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Subject: Review: 4Pi Pros, or... Walnut Pi  
Posted by [Bill Epstein](#) on Fri, 12 Sep 2008 16:12:49 GMT  
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I spent 3 serious hours with the new speakers early this AM and I'm satisfied these are the best sounding I've ever built. They needed a \$4 tweak to get there, though. oops, still have to touch-up that port. My first impression yesterday was disappointment with a 'plasticky' coloration from the treble that spoiled the sound and I was filled with regret over abandoning the wood horns. I decided to try damping the H-290s even tho' there was limited success doing that to Altec 811s some years ago. And these horns aren't even 'cowbell' aluminum. I completely covered the outsides of the horns with M-D rope caulk, \$4 bucks a package. It made a fantastic difference, completely eliminating the coloration. This is a mandatory tweak for anyone using the H-290 in whatever speaker. That done, I was able to hear the most remarkable soundstage, a true stage that extends from wall-to-wall with instruments and voices placed exactly right in relation to each other and the hall (or mixing board!). One of the weaknesses of the BatSpeakers was accurately portraying the piano keyboard; whether Diana Krall or Emil Gilels, the octaves were a muddle. No more. Now there is no question about the orientation of the Steinway or hands upon the keys. The combination of the new crossover and positioning of the woofer and horn in the baffle results in the kind of image single-driver advocates go on about and beyond. No 4" or 6" single driver can do what the JBL and B&C combo does. The first few bars of Dire Straits Ride Across The River reveals the wonderful and eerie tone of the flute backed by the impact of the percussion. This track from the SACD re-issue is one of my top five benchmarks and shows off all the strengths of the 4Pis: natural tone, impactful, fast transients and the sensation of vast amounts of air moving. Her Latest Trick showcases Mark Knopflers guitar sound in a way never before heard, with little details of the mix coming and going that, until now, were lost. On Jacinthis Autumn Leaves, the upright bass intro to track one is just so real with tone that describes the wooden hollow body and vibration of the strings. Her voice is also "the sweetest sound I've ever heard". 'Deed I Do, Diana Krall, reveals the one remaining flaw of the sound I'm getting in room. Her attacks on vowels that open phrases are too sharp and become fatiguing. I'm certain this is my room even with the conditioning I've done because it was there before. I had mostly eliminated it with the corner placement and extreme toe-in of the BatSpeakers but it's back somewhat with the 4Pis. I feel this is owing to the more accurate reproduction of the 4Pis as well as the need to reduce the toe-in to better attain the other positive attributes of the sound. The H-290s want to be heard more on-axis in my room than the wood horns. So be it. Given enough time and fiberglass, this will be tamed. Getting my room back was high on my list of priorities for building the 4 Pi Pros and for the first time in years I have speakers with "indoor plumbing" and plenty of walking and breathing room. Only the sound dominates the room. Everything I've done in years past has been with exotic veneers and I felt that walnut went out with Acoustic Research. I'd forgotten how interesting the grain and rich the color could be with the right finish. In my mind, I carry around with me memories of great speakers that function as standards of comparison: Infinite Slope Model 3s, Dunlavy Sovereigns, John Wolfe's Hartsfield reproductions, Von Schwiekert 7s and most recently, the XLH 1812s. Wayne's 4Pi pros easily join that company and I expect to enjoy them for many years.