

## Finite Elemente Master Pagode Reference II Modular Rack System

The intersection of science and style.

about \$15,000 as shown here, price varies with shelf number and material.

[mofidistribution.com](http://mofidistribution.com) (US Distribution)  
[finite-elemente.eu/en/](http://finite-elemente.eu/en/) (Factory)

**W**e produced an all black and white issue years ago, and it was a fantastic success. Rather than waiting to assemble a group of components that will all work together as monochrome images, I've decided to produce one review every issue, where the images are all black and white.

The last time, all of the images were produced with the Leica M Monochrom camera, but that was on loan from a friend who's orbit no longer intersects with mine, so these images were all shot with the Sony A7iii, and a variety of lenses in color. The final images were then converted to monochrome in the latest version of Adobe Photoshop.

The stark curves and angles, contrasting with the precise combination of wood and metalworking with the Finite Elemente rack presented here just seemed the natural place to start. (full size image, courtesy of Finite Elemente)

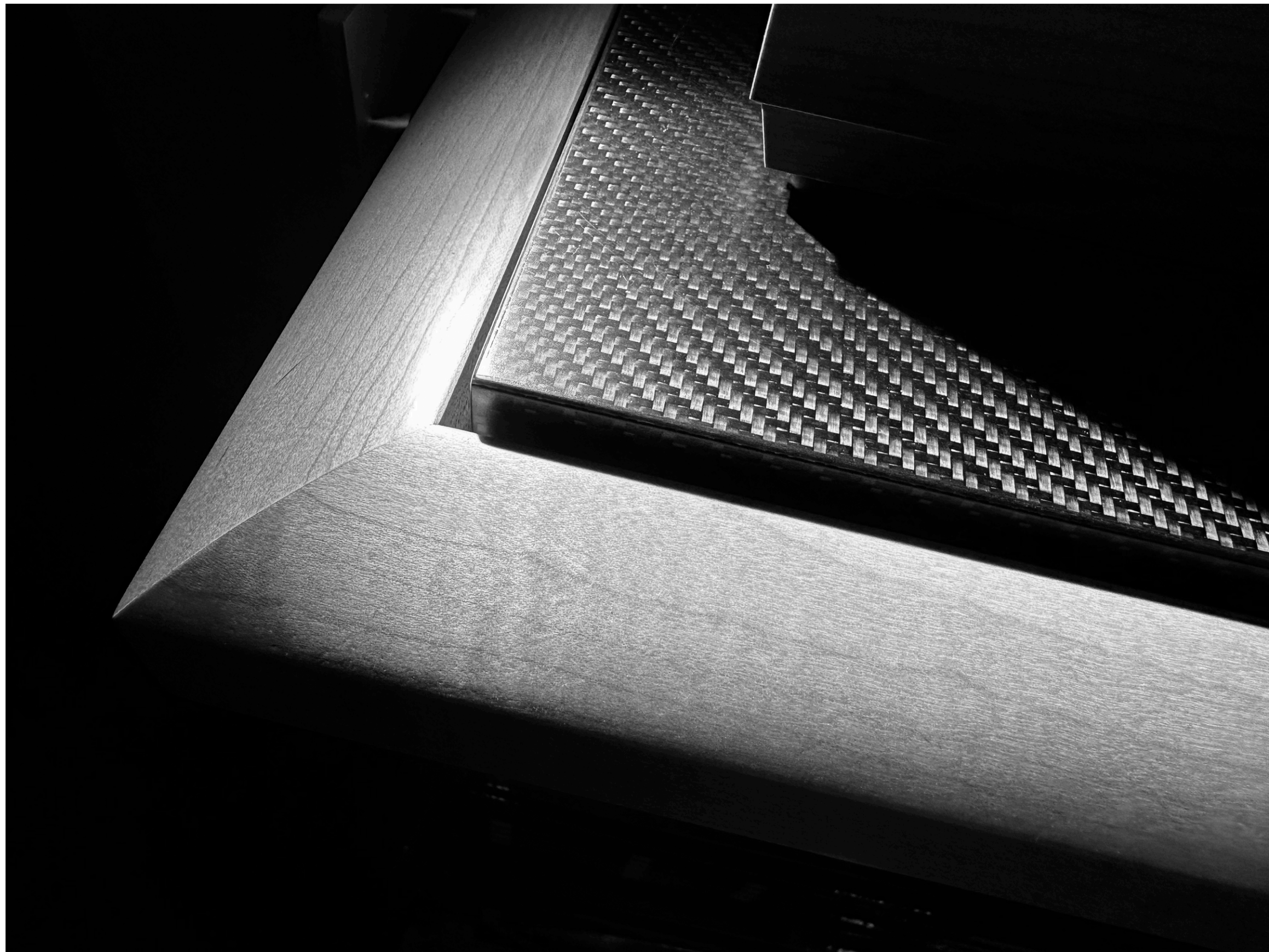


**H**ave you ever spent a fair amount of money to frame a photograph or lithograph poster that you really loved? Chances are you probably paid \$400-\$600 to frame a cherished concert poster that maybe cost you \$50 at the merch table. Yet, when you brought your treasure home from the frame shop, it looked fantastic, and perhaps you said to yourself, “hey, there’s something to this.”

That’s how I’d like to present the Finite Elemente Master Reference Pagode II rack system. Years ago, I had a pair of the originals, but moved to some components that were too big for the shelves. Instead of gently packing them up and putting them back in storage, I sold them to a friend. Do I regret that move. And there’s that mint ARC D-79. Oh well. The good news is the current “II” series has a greater capacity, just over 250 pounds on the bottom shelf, and 132 pounds on the rest.

### **Top tech**

Thanks to some sophisticated vibration control methods, your gear will perform better on a Master Pagode Reference II rack – especially tube gear. As we already had the VK-80 preamplifier and matching VK-80 amplifier in from BAT (which is also distributed by MoFi Distribution) this all made for a great display of gear that would work well on this rack. Chances are, you’ve already got a great system and you’re looking for the icing on the cake.



**L**ike Porsche and Leica, well-engineered, fanatically implemented products from Germany are not inexpensive. However the Master Pagode II rack system is not in the stratospheric price category of some equipment storage solutions. It's also worth mentioning that unlike some high performance racks, the Pagode II does not rely on elastomers between the shelves that will degrade with time and need regular replacement. The rack we have here is \$11,000-ish, so this is not a beginning or maybe even journeyman audiophile purchase.

Clicking here will take you to the Finite website for an expanded explanation with illustrations, of just how they achieve their isolationist goals (this sounds like a news headline, eh?) with their shelves, spikes, and ceramic ball couplers.

This isn't an exclusionary thing – if you've got a \$5k-\$30k system, you will get a larger improvement in system sonic quality with an \$11k investment elsewhere. One thing our test sample does have is a carbon fiber top shelf, which is a bit more than the standard \$2,000 shelves. As a huge fan of the material, it's tough not to suggest getting at least one of these for the top shelf you put your turntable!



## Assembly and setup

The three and four shelf Pagode II arrives in a fairly large box with top and bottom shelves attached. Everything is well packed, requiring only installing the middle shelves. While this can be accomplished as a solo effort, it will go quicker if you have a little help. First, figure where you will be placing your rack, and level the bottom shelf with the adjustable feet and accompanying pucks.

You'll notice the finely machined holes in the spiked, side shelf supports with locking nuts. A quick assembly tip from doing this a few times is to tighten them all down to a similar torque value. Proceed slowly, a bit at a time, tighten everything in a cross pattern (like torquing down a cylinder head) so the columns will expand at a similar rate. Otherwise, you may find a corner or side being loose, and then... As they say on social media, "ask me how I know this."

## Listening and comparisons

Much like testing cable, what do you compare a rack that claims to reduce vibration and increase the sonic purity of your system? Two other things were tried for a comparison, and to keep the equipment simple, an Octave V 110 SE integrated amplifier (with 8 tubes), a Naim CD5-Si CD player and a Technics SL-1200G turntable were placed on a Target rack that is about 35 years old and has no vibration control whatsoever, and a four shelf Quadraspire Q4 EVO (an excellent performer for about 1/5th the cost of the Pagode II). The YG Hailey 3 speakers here for review were used because of their highly resolving nature.

However, the increase in resolution is very pronounced when going all the way to the Finite setup, even more, when all three components are on the Finite rack.



**A**long with the soundstage increasing in all three dimensions, the noise floor drops substantially, to the point where it was very noticeable to even the non-audiophile friends in my circle. Making no mention of what any of this stuff costs, honest feedback was petitioned, and these are guys that always question my audiophile flights of fancy, so they are a tough audience.

The main response from the uninitiated was, “how can a shelf make that much of a difference?” So I rest my case. In addition to the lower noise floor and larger sonic landscape, your system’s ability to resolve fine detail will increase as well. Please make note that the Naim CD player and the Technics table used for initial listening are sub-\$2,000 components. Even the Octave amplifier was substituted for a \$2,500 PrimaLuna EVO 100 integrated with similar results. On the other end of the spectrum, substituting the digital front end for the T+A 2500 DAC/Streamer, and a Rega P9 delivered an even wider delta. Bottom line – this is not merely a cosmetic upgrade. While there was not as much of a difference in resolution going to the carbon fiber shelf with the Technics table, the difference with the Rega was more pronounced, and these are both non suspended tables. Will you get the carbon fiber shelf/shelves for the functionality factor or the coolness factor? Hmmmm. Remember I like to spend your money.

### **Start your own audio gallery**

Just like a fine sports car or motorbike, it’s always a system. While the Finite Elemente Master Pagode rack system offers distinct sonic benefits, the elegance that it lends to an audio system is unmistakable. Personally, I’d buy them for that alone, but it is nice to know that you are getting a significant performance improvement along with a visual makeover for your gear. Finite systems are highly modular, so you can build them like Legos as you go. And seriously, doesn’t that concert poster look way better framed? Same thing. Highly recommended.

