

Pachelbel's Canons?



Tweaks: 9/10/2009 meeting

By Jerry Pomeroy

Tweaks

Tweak: \ˈtwēk\, to fine-tune, making small adjustments to improve performance. In the audio world a tweak is something not often thought of. A tweak could be just about anything. I usually think of a tweak as something that indirectly affects the sound of a system but many demonstrated at the Sept meeting were directly in the signal path while others weren't. Rationally some things are obvious why they work while others seem completely illogical. Many articles have been written and there are websites devoted to the subject such as [http://](http://www.audiotweaks.com)

www.audiotweaks.com. I have heard some profound differences but couldn't explain why. For example the first tweak demonstrated at the meeting; holding your CD close to a fluorescent or incandescent light for about 1 minute before playing it. I can't explain why this makes a difference but it seems to and most people at the last meeting thought they could hear a difference. I am convinced the light trick makes a difference, although I can't definitively say why. A few years back when I was making videos for schools and church programs, I was

given a DVD that had been abused and the surface was less than scratch free. Every time it got to a certain time code the image would become pixilated then freeze. I cleaned the surface and it made no difference but after I held it to an incandescent lamp in the room, it played fine. I don't know if the read error was caused by a flaw in the disc or scratches. It didn't matter because I was able to retrieve the data.

The next thing demonstrated was cleaning the RCA connectors with small Q-tips; the inter

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esting thing is all the RCA and IEC electrical connections were plugged together during set up just prior to the meeting. We turned the club's *Acoustech* phono stage upside-down. This made a big difference. Some things sound better upside down. At least the phono stage did. One I had never thought of was tying knots in the interconnect cables; this makes sense as it changes the capacitance.

By inverting the leads on one side of the phono cartridge and then reversing the speaker cables at the amplifier, the signal load between left and right channel are opposite as they go thru the amplifier. This trick will work best in a balanced system. Remember all of your sources must have one channel inverted or it will be out of phase. We placed acrylic domes under the club's SACD-777 in place of tiptoes. It sounds different, all of these were on top of an *FIM* isolation platform. One of the features on the 777 has is the ability to turn off the display, there is no doubt the club disc player sounds best with it turned off.

We also demonstrated a couple of CD mats such as the *FIM RCC* carbon mat. The CD sounds different, depending on what side is in contact with the CD. There are many mats available, including the likes of the *AudioPrism Blacklight* that glows in the dark. All the mats I have tried sound different. I had several to try but cut these out so we could have time to demonstrate other tweaks.

I don't remember if we demonstrated this during the meeting or only before, was the *Walker Talisman*. This is a really strong magnet and not recommended around people with pacemakers. Gary has one of the original *Talismans* that have a really really strong synthetic magnet. He used it on a CD before the meeting and it really opened up dynamics and detail. There is a company out of Germany that makes a CD lathe that

will cut a bevel on the outside of a CD. The beveled edge holds paint very well. Even if you think the painted edge doesn't make a difference, it looks cool! I have had CDs that wouldn't play because they are so far out of balance and after truing the edge they worked fine.

Joe, from Kosmic Audio, brought a box of goodies such as LP/CD demagnetizers, *Acoustic Revive* silk from worms fed a diet of tourmaline, a tourmaline lamp for negative ion treating your CD (this is a lot quieter than the Tourmaline hair-dryer). Not demonstrated, he showed *Still Points* and the new OEM *Still Points* for circuit boards. The concept, is to stop resonance as close to the source as possible. He also brought some AC outlets, grounding conditioners and an ultra low frequency generator. He also demonstrated the difference between a shielded and non-shielded AC cable. One of the coolest demos was his AC noise sniffer. When plugged into an *IsoTek Sirius* AC power filter it was quiet, when the sniffer was directly connected to the wall outlet you could dance to the music.

Members also brought tweaks such as Ear candles. One of the coolest things anyone brought in was a small cotton tube about 4 inches long. Exactly what these are and why they work I don't know, but they sure made a difference at the meeting. I took a set home and these cotton sleeves made a great improvement.

This was the best "Tweaks" meeting we have ever had. It seemed like all that we tried were noticeable. That tells me this is a higher resolution system than in the past. There were many things we didn't try, like different TT mats. I thought it would be fun to actually make an improvement in the club system and see what sounded best. We will have to do that at a later date. Another thing that would have been fun on the clubs system would be to experiment with

different vibration isolation/diffusion items inside the clubs rack. The *FIM* platforms and *Still Points* work well and it would have been fun to play with those in the rack just to see how good we could get the club's Sony 777 and TT to sound. Since we don't have the Genesis 928 sub anymore, we have a set of Aurio's that aren't being used. We just plain ran out of time. We had enough stuff we could have had another meeting on the subject and demonstrated more tweaks.



Update from RMAF 2009 (editor: since this article is about Tweaks, I'll include a very interesting article from a seminar that I attended.

Breakthrough Approach to Audio Measurement. (taken from *stereophile.com* by Jason Victor Serinus)

Cable manufacturers Nordost and Vertex AQ had good reason to present their joint seminar, "New Approach to Audio Measurement: Why Cables Really Matter," no less than five times during the show. As Art Dudley will report at length in his December "Listening" column, their groundbreaking new approach to measurement, developed by Nordost and Vertex AQ in collaboration with military electronic-engineering consultant Gareth Humphrey Jones, has produced an entirely new method for measuring the audible effects of components on sound. We're talking not only cables, support platforms, and the like, all of which can now be unequivocally shown to affect a system's sound quality, but also CD players, amplifiers, and speakers.

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Co-presenters Roy Gregory of Nordost (former editor of *HiFi+*) and Steve Elford of Vertex AQ projected a series of graphs that for the first time definitively demonstrated the effects of audiophile power cables, supports, and the Quantum device on sound.

They also measured differences between CD players. Simply changing from a stock power cord to a well-made audiophile cord resulted in a 36% reduction in timing errors between the original WAV file and the same file burned on to a CD and played back by a typical high-quality player. Vertex AQ's support platform further reduced noise by 15%. The Quantum unit reduced noise by another 11%. Furthermore, there was no apparent hierarchy; if the support platform had been introduced first, rather than the power cord, its effect on errors would have been far greater.

Errors and effects that were formerly attributed to jitter have for the first time been identified as program-related using real music as the test signal. **These errors cannot be identified by the standard continuous tone tests that everyone and their mother have been using all these years.** To quote Roy Gregory, "We knew this stuff worked, but we didn't know why. Now we can gain insight into how to construct cables, CD players, and amps to produce better sound."

According to Gregory, the so-called law of diminishing returns, which says the more costly, high quality parts you put into a cable or device, the less of an improvement you will hear, need no longer apply. Using this new form of measurement to perfect products, it should now be possible to mate properly designed cables, components, and supports to deliver sound that reflects every bit of the time and investment devoted to their design and manufacture. This will not happen overnight—developing these measurements took

a good six months, and this is very much a work in progress—but the results so far are extremely heartening.

Upcoming Meetings

Not much on the calendar this month because I fly out to Denver for the show in a few hours. I hope to give a short rundown of what I saw in the first few minutes of the Oct meeting.

The **Oct 8th meeting**, we'll have special guest speaker, Steve McCormack. He will demonstrate the new McCormack/Genesis equipment that debuted at the 2009 Rocky Mountain Audio Fest. Steve is a tweaker and has been on the cutting edge of high-end audio for many years. You won't want to miss the chance to meet him and maybe even get a picture with an audio legend.

Sunday Oct 18th Seattle Center, Shaw/Fidalgo Room; The Northwest Record and CD Show, 10AM-4PM, \$3 admission. The best Albums go early and there is always a line waiting to get in when they open. These are alot of fun, just flipping thru the LPs; album art is great.

November 12th meeting, this is the annual multi media event. Since it is dark we don't have to cover the windows. This year I have progressed from last year's 720p to a 1080p projector. So the images will rival last years by about 40% more detail. As of yet, I have little 24/192 audio, but promise some really good 24/48 with killer concert video. I am still working on the video line-up, as there is so much to sort thru this year.

Dec 10th meeting: This is our annual CD trade/Christmas music contest.

See Ya

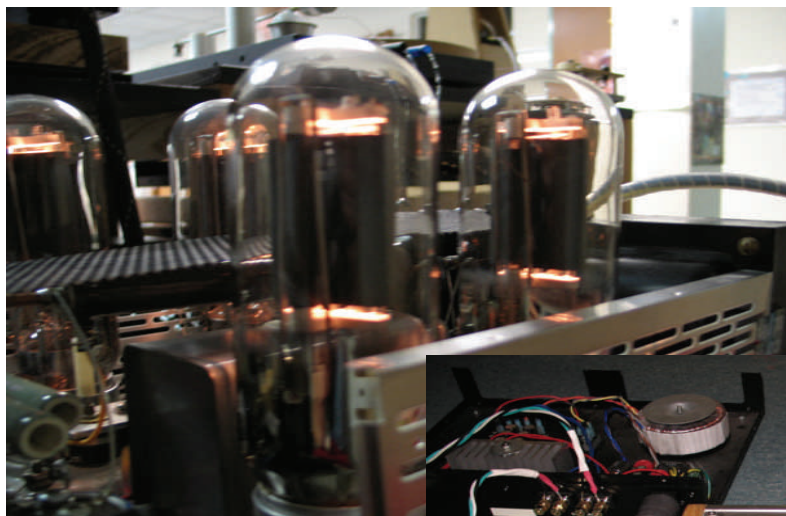
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Saturday September 26th, about 40 people gathered in the church basement for our bi-annual "Do It Yourself" meet. This unstructured event allows people who have built things to get together and share with other DIY folks, their stories and to get comments. I look forward to this event, as it is unstructured and doesn't generate a lot of stress. There are no judges and virtually no rules, except leaving at the end of the day.



Shanling JP. The tube roller strikes again! At an event like this, the sky is the limit.

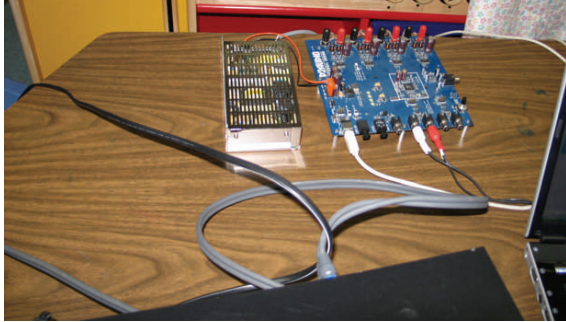
The prototype Amadeus TT was there. It really sounds good but just wish it had an arm lift. There were lots of speakers from 6" to over 48" tall. Several people brought drivers and albums for sale. As always fun was had by all. I got lots of questions about the club and a few new members. Next August, the Speaker Contest: I took a few pictures, enjoy.



This year we had about 5 systems set up in the basement and there were a few times it seemed like a contest to see who could get the loudest, but we all had a great time. Most of the stuff sounded fantastic!

There were several home made amplifiers and a modified Haf-ler. There weren't too many pre-amps except those built-in, so the clubs CJ came in handy. The smallest thing was Joe's 3 watt SET





Best of Hootie and the Blowfish, 1993-2003
Atlantic/Rhino records, R2 78083



The group never contained “Hootie” or the “Blowfish”; the name comes from two of Darius Rucker’s (lead vocalist) college friends. One had a flat face like an owl, while the other had a round face, glasses and looked like a blowfish. The band was formed while the four members were freshmen at USC in 1986. Their debut album, *Cracked Rear View*, was released in 1994 and dashed to the top of the charts becoming Billboard’s best selling pop album of 1995. The CD produced several hits including *Let Her Cry*, a very blues tune, *I Only Want To Be With You* and what I consider their signature song, *Hold My Hand*. All of these songs are in the Rhino best of collection.

The group has three cover songs on this disc: *Goodbye Girl* from the Neil Simon movie, Bill Withers, *Use Me* and the Zeppelin classic “*Hey Hey What can I do*”. The funk and performance quality in “*Use Me*”, makes a more “in to the music” experience than the ‘72 origi-

nal, in my opinion. *I Only Want To Be With You*, is a classic rock rhythm, powered by extremely melodic lyrics. The group settled out of court with Bob Dylan for use of the term “tangled up in blue” in this song. Overall, I categorize the music on this CD as Rhythm and Blues, but some is bordering on Contemporary folk/soul music. The group has a sound similar to John Cougar Melancamp with funk.

The group released four studio albums; *Fairweather*, *Johnson*, *Musical Chairs*, *Hootie and the Blowfish* and *Looking for lucky*. Two other compilation discs are available; *Scattered Smothered and Covered*, released in 2000. The last album they made, *Live in Charleston*, released in 2006. In 2008 the band started releasing its concerts via downloads through True Anthem Music.

The group started their own record label “Breaking Records” in 1996 that produced a handful of albums from lesser-known groups, this short-lived venture folded in 2000. The groups albums were primarily released on Atlantic records; two of their latter works on Vanguard and this collection on Rhino.

Rucker announced in August of 2008 the Band was splitting and would only do a few benefit concerts each year till he made three or four country albums. Rucker did a solo country CD in 2002; *Back to Then*, his 2008 release *Learn to Live* produced two number one singles on the U.S Country charts; *Don’t think I Don’t Think About It* and *It won’t be like this for Long*. Darius enlisted the help of some music heavy weights as

he moved into this Nashville venture including Alison Krauss and Brad Paisley. Commercially, his solo carrier has been successful; what remains to be seen is can it stand the test of time as his work with Hootie has.

I have enjoyed listening to this CD as I wrote this for over the last couple of weeks. The music has enough melody. I am always singing along and the great rhythm gets my head bobbing and foot tapping. One of the ways I determine how much I like an album is according to the skip factor. The more songs I am tempted to skip the less I like the album. For me there isn’t a “Skip” on the CD so that makes this soft rock vocal driven CD great.

The Audio quality is better than average for a pop CD but not by much. I was hooked on the music before it cooled off enough to fire up the I60 and give it a good listen on the home system. I still haven’t fired up the Exemplar CD player because it just takes too long to warm up. I played it on the Oppo BDP this morning and it sounded pretty good. The CD is a bit thin and lacks detail and has the typical compressed sound of a pop recording. I haven’t gone thru the motions of hunting for an import yet. If you’re looking for music to show off your system, save your money and don’t buy this CD. On the other hand if you love melody and can look past the audio quality this is a great CD. My advice: invest in what you enjoy!

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The Northwest Sinfonietta (a classical chamber orchestra) provides discounts to members of our club for performances of the 2007-2008 season. The regular single ticket price of \$38 will be only \$20 per person per performance at the door (or by phone or mail). Just tell them or note on your order that you are a member of the PNWAS. Information and order forms are also available at their website: www.nwsinfonietta.org.

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Contact Joe Pittman

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Revolution Power

[Www.revolutionpower.com](http://www.revolutionpower.com)

Contact: Ken Garza

Visitors Welcome!

Meetings are held on the second Thursday of every month at 7:30 p.m. at 4545 Island Crest Way, Mercer Island, WA 98040.

PNWAS Mission Statement

- ◆ To bring together people with a common interest in music reproduced at its best, for their mutual edification and pleasure.
- ◆ To facilitate the exchange and dissemination of accurate data concerning audio equipment and musical recordings.
- ◆ To promote, sponsor, and cultivate the highest quality reproduction of music in the home.
- ◆ To encourage maintenance of high standards in the performance, recording and transmission of music.

PNWAS Objectives

1. Provide a forum for meeting other audiophiles and exchanging information on musical recordings and audio equipment.
2. Demonstrate and compare equipment and recordings.
3. Give members opportunities to become familiar with the techniques of audio manufacturing,

testing, repair, recording, broadcasting, etc.

4. Explore related avenues as the membership deems appropriate.

Club website

www.audiosociety.org

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U.S. Mail

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Annual dues

\$60 due each January. New members pay a prorated \$5 per month for remainder of year.

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Editorial

Editorial submissions are welcome.

Content must be audio-related or of general interest to the club in plain text or Word document format without automation (macros or scripts). We reserve the right to edit for style, content, and length.

Editorial deadline: two weeks before meeting date.

Publishing any editorial material is contingent upon the approval of the Executive Committee.

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Audio Society**

Bringing Audio Enthusiasts Together Since 1978

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