or more, so the feet are a 'rightful' system component, just like the sound source, amplifier and speakers.

Since I have the Finite Elemente Pagode Edition platform, I tested the feet only, but using four different products as a load. The Harmonix feet replaced the **Franc Audio Accessories** Ceramic Disc Classic feet under my Ancient Audio Lektor AIR V-edition CD player. As regards the **Accuphase A70 power amplifier**, the feet were used instead of the standard amplifier feet (with a high iron content). In the case of the Chord pre-power combination, the Harmonix feet were placed under the device's feet which are a basic component of the mechanical structure of the device (read [HERE](#)). As far as using the feet with a player and an amplifier is concerned, they were placed directly under the bottom panels, without using the original feet.

— A FEW SIMPLE WORDS WITH... 

KAZUO KIUCHI Combak Corporation | owner

Wojciech Pacuła: When did the process of the Tuning Feet design start? What was the inspiration behind it?

Kazuo Kiuchi: The response to this question lies in the philosophy of my company – it started with thousands of thousands of listening sessions and attempts. Work is my life.

Wojciech Pacuła: How do you select proper materials for designing such a product?

Kazuo Kiuchi: I have spent more than 30 years studying research on resonance and related problems in musical instruments. So, I know what materials I need for any Harmonix product that I design.

Wojciech Pacuła: Do you use the Tuning Feet in JVC XRCD studio?

Kazuo Kiuchi: Absolutely! It is very important for us to have tuned equipment for XRCD mastering, including feet, signal cables and power cord X-DC30M2R, ALS-777.

Wojciech Pacuła: I have an impression that the TU-666 Million is an extraordinary item in the Harmonix range. Where and in what configuration do music lovers most often use the product?

Kazuo Kiuchi: The TU-666M was designed for very sophisticated music listeners and lovers who also know quality sound. It is true not only in the case of the TU-666M. I always suggest that Harmonix users should first use feet in loudspeakers and power amplifiers, since these devices produce unwanted vibration.

Wojciech Pacuła: When did the idea of presenting such as uncompromising cable as the X-DC Studio Master Million come to your mind?

Kazuo Kiuchi: It was my mission to present a Harmonix product that serious music lovers have dreamt about for a long time, but it was not simple to make it materialize for many reasons. About 8 years ago, the wire material that I needed became available for production only once.


Wojciech Pacuła: Music is definitely a very important part of your life. Do you derive inspiration from it to design new products?

Kazuo Kiuchi: I love music very much because music is Art for me. No matter if it is a CD or LP, a piece of music contains many stories that include human dramas and life of the given time. Artists, players and the Conductor devote themselves to describing stories of these dramas and life of the time. More often than not, designers and mastering engineers are superior in one area, but do not take meticulous care of Art.

SOUND

Recordings used during the test (a selection):

- *Now the Green Blade Riset*, The Stockholm Cathedral Choir, Proprius/JVC, XRCD 9093, XRCD2 (1981, 1993/2001).
- *Paganini For Two*, Gil Shaham, Göran Söllscher, Deutsche Grammophon/Universal Music Ltd, Taiwan 480 246-5, XRCD24 (1993/2009).
- Bill Evans, *Conversation With Myself*, Verve 521 409-2, „Verve Master Edition”, CD (1963/1997).
- Duke Ellington, *Concert In The Virgin Islands*, Reprise/Warner Bros. Japan 8122-79598-0, „Jazz Best Collection 1000, No. 4”, CD (1965/2013).
- Ed Sheeran, *X*, Warner Music UK/Warner Music Japan WPCR-15730, CD (2014);
- Patty McGovern & Thomas Talbert, *Wednesday's Child*, Atlantic/Sinatra Society of Japan XQAM-1047, CD (1956/2010).

Japanese issues available at 

The TU-666M "BeauTone" Million Maestro is a very expensive product developed by a man that I have known for years and that I respect and value a lot. I believe in what he says about his new products, because his words match my own observations. I do not instantly accept everything, but it is due to the fact that we have different priorities and musical tastes, not because of a lack of reliable information. So, I immediately compared the tested feet to my reference products and to standard device feet. That is why I did not carry out any sophisticated comparisons with other brands, as it does not make sense (at least today). We are talking about a mature product developed by a mature person and music lover. Seen from this perspective, the feet deserve our respect.



It is even more evident due to the fact that the feet bring about clear, significant and repeatable changes in the sound of the products that are placed on them. Thanks to the feet, sound obtained in a system focuses on instruments, vocals, reverberations and acoustics, etc. – to a greater extent than without the feet. It is as if we got a pair of stronger glasses. Contrary to the first association, the picture becomes slightly smaller then, because of the fact that it is less fuzzy. It becomes focused and therefore its body and contours are better visible. There are, of course, more details, but they do not constitute a basis for evaluation, because they are hidden behind bigger events.

That is why the sound of the recordings seems to be smaller at first. However, it is not. We get this impression because of the fact that the Harmonix feet define sounds better. Without the feet, sounds are a little more undefined in space, because of which they seem bigger. When we use the feet, sounds are slightly moved away from us and gain more depth. In this case, reverberation which accompanies sounds is better integrated with the basic sound. Everything is clearer.

However, it is neither brighter, nor more analytical at all in the sense that we are attacked by more details. It was excellently shown by Bill Evans's album *Conversations With Myself*. It was recorded by the artist himself, using the method of overdubbing three different tracks for each song. That means Evans performs like in a classic trio, but with himself only (the left side, right side and the centre). Overdubbing all the tracks has made the recording very noisy.



The Harmonix feet changed the expression of the album, giving the pianos more glamour and showing the nature of noise in more detail. However, the most important thing was that sound was more natural, authentic and, most importantly, more "modern" with the feet. Without the feet, the sound of Evans's album was a bit similar to the sound of an old tube radio – it was very nice, but covered with "patina". The Harmonix feet removed most of it. The sound was clearer and the noise was stronger. However, just like in the case of other high-end audio products, the sound was neither brighter, nor more detailed. I would even say that details were not as important as they had been before and the sound was smoother.



The sound of Ed Sheeran's album was similar. In the case of this recording, everything became deeper and the slight brightening of the upper midrange was gone; the tonal balance of the whole recording was lowered. Owing to this, the vocal was easier to understand and better situated in space with respect to the instruments. I had an impression that everything was clearer and better-defined.

Summary

"Clear" and "well-defined" are often used as synonyms to talk about brightening in an indirect way. However, I never use them in this way. In my articles, the word "clear" means "clear", whereas "well-defined" is "well-defined". The Harmonix feet lower the sound and make it focused. The last thing that can be said about them is that they "brighten" anything up. They will excellently perform both under standard feet of devices and directly under the devices themselves, although I am inclined to say that they prove more effective in the latter case. They influence a system in such a way that they open it, improve its focus and define it better. At the same time, everything is smoother. The feet are a really expensive accessory, but has anyone ever said that art (including high-end audio) is a cheap passion to have?

Technical specifications

Set: 4 pieces
Height: min. 33 mm – max. 36 mm (adjustable)
Diameter (ø): 50 mm
Weight: 39.7 g
Load: up to 80 kg