

## Dear *Get Better Sound & Through the Sound Barrier* owners,

Welcome to the *twenty-first* issue of *Quarter Notes*, published on April 9, 2017. *Quarter Notes* is a free newsletter for *Get Better Sound* and *Through the Sound Barrier* owners, expanding on both, as well as introducing new and timely subjects.

### Best email address

Since you're reading this, the e-mail address with which I sent this QNs must have worked. However, the only e-mail address I have is the one associated with your initial *Get Better Sound* or *Through the Sound Barrier* order. If you have an e-mail address that you'd prefer to use to receive *Quarter Notes* notifications, send it to [jim@getbettersound.com](mailto:jim@getbettersound.com). Be sure to include the e-mail address I used originally, along with the one that you want to use to replace it.

### Mass loading loudspeakers

I used to (over 15 years ago) employ this tweak on certain systems, but had frankly forgotten about it. Recently saw a post on Audio Asylum.com by Jeff Medwin (aka Dr Lowmu on AA) and it all came back.

Mass loading – adding weight to your loudspeaker – can result in some pretty amazing improvements. Contrary to what you might think, the system will sound louder than pre-mass-loading. The sound takes on a purity & authority that you didn't know was there. Musical dynamics improve as well. The result is even more musical involvement, for relatively little money.

IMO, a slight increase in weight has an exceedingly slight effect. With mass loading, I tend to think of percentages. In past experiments, I found that – whenever possible - adding about 50% or more of the original speaker's weight made a significant difference.

My Tannoy Canterbury loudspeakers weigh 150 lbs each. My REL 212/SE subs weigh 122 lbs. each.

I added two 57 lb. patio blocks to the top of each of my Tannoys. So I added approximately 114 lbs each – over 75% increase in weight!

I added four 15 Lb. patio blocks to each of my RELs – for a total of 60 Lbs./speaker (about 50% of the REL original weight).

Although the results were a wonderful improvement to my already musically engaging sound, the issues that accompany performing this tweak are many:

**1** – Ummm, it does not improve the appearance!!! At minimum, you will probably need a dedicated room or a man-cave for such a tweak.

Here's a look at mine, before I substituted another 57 lb. block for the 3 15 lb. blocks on top. This is also before I ever thought about reducing the visual effects:



After a quick `n easy attempt to cover up my work:



Still not exactly "attractive", but I am still working on it. That's a REL 212/SE behind my left channel Canterbury. It has four covered 15 lb. patio blocks on it as well.

I will add some weight (about 65 lbs.) to the bottom (Canterbury stand) as well – in this case, for stability, in case someone bumps into the speaker. Who knows, there may be a further improvement to sound! Fortunately, this time it will not be visible. :)

**2** – You have to have a speaker that is amenable to adding weight. In other words, you need somewhere to mount the weights.

**3** – You need to be sure that your speakers are in their best location, as moving them post mass-loading will be difficult...

**4** – Never tried it on inherently solid and weighty speakers such as the larger Magicos & Rockports, so I have no

idea if it will work for them.

The good news:

**1** – As already noted, the improvement is quite noticeable, with no negative sonic effects. Well, you may need to isolate the blocks from one another, as they can find amazing ways to vibrate against one another. I used foam-core poster board. Not the thin, almost paper-thin stuff but the compressible thicker stuff (eighth inch thick or more)

**2** – This is cheap!!! I got my 16 patio blocks at Lowe's hardware store for less than \$40.00!

## **Evolution of RoomPlay Reference**

This service was not much more than an afterthought back in 2009 when it began after I did some **RoomPlay** sessions around North America. Clients loved it and I subsequently began to think of ways to make it more valuable. Now, it has evolved into something considerably more worthwhile.

For many years, I have realized that audiophiles simply do not have a reference for what is possible. They have thought that if they could only acquire the latest & greatest component, they would hear a tremendous improvement in their systems.

I guess it depends to some extent on what they would call *tremendous*. The fact is that if they depend on audio shows or audio dealer sound, they will not likely be able to establish a usable reference for what is possible with their existing systems (without buying more equipment).

If and when they do acquire a "new & improved" component, they will actually be able to recognize improvements that they probably wouldn't have before. And they may hear that the component in question does indeed produce a different sound, but not necessarily a sound that is more musically involving.

So the **RPR** sessions became as much about what to expect as how to get it yourself. Some call it teaching. I was a teacher briefly, and this is NOT teaching. :)

Here are a couple of comments from recent **RoomPlay Reference** clients. FWIW, they are knowledgeable audiophiles and each is multi-degreed in their fields:

*"Many thanks Jim for a rich and rewarding session! I learned a lot and very much appreciated expanding my musical horizons as well. I have a number of questions and will send them along as soon as I process a bit.*

*"It is certainly clear to me that there is so much more contained in my cd collection that I have never really heard before and that the quest for hi-res and multi-channel is not where most listeners should be putting their energies (and money). There is a whole world of music on my shelves waiting for the right room conditions to emerge!!...*

*"...As you can tell, I was blown away by listening in your room... I have 'seen the light' (or heard it as the case may be.)"*

– **S.K.**, RI.

*"Hi, Jim.*

*"I just wanted to write and say again how much I enjoyed seeing you, and how much I learned. My brain was on overload on the way back. It seemed so surreal, going there and back in 24 hours and listening and learning so much from you. Your generosity and willingness to spend the time and share your expertise was heartwarming, and meaningful. Thanks again so much!*

*"BTW, you were right - I checked when I got back and the Quads are sitting with the center of the speakers ~6-9 inches down from my ears. Even with the spikes added and the weight, they'd be a minimum 4-5 inches down, and maybe still 6-7 inches down. So this is job one.*

*"After I raise and forward-tilt them, I'll work with moving them closer together and play more with toe, then see what moving them forward on the toed axis reveals, to see if I can't get more of the 'you are there' sense I felt in your room.*

*"Once again, thank you hardly seems adequate. Take good care and stay well. Looking forward to talking with you again..."*

– **J.B.**, VA.

If you are interested in taking your music system to a higher level of musical engagement, we should talk about a **RoomPlay Reference** session. Plus, should you ultimately decide on purchasing a **RoomPlay** session later, the **RPR** fee is credited to your **RoomPlay** account!

<http://getbettersound.com/rp.html>

**RoomPlay Reference** sessions are held here, at my office/listening room, next door to our house (about 40 miles north of Atlanta):



## Latest Copper e-mag issues #26, #28 & #29:

**Something to Talk About**

<http://www.psaudio.com/article/something-to-talk-about/>

**The Answer Man**

<http://www.psaudio.com/article/the-answer-man/>

**The Answer Man – Part 2**

<http://www.psaudio.com/article/the-answer-man-part-2/>

## Effects of equipment cabinet between your speakers explained. – from Copper Issue #29 reader reply

**Reader blang replied:**

*Thanks for your continued contributions to this magazine, Jim. I understand why keeping the space between the speakers unoccupied is ideal, but I'm surprised by just how important you feel it is. My number one reason for placing my equipment rack in between the speakers is just because it allows me to run shorter cables, which make a significant price difference. Also, I think it's widely accepted that shorter runs of cable sound better if it can be helped.*

**My reply:**

*Blang,*

*As my answer, please permit me to tell this story (similar events have occurred numerous times as well).*

*I was at a **RoomPlay** voicing session. The client did not want to move his equipment cabinet to the sidewall, as his relatively short – but very expensive – speaker cables would not reach.*

*I suggested that we go up to the nearest hardware store and purchase 50 feet of 18 gauge lamp cord(!) I said that an unsullied acoustic wave launch into the listening room was well over ten times more effective than the*

*type of cable he used, no matter its claims or its price...*

*Even though he seriously doubted me, he went along with my suggestion. We moved his equipment to the sidewall and replaced his exotic speaker cable with 18 GA lamp cord.*

*He was astonished at the sense of presence and sheer musical involvement he now had.*

*I asked him if he would rather go back to using his short & expensive speaker cables and he said NO WAY! You would be amazed how often this happens.*

*That doesn't mean that I am against better sounding cables. In fact, quite the contrary. But there are priorities, even in audiophile land!*

*I suggested that the client invest in longer cables of the brand & model that he liked. In some cases, the amp can stay by itself and the user can employ longer ICs. Depends a bit on the component, especially the preamp's ability to drive a longer line...*

*But NO cable – at any price – that affects how electrons flow in the wire – can come anywhere close to the effect of a vastly improved acoustic wave-launch into the room.*

*IMO, of course.*

## **New TTSB Podcast!**

Until now, Randall & I have not had a chance to produce another *Breaking Through* podcast (Since #10).

We have just produced a new episode :)

If you haven't heard them yet, I suggest you give them a try – you might pick up a useful tip or three.

Here is a link to all of the *Breaking Through* podcast episodes on iTunes:

### **The Breaking Through Podcast (iTunes)**

If you are not an iTunes subscriber or user, go here for the latest podcast:

<http://breakingthrough.libsyn.com/episode-eleven-we-like-mike>

Go here to access all eleven episodes:

<http://breakingthrough.libsyn.com/>

## **Facebook Updates**

As I mentioned in the previous QNs, there are times that there may be news that I might want to send sooner than the next *Quarter Notes* newsletter. In fact, that's now happened on several occasions.

So I have combined my Facebook pages to include occasional audio info as well as the personal posts that you would expect. If you have a Facebook account and you are interested, go here:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1057521805>

Ask to make friends & let me know you are a GBS owner, or simply click on **Follow**. If for any reason you change your mind, it's easy to un-friend or un-follow someone.

## **TTSB Update**

Pretty much the same news as last issue - The CD has been fully licensed and has been mastered. It is ready.

Book One is complete.

I am ready to begin the DVD production, but cannot just yet, as Book Two needs to be completed.

I fully expect to produce the entire package before the end of this year, and hopefully in the next six months or so.

## Previous Quarter Notes

- **Volume 1, Issue #1**  
**Topics:** Tesa tape • Master the mister • Why single-ended amplifiers can sound so good • Why single-ended amplifiers can sound so bad • Bi-wiring • Room temp/humidity/Rives • The Concert Experience • Twenty Minutes vs. Two Hours to Nirvana? • Small, medium and large listening rooms • CES 2009 quick note • Laser distance measurers and levels • RTAs • House calls
- **Volume 1, Issue #2**  
**Topics:** A question about CD technology • Bi-wiring, part two • From common sense to sixth sense – Srajan Ebaen • Three common-sense tweaks • Tweaks to watch • Tweaks to try • Sensitivity to sensitivity? • Top 10 standards of quality for high-end audio retail specialists • Message boards • Sad, but true • Hourly rate for consulting
- **Volume 1, Issue #3**  
**Topics:** The top 3 tips I keep hearing about from readers • Vinyl 101 - A few tips on the return to vinyl – Jeff Dorgay • How to Eat an Elephant • Computers and Audio – Charles Hanson
- **Volume 1, Issue #4**  
**Topics:** From recent experience • On-the-job observations • The sound of rooms • Hard drive housekeeping • Ear protectors, new basement, fluorescent lights • AC polarity tip • Questions from Italy • Music review – Geoff Poor • Absolute polarity -- controversial, but worth checking out
- **Volume 2, Issue #1**  
**Topics:** The ACK Attack and un-common Knowledge • Basics re-visited - a little more info: subwoofer set-up, speaker separation and staging, long wall or short wall?, affordable RTA, absolute phase/polarity, sliding base for spiked speakers, rack in the middle – AGAIN!, spikes – AGAIN! • Stacking the decks with DEQX • Demystifying room acoustic treatment
- **Volume 2, Issue #2**  
**Topics:** A reader teaches me a lesson – Computer Audio • New room designs • Set-up diagrams • Stereo subs • Audio forums • Back in the saddle again
- **Volume 2, Issue #3**  
**Topics:** The new *Get Better Sound* DVD! • Computer audio, part two - the sound, better recordings, more involving sound, Redbook CD, Pure Music, five easy pieces, computer hardware upgrades, interview with Rob Robinson – CEO of Pure Music
- **Volume 2, Issue #4**  
**Topics:** *Get Better Sound* DVD • Introducing RoomPlay™ • A surprising story about voicing • Room eq systems, and a brief story • How far is too far? • Uneven speaker wire lengths • Fuses as tweaks • Sliders • Degrees of separation • Subs for every system? • Computer audio and absolute polarity • Rack 'em up one more time!
- **Interim Volume 3, Issue #1**  
**Topics:** *Nothing much to see here – just a report about some health issues that were interfering with my work.*
- **Volume 3, Issue #2**  
**Topics:** Health issues and your correspondence • It's not just babies that take nine months – the 1st comprehensive *GBS* DVD review is born! • Best coupling to the floor • Speaker sliders – a better solution • When sound is foremost • Mini-breakthrough in my Computer Audio system – and a tip even if you don't use computer audio but you have a TV connected to your system • Apology re RTAs • Balanced outputs – better or worse? • When do the best measurements NOT yield the best musical involvement? • Another instance of technically correct set-up at the expense of the music • RoomPlay Reference
- **Volume 3, Issue #3**  
**Topics:** Half Notes, anyone? • RoomPlay & RoomPlay Reference update • New – StraightTalk • The 83% rule – NOT! • Clever and entertaining blog • SPL meter • Full-range speakers need subs too... • Auto EQ & bass levels • How to voice subs (2, not 1, of course) with full range speakers • Listening seat not always against or near the back wall • Effects and proper usage of Tube Traps • My computer audio settings – NOT • Three good questions • Effects of ear wax • Near-field listening
- **Volume 3, Issue #4**  
**Topics:** *Through the Sound Barrier* • A different kind of Sound Barrier • Kickstarter
- **Volume 4, Issue #1**  
**Topics:** Our FIFTH Anniversary! • Internet message boards and a continuing invitation • System priorities • Organic EQ vs electronic EQ • Ultimate tweak for Macs when used as computer music servers? • Tweakville • Latest developments with *Through the Sound Barrier* • Inside info about the delay
- **Volume 4, Issue #2**  
**Topics:** Finding old newsletters • Inexpensive RTA that works • Soulless • The High Fidelity Report • New sound room & office • Just a little loving and moving • Large items between your speakers • Quiet and

efficient HVAC • Duelund outboard crossover • Laser info • *TTSB* updates • **StraightTalk** • More...

- **Volume 4, Issue #3**

**Topics:** Mail servers • Light Harmonic Light Speed USB cable • Listening room dimensions • Can't get no satisfaction? • Second that emotion • Can Jim voice your system when he is in the area? • In the crosshairs • Links to *Breaking Through* podcasts if you cannot use iTunes • How do you know if your *TTSB* pledge is on file?

- **Volume 4, Issue #4**

**Topics:** Audiophile angst • Greater isolation for *RoomPlay Reference* sessions • Invitation • *Breaking Through* podcast #7

- **Volume 5, Issue #1**

**Topics:** Better sounding computer audio • Better hearing = Better Sound • Better health • *TTSB* update • Quasi-leave-of-absence • *Breaking Through* podcasts

- **Volume 5, Issue #2**

**Topics:** Cheap 'n Cheerful • The Missing Reference • Dynamics, Presence, & Tone • *TTSB* update • RE: my recent Quasi-leave-of-absence • The *Breaking Through* podcast

- **Volume 5, Issue #3**

**Topics:** The silence between the notes • Two not-so-politically-correct techniques to gain even more musically engaging results from your listening sessions • 4 on the floor • Relative importance of components – a subjective ranking • Strip down • Digital EQ & DSP • Facebook & Friends • Mono & Stereo rant • *TTSB* update • *TTSB* Podcast

- **Volume 5, Issue #4**

**Topics:** EarPlanes importance • IBE • Copper articles – and time required • AudioShark forum & link – Polite & Helpful • Acoustic Wave Launch & Sliders • Linear Power Supply for Mac computer & PS Audio LanRover • Duelund • Cable Isolation • Facebook Updates • *TTSB* backers – fulfilling parts of pledges where possible • Importance of Book Two for *TTSB* • *TTSB* update • *TTSB* Podcast

- **Volume 6, Issue #1**

**Topics:** Mass loading loudspeakers • Evolution of *RoomPlay Reference* • Latest Copper e-mag issues #26, #28 & #29 • Effects of equipment cabinet between your speakers explained • New *TTSB* Podcast! • Facebook Updates • *TTSB* Update

## Questions or comments?

E-mail me: [jim@getbettersound.com](mailto:jim@getbettersound.com)

***That's all, folks.***

Keep on listening!

*Jim Smith*

**back to the top**