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From "Tuning Up" by *Myles Astor*

Vanishing Points From TARA Labs

One of my most memorable audio projects was a survey of a dozen different cones (aluminum, brass, ceramic, upside-down points exotic materials, in different sizes and shapes) for the magazine Sounds Like. The publication, alas, folded before the project saw the light of day. But the lessons of these listening sessions didn't go to waste.

I discovered that each cone, especially those of the metal persuasion, displayed a characteristic sound. The sound of a cone is first of all a function of its resonance point(s). The secret of the Goldmund (my fave) cone's sound, it seems, lies in the choice of elastomer and its positioning a fraction of an inch below the top. This arrangement does not interfere with the transfer of vibrations into the cone but damps both cones and equipment. Next, cone arrangement and the number of cones underneath a given component affect the sound. Four cones provided far better musical timing than three cones, as long as each cone solidly contacted the bottom of the equipment. That is, as long as the cones couldn't be easily rotated. After this, three solidly placed cones was the next best alternative.

From this early comparison the Goldmund cones emerged the clear winner among the dozen or so specimens. At \$250 for a set of three, however, these were beyond the reach of the average audiophile. Consequently, I searched for a reasonably priced alternative. Unfortunately all the other cones in that survey exhibited shortcomings severe enough to disqualify them.

Times change, however. One of the most intriguing new - and affordable -

cone devices to appear is TARA Labs' Vanishing Points. Molded from a proprietary composite resin/mineral material, with a high percentage of titanium oxide, the Vanishing Points are seven times harder than steel and counteract the tendency of a material to store and re-radiate energy. Unlike most cones, Vanishing Points use a rounded tip that preclude their use on carpets.

These cones have a slightly warm signature. Relatively linear, save for a slight leanness in the upper midrange area, the Vanishing Points' real strength is a lack of the unpredictable resonances found with metal cones. Resolution is good but some of the finer nuances, especially in the lower frequencies, heard with the Goldmund cones or the Shelf are missing here. Instrumental timbres are blurred owing to a slight smearing of Harmanic overtones. Instrumentals are well focused within the soundstage.

Bottom line? Considering their price (\$59 for a set of three) the Vanishing Points are an extremely affordable alternative to the much more expensive Goldmund cones. Plus they come with a cup, so their little pointed heads won't scuff the underlying surface.

RATING: (Three stars) SOUND: 80

\$59 per set of three

Product price has been corrected. Text is otherwise unaltered from originally published review.

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