

# Synergistic Research Black Box resonator

Alan Sircom

**W**e already covered the Synergistic Research Black Box as part of a two-issue system tuning round-up in issues 135 and 136. But I never felt we gave it quite the justice it deserved, and it was possibly lost in all the treatments and grounding connections. Black Box is an extremely clever broad-spectrum low-frequency resonator array in a small black box (the name isn't just there for fun) that sits in-between and slightly in front of your loudspeakers.

Of course, 'in between and slightly in front' is a sweeping generalisation. To find that optimum point in the room takes some careful positioning and repositioning to find the ideal spot in room. This becomes doubly so if your room has any architectural idiosyncrasies (such as an alcove on one side of the room). But, it's worth the effort.

## Just Passive

Synergistic's Black Box is a passive resonator array; no plugs, no power, no connections to the system, just some spikes that look like they might be handy in a fight. By audio standards, the Black Box is extremely light (you can carry it under one arm) and in its box, you could be forgiven for thinking it was a crash helmet or something of similar size and weight. And just when the object-to-it-all-ivists begin nodding approvingly of something straight out of their Bumper Book of Acoustics, that resonator array uses Synergistic's own Unified Energy Field technology to upset their delicate sensitivities born out of 1950s-era science.



The addition of UEF technology is directly responsible for explaining why a nine-litre resonator can have a powerful effect on sound right down to 20Hz in room. Torturing that acronym a little, music can be considered a unified energy field of organised harmonics and anything that disunites that harmonic structure can often ruin an otherwise good sound. Synergistic Research uses the Black Box to balance low, midrange and high frequencies using a tuned sympathetic resonance. Meaning that what works at 20Hz, also has influence at 40Hz, 80Hz, 160Hz, 320Hz and so on. Getting those harmonics right therefore doesn't necessarily need a Helmholtz resonator the size of a lift-shaft or bass traps that are so large they swamp the sound. But the improvement still holds.

It becomes clear why the fine-tuning of placement matters almost the moment you put the Black Box in the room. Ignoring the bass for a moment, careful tuning snaps the soundstage into sharp focus, adding significantly to the air around instruments within that stage. We can't ignore bass for too long as that 'snapping' into focus has a significant impact on soundstage

solidity. Instruments that were seemingly 'floating' around the stage are now so 'planted' in 3D space, you'll feel like watering the musicians. This is helped by a distinct sense of improved midrange clarity and even high-frequency extension.

And it's now that we get to that bass; the Black Box excels at defining the shape and texture of bass notes, whether they are bowed, plucked, struck or electronically derived. Bass notes don't just 'start' and 'stop' with greater precision; the physical 'thereness' of bass sounds are so precise you will be more able to recognise the difference between both instruments (like a Fender Jazz and Fender Precision bass) and the different style of otherwise very similar players. And, as ever, it's outstanding at portraying musical intent; letting the musical presentation of the audio equipment do what it does best.

Bass traps in the corners of rooms and the wall-wide arrays of acoustic treatment are not necessarily domestically acceptable. The Synergistic Research Black Box is the rare exception that improves the bass performance of a system without swamping the room. +

## Price and Contact Details

**Synergistic Research Black Box** £2,000

**Manufacturer** Synergistic Research

🌐 synergisticresearch.com

**Distributor** Harmony HiFi

🌐 harmonyhifi.co.uk

☎ +44(0)1707 629345