Subject: Two Tower initial impressions
Posted by Shane on Thu, 17 Nov 2005 15:58:46 GMT
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Well, even though I won't be veneering the cabinets till spring probably (due to kids and Xmas, etc....)I'm impressed with the sound of my 2 Towers. They are sub-optimally placed in the corners of the room, toed in about 2 inches, 5 inches from the back wall, 10 inches from the sides that have full length curtains on them, about 10 feet apart, with the listening position around 12 feet out against the far wall. Initially they produced almost zero bass unless driven pretty hard. Now that I've got a little time on them the bass has come out more, but still seemed "thin". Then I started really paying attention to the CD's I was playing. Some had great bass, some none. Played them on my vintage Kenwood/Polk system and didn't notice it as much. I think the higher sensitivity of the Pi's is revealing that some of these recordings that I thought were good in actuality are not! That and the new NAD amp/cdp I got are much more neutral in processing the music. When you put the power to them they really stand out and shine. Also, the soundstage is very, very good. My wife walked in the other day and said "hey, the singer is right in the middle and the drums are right behind him with the guitar player right there and the bass right over there--that's so cool!" She is a complete audio non-afficianodo with a tin plated ear, which is saying something when she can pick out details. All in all I would definitely recommend the Towers for anyone who wants to give a try at building a first set of speakers.

Subject: Re: Two Tower initial impressions
Posted by Matts on Thu, 17 Nov 2005 16:32:22 GMT
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sounds like you did a good job on the speakers! My guess is that your take on the wife's ear is 180 off...most women have better ears, but just think they must not "get it" and are polite when the lower-quality stuff doesn't sound good to them. From what you say, though, sounds like she has excellent ears.

Subject: Re: Two Tower initial impressions
Posted by Shane on Thu, 17 Nov 2005 17:09:44 GMT
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Yeah, she's got good ears, she just doesn't care usually as long as the music is playing in some fashion. Although I caught her in the room listening the other day when I came home from work! She didn't realize that a hi end end system could sound different till I took her to the local hi-fi shop a couple of months ago. We listened to the new B&W $12k speakers through a top of the line Classe system. That pretty much changed her attitude when compared to the old vintage system I had. Her comment was that she could "almost" get rid of the TV if we had something

that sounded like that. We'll the Towers don't match the kind of sound we heard that day, but they are are very, very good for what $$ I have in them. As good and better than some of the several $K speakers I've heard. And of course my front end isn't top quality either as that can make a huge difference. All in all, though, I am very pleased and have no desire to "upgrade" at this time---well, I might need to make some Thermionic 8's just to be covered!

Subject: Re: Two Tower initial impressions
Posted by Wayne Parham on Thu, 17 Nov 2005 17:13:05 GMT
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Glad you have them running, Shane. Just out of curiosity, have you checked the phasing of the woofers? Put the speakers face to face and listen to the bass when both speakers are playing and then fade hard left or hard right so only one speaker is playing. Does the bass level go up when both speakers are playing or does it sound like it goes down?

Subject: Re: Two Tower initial impressions
Posted by GarMan on Thu, 17 Nov 2005 18:06:31 GMT
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Shane,It's very strange that you're finding the bass thin on the Towers. When I built mine, the first thing I noticed was the incredible dynamics. The second thing was the bass. In some recordings, it was enough to buzz the windows in the room. Definately check the phasing as Wayne suggested. Mine were always able to fill the room up with bass.And yeah, revealing speakers and poor recordings are frustrating. At least you got a set of good component to drive the speakers. BTW, have you soldered the CDP and amp together like I suggested to hear how it can sound without IC's gar.

Subject: Re: Two Tower initial impressions
Posted by Shane on Thu, 17 Nov 2005 18:21:12 GMT
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Just tried that while I'm home for lunch. Bass definitely goes up. It's not as if there isn't any bass at all and I definitely notice a difference with different recordings, but you don't really "shake anything" unless you have the volume up fairly good. I noticed the difference in bass on recordings when I listened to Wayne's pair. Norah Jones on his had great bass, but my Pantera seemed to have very little unless you were really driving them. I've noticed the exact same thing with mine. The dynamics are good, and it may be that the high freq. are a little much, too, causing me to not pay attention. I've had to attenuate them some with the NAD's controls. The good thing

about the NAD is that it just affects the higher frequencies and not the uppper mids at all. Takes a little of the "bite" off. If I were to guess it would be that I'm used to driving my little Polk 5b's in a large room and having to compensate by boosting the bass on them which can sometimes make it a little boomy. The bass on the Towers is definitely taught and defined, not boomy at all. And it could just be synergy between the amp and the Pi's at lower levels.Please don't think that I'm complaining, they're great!I guess I could blame it on that Royal Cable someone sent me.LOL! On that note I might just need to hurry up and get those IC's built.

Subject: Re: Two Tower initial impressions
Posted by Shane on Thu, 17 Nov 2005 18:28:33 GMT
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Also, there could be several other factors. The fact that I have a double front baffle where the front piece is 2" narrower on each side making a double step off of each side is probably not helping any matters. I can't remedy that till I veneer the front as oak strips are filling that edge space. And the fact that they are in corners where the side wall is long, but the back wall is only about a foot wider than the speaker cab then followed by an open doorway (this is on each side) then a wall in between the openings where the stereo sits can't help either. Unfortunately that will not change as I'm not putting my good system in the living room, it'll have to stay in the bedroom.

Subject: Re: Two Tower initial impressions
Posted by Matts on Thu, 17 Nov 2005 19:36:12 GMT
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Women tend to like good SET a lot- find a good 300B, 2A3, or 45 amp for her to hear and you may not be able to hold her back. The 2 Pis sound great, and there's no better cost/benefit ratio around.

Subject: Re: Two Tower initial impressions
Posted by Shane on Thu, 17 Nov 2005 19:46:07 GMT
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Um, don't get me started on the whole tube amp thing. Let's just say that the NAD amp was to replace a UPS "mistake". I don't like the idea of shipping a 50lb amp that's in a 14x14" box anymore. Too easy to drop. On the other hand I've been collecting vaccuum tubes for the last 4 months and have enough to try out about a dozen different low cost SETs and PP's. Not 300B, 2A3, or 45's but some others non the less. I've got a set of old GE EL34's that I'd love to make a SE amp from. Just need to invest in the iron now.

Subject: Re: Two Tower initial impressions
Posted by Wayne Parham on Thu, 17 Nov 2005 20:37:03 GMT
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Glad you checked the phasing, that confirms everything is hooked up right. Let us know when you find out what's up.

Subject: Re: Two Tower initial impressions
Posted by Matts on Thu, 17 Nov 2005 22:10:07 GMT
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Shane, Are you sure the phasing is correct? I just realized I have a pair of Polk 5's (haven't been used in years), but they had no bass at all compared to my Studio 2's, which have less than your Towers....so, why don't you switch the leads on one of your speakers around the other way and tell us what happens?

Subject: Re: Two Tower placement
Posted by Shane on Thu, 17 Nov 2005 22:11:00 GMT
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This may give you some idea of what I'm up against.
http://pg.photos.yahoo.com/ph/bloozestringer/detail?.dir=c8d2&.dnm=d349.jpg&.src=ph

Subject: Re: Lead Switch
Posted by Shane on Thu, 17 Nov 2005 22:31:17 GMT
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Swapped the leads. The speakers were definitely wired correctly.

Subject: Re: Lead Switch
Posted by Matts on Thu, 17 Nov 2005 23:56:41 GMT
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You just switched the leads on ONE speaker, right? not both?

Subject: Re: OK think I've got it. Royal Cable.
Posted by Shane on Fri, 18 Nov 2005 00:07:43 GMT
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Kidding! Just seeing if I can get a rise out of a few people.Took one of the Polks in and substituted it for one of the Pi's on the NAD. Did a little left-right comparison having to quickly adjust the volume to account for sensitivity issues and the Pi's definitely put out more, lower bass. So we're OK there. Whew! Throw on the Kenwood and it put more bass out through both speakers (remember, this is what I've been used to for a longgggg time) but doesn't quite image as good as the NAD. So it's the amp! Could be that the 30 year old Kenwood is not actually putting out a flat signal with all the controls leveled out (and I usually bump up the bass and treble some), where the NAD actually is. I know with the Kenwwod I have to bump the treble up to 3/4 on the Polks for it to sound good to me. On the NAD I'm having to reduce it a bit so it's not so harsh on the Pi's and I noticed I had to do that with the Polks also. I think at this point I'll build some new IC's and see if that makes a difference. Otherwise I'm going to chalk it up to years of playing loud guitar without earplugs and my lack of exposure to decent equipment. When I think back, like I said before when I heard them at Wayne's, I checked them both with Norah this time and it sounded fantastic and Pantera was very bass shy until you cranked it up on the Pi's, but these differences were less noticable on the Polks. The Pi's are defintiely more revealing and think I like that better.So never mind guys, it's an equipment issue and a brain damage issue evidently.Thanks for all the help....Shane

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Subject: Re: levels
Posted by Shane on Fri, 18 Nov 2005 00:09:30 GMT
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Gar - what levels are you listening at? I tend to listen rather softly anymore, almost as background music, unless I'm throwin' down some Disturbed or something.

Subject: Re: Lead Switch
Posted by Shane on Fri, 18 Nov 2005 00:10:47 GMT
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yep. One speaker, otherwise we'd be ending up with the same situation if they were wired wrong.

Subject: Re: Them's fghtin' words!
Posted by Bill Epstein on Fri, 18 Nov 2005 20:43:05 GMT
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Everbody knows Royal's the best.I wonder if the Alpha's are'nt showing the little peakiness they have as you go up he scale in your room, un-balancing the bass. Maybe try a coil? I think Ron is using one on his, don't remember the value. .5 maybe.

Subject: Re: Them's fghtin' words!
Posted by Shane on Fri, 18 Nov 2005 22:25:07 GMT
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Kiddin' kiddin'!!!I like the Royal a lot. Way better than the Monster stuff I had. I've never tried "high-end" cable before and don't plan on it unless someone gives it to me. I can't see how $400-???? cable can be that much better. I'd rather spend it on new amps, speakers, anything but cable.Might have to get another coil. Is Ron just adding this to the one that comes with the kit?

Subject: Re: Them's fghtin' words!
Posted by GarMan on Fri, 18 Nov 2005 22:40:42 GMT
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I have absolutely no doubt that $400 cables can change the sound of your system, and in some cases, for the better. The question is, by how much? and can you better spend the $400 in others ways to increase the enjoyment of your system?Forget the cable, buy more CD's instead. Law of diminishing returns applies to everything. Sometimes, good enough is good enough.

Subject: Re: Them's fghtin' words!
Posted by Shane on Fri, 18 Nov 2005 22:44:00 GMT
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That's my thinking, too.

Subject: I liked Royal Cable so much I bought the entire stock

Posted by colinhester on Sat, 19 Nov 2005 05:22:04 GMT
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I cleared the local Wal Mart Super Center out. I ended up with about 15 rolls of the 14 and 16 ga. Yeah, as you can assume I was pretty impressed with its performance in my system (Cayin integrated and Altec A7s.)....Colin

Subject: Re: Steve Browns tranny choice
Posted by Bill Epstein on Sat, 19 Nov 2005 23:58:45 GMT
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Steve used James transformers in his 300B's. New name to me. He says James used to work for Tamura and the prices are quite reasonable. Check with Steve.

Subject: Re: Steve Browns tranny choice
Posted by Shane on Sun, 20 Nov 2005 00:20:43 GMT
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Thanks.Seems like Pete Millett used some James' in one of his amps. I know I've seen them in some amp designs somewhere. I'll check them out, though I'll probably just start with something inexpensive like the Hammond 125ESE's to get a feel for building, then I can always upgrade the OPT's to better ones if the amp design is promising.

Subject: Re: Two Tower initial impressions
Posted by Norbert on Sun, 20 Nov 2005 03:43:24 GMT
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Congrats Shane! Now that I've been listening to my 2 pi Towers for several weeks I can say that there is more bass than when I first put it together, but not that much more. I am using them for stereo listening and am definately very happy with the speaker.

Subject: Re: Two Tower initial impressions
Posted by Shane on Sun, 20 Nov 2005 03:49:20 GMT
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Norbert, glad to hear it! I really can't wait to get mine completely finished, but it will definitely be spring before that happens. I think a lot of my problem may be due to the front baffle at this point and the new (read--different sounding to me)system I have. I did move the cabinets a little closer to the back wall today (from about 6" to 3")and the lower bass noticeably improved to the point I am well satisfied with it. I had to diddle with the amount of toe-in to bring the imaging back into alignment, but that is to be expected. You wouldn't think that moving them 3" would make that much difference, but it sure did!

Subject: Bill--question on cables,
Posted by Shane on Sun, 20 Nov 2005 03:57:50 GMT
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Bill, I had posted about IC's a while back and I remember you saying what you were using, but I've lost the email. I was thinking about making some DIY with PTFE 22Ga stranded Ag plated Cu and some with PTFE 22Ga standed silver just to see if I could hear any difference.

Subject: Re: Hey Steve Brown, about those IC's?
Posted by Bill Epstein on Sun, 20 Nov 2005 08:33:30 GMT
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I just use the blue AR IC's you get at Best Buy. They're shielded and, I think, neutral. What else could you ask for?Steve and I talked cables a bit yesterday and he mentioned a Gary Pimm DIY design using Litz wire. I googled for it but can't find any info.I have the original Homegrown silver coated copper braid unshielded which are a little bright. I've built Kevin Haskins version of the Risch Belden co-ax cross connect which were just OK. I see on his site that he has finished cross connect with Cardas Litz wire for $85. The only truly outstanding cable I have experience with is the 1985 vintage Straightwire I use from phono to pre-amp. It's thin and shielded so must be a small gauge and the RCA looks like all of that era, i.e. no gold, no silver no locking or other doo-dads.Now if you want to talk speaker cable.....
Cross connect

Subject: Re: Two Tower initial impressions
Posted by Norbert on Sun, 20 Nov 2005 15:19:31 GMT
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Shane, I can believe it...speaker placement is another variable that can change the sound coming out of the speakers. Have you tried placing the speakers near a corner? I am quite sure it will

futher increase bass coming out of the speakers.When you are ready to veneer your speakers, I would suggest that you do lots of research and seek experienced help, if you haven't done it before...Speaking from personal experience, my veneering job was the only part of my speaker project that gave me some grief. If you plan on veneering the back and bottom of your speakers (I spray painted the back and bottom of my speakers)you may want to start with that first to gain some experience, including staining/shallacing... What may turn out to be a good veneering job can be nulled when the stain is applied such as in my case - I started to see air bubbles coming out of the veneer. It is ok now and no one can tell sitting 5, 10 feet away. I still enjoy the sound and that is all that matters. Cheers.

Subject: Re: Two Tower initial impressions
Posted by Shane on Sun, 20 Nov 2005 16:26:41 GMT
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Norbert, here is a picture of what I have to work with. They are in a corner so to speak, but then there is an opening, then a wall to the right where the stereo rack is. Same situation from the left.I've spent a lot of time with my Polks getting them placed just right so I know how important placement can be. You just wouldn't think it would make the HUGE improvement that it did.I've never veneered, but I've finished many, many wood projects from homemade Cherokee style bows, to furniture, to wood carvings. So I'm not worried about that. Just the actual application of veneer is a little troublesome, but it will turn out fine I'm sure.

Subject: Re: Steve Browns tranny choice
Posted by Wayne Parham on Sun, 20 Nov 2005 17:57:11 GMT
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Akhilesh has a pair of James output transformers in a custom 45 amp he owns. They look and sound very nice, and I understand they don't cost much either.

Subject: Re: Two Tower initial impressions
Posted by Bill Epstein on Sun, 20 Nov 2005 19:04:22 GMT
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How did you glue up the veneer? And was it raw or backed?

Subject: Re: Steve Browns tranny choice
Posted by Shane on Sun, 20 Nov 2005 19:18:48 GMT
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Here's that amp the Pete Millett used James' on.
http://www.pmillett.com/elinear.htm

Subject: Re: Steve Browns tranny choice
Posted by Wayne Parham on Sun, 20 Nov 2005 19:33:35 GMT
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That's good lookin', I dig it. The James transformers look the same as those used on Akhilesh's amp.

Subject: Re: Two Tower initial impressions
Posted by Norbert on Tue, 22 Nov 2005 01:19:33 GMT
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I started using carpenter's glue... that didn't go well because I only have four clamps and a big piece of plywood to sandwich the veneer and I am certain I needed more... so for the rest of the project I used contact cement.. all of my bubles came after applying latex shallac over contact cement backed veneer. Speaking of veneer, I used the raw variety. Looking back I'll never use raw veneer again (although it was way cheaper compared to paper backed ones) and would need way more clamps... someone told me later that I also needed a roller to apply on the veneer when matting to the clued surface. Bill, would you have any other suggestions?

Subject: Re: Two Tower initial impressions
Posted by Norbert on Tue, 22 Nov 2005 01:26:19 GMT
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Shane, have you tried position the speaker along a long wall? Looking at your picture you have a window and a short wall which may explain for the lack of bass. Or put it another way, have you tried replacing the 2 Pis with your Polks in the same spot? And do you get the same results? Just a suggestion.

Subject: Re: Two Tower initial impressions
Posted by Bill Epstein on Tue, 22 Nov 2005 02:08:43 GMT
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As you found out, contact adhesive is deadly with un-backed veneer.You shouldn't have to pay more than $55-60 dollars for paper backed common species 4'x8'.2 very important methods are: cover the previously veneered edge the bearing will ride on with 3M Blue tape so the glue doesn't contaminate the veneer. It also keeps the cutter the thickness of the tape away from the previous edge and then you just trim and sand down flush. The other is to press down the veneer with a block of pine; a piece of 2x4 long enough to grip with both hands is perfect. Rubber J-Roller doesn't exert enough pressure. Work from the center out to the edges and press down until flat. Use enough force so that you can see the veneer being 'burnished' by the wood block. Use both hands. Remove the 'burnish' with a light sanding with 220 grit paperThen wait 24 hours before applying any finish.Contact adhesive never really dries so it may still be possible to work out some of the bubbles. I never use water-based finishes. Save the water for Scotch and water.

Subject: speaker placement
Posted by Shane on Tue, 22 Nov 2005 02:49:15 GMT
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Well, here is the layout of the room. Unfortunately where the Pi's are is where they will have to go. I put the Polks in somewhat of the same position and the lower bass was definitely less, mid-bass the same which is to be expected. Moving the Pi's closer to the back wall helped tremendously, especially at the lower volumes I tend to listen at and I am quite happy with them now. The only consequence to this is that the bass gets a tad boomy when you really press the Pi's, but that is such an infrequent situation that I'm not concerned. When the kids are a little older and more responsible they will probably get moved to the living room (huge--20x30' with 10' cathedral ceiling--at least where we are renting now)

Subject: Re: speaker placement
Posted by Norbert on Tue, 22 Nov 2005 03:33:13 GMT
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Ok. I guess where you have is the best there is under the circumstances... I could not help but to suggest the thought of moving the Pis temporary to the living room just for kicks, but then I am afraid you won't want to place the speakers back to your bedroom afterwards;-)

Subject: Re: Two Tower initial impressions
Posted by Norbert on Tue, 22 Nov 2005 03:42:59 GMT
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Bill, thanks for the suggestions. Here in the great white North, the price for a 4x8 backed veneer was $119 Canadian... which I saw at a woodcraft place, maybe I am not looking in the right places. When you mentioned that one can also use a 2x4 piece of pine to push the veneer down, are you also squeezing the glue out underneath the veneer as well? Or is this a light pressure press?

Subject: Re: Two Tower initial impressions
Posted by Bill Epstein on Tue, 22 Nov 2005 08:46:29 GMT
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2 Hands. Heavy pressure. Contact doesn't squeeze-out.