



# IsoTek Evo3 Syncro

**B**ritish power conditioning brand IsoTek produces a whole catalogue of devices and cables designed to optimise the quality of the power your electronics receive from the AC plug in the wall.

For many, the mere notion that not all power cords are created equal, let alone that the quality of household current can vary, and that all of this can have a significant bearing on the performance of an audio or AV system, still sounds like something akin to black magic.

However, if you consider that the electric current fed to your system from the wall plug is effectively the fuel that drives the system, and the sound and the pictures it produces, then it stands to reason that the better the fuel, the better the performance.

Of course, there's a lot more to it than that, but if you compare a decent, thick-

gauge, properly shielded mains cable with corrosion-free termination to a cheap, black cable included in the box of an audio or AV component, you will hear improvements in detail, noise reduction and, by implication, imaging and detail.

Still, we're talking subtle differences here, and I can completely understand why power conditioning and special power cables are not that high on the upgrade priority list of many audio and home theatre fans.

Enter the IsoTek Evo3 Syncro. Okay, so this is not your average power cable. And the asking price certainly suggests that there is a lot more to this piece of equipment than transferring current from one end to the other.

Take the Syncro out of its box, and that suggestion is vindicated by the thick, alloy cylinder that is inserted halfway between the Schuko connector at the one end and

the IEC connector on the other. Clearly, there is a lot more going on here!

IsoTek isn't saying exactly what is inside that anti-resonant aluminium cylinder, but it describes the in-line device as a pre-filter that is meant to synchronise the mains supply to establish a perfectly symmetrical sine wave, with a marked benefit in sonic performance from connected components the claimed result.

Why is it necessary to 'synchronise' the mains power in the first place? Well, IsoTek maintains that household power is polluted by modern-day electronics, which compromises the quality and consistency of the mains power feed. This is particularly noticeable in the context of high-end audio systems, which specifically focus on resolving fine details and nuances.

Power conditioning products attempt to address the contaminated power



feed by filtering out interference. More sophisticated (and expensive) power conditioning devices also seek to eliminate the low-level noise created by transformers in amplifiers.

The Evo3 Sync addresses this hum or buzz by rebalancing the AC sine wave, IsoTek claims. More importantly, it does so without stymying the current flow – something that many passive power conditioning and power filter products get accused of, and which can result in compromised dynamics.

The Evo3 Sync's solution is to centre the mains sine wave on the zero volts line, thus removing any audible transformer noise in the process. There's also an overall reduction in the noise floor, which should allow more of the music to be heard: more detail, greater tonal range, and improved dynamics.

That's the theory. I've heard the difference that power conditioning products can make, and I own several examples, including IsoTek's Aquarius and Polaris devices. But even I had my doubts about how effective the Syncro would be.

I started off by running it directly between a mains outlet and a source component – a Marantz KI Pearl Lite CD/SACD player, in this case. Compared to the normal cable, the sound was significantly, audibly different: airier and more accessible, with a wider, deeper soundstage. The bass was better defined and more succinctly presented, and there was a greater level of microdetail in the upper frequency spectrum. Pace and dynamics benefited, too.

Does that sound impossible? I compared and re-compared to make sure I wasn't simply hearing what I wanted to hear, but the results were the same.

I then used the IsoTek Syncro with our Electrocompaniet PI-2D integrated amp, and found similar, if slightly subtler improvements: again, there were gains in soundstage dimension and detail retrieval, plus a certain tactile appeal to the sound that wasn't noticeable before.

When I used the Syncro to power up a Polaris power conditioner, every component plugged into the Polaris seemed to benefit



in similar ways. In broad terms it's probably best described as lifting a veil that you never realised was there until the Syncro got rid of it.

Thus with noise and interference addressed, the music is allowed to come to the fore with greater clarity, allowing access to those fine details and subtleties that make the difference between average and awesome. Even better, there's no sense of the music being held back as a result of the Syncro's filtering actions – as is the case with all of the IsoTek products I've tested, dynamics aren't affected in the slightest.

The biggest problem with a component like this is that once you've started using it, it's difficult to go back to what you had before. The Evo3 Syncro isn't cheap, and to replace every power cable in a system will entail a level of investment few people will want to embark on.

However, if it's employed as the main feed between the mains supply and a device like the Polaris, or the Aquarius, the benefits can be enjoyed by all devices powered via those devices, which amortises the cost considerably.

The IsoTek Evo3 Syncro provides irrefutable proof that meaningfully engineered devices aimed at addressing mains power supply impurities actually work. Its impact is particularly apparent, but it also vindicates the use of less complex – and more affordable – products

in the IsoTek stable. Expect to read a review on some of the other cables in the IsoTek line-up soon.

Deon Schoeman

## VITAL STATS

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Type.....               | Semi-active power conditioning cord                   |
| Conductors .....        | 3 mm <sup>2</sup> three-core silver-plated OCC copper |
| Dielectric .....        | FEP Teflon  |
| Termination .....       | Schuko/IEC kettle, gold-plated                        |
| Peak current .....      | 300 Amps/10 msec                                      |
| Permanent current ..... | 16 Amps   |
| Length.....             | 2 m   |

### Verdict

If you think that power cords can't make a difference, take an open-minded listen to the Evo3 Syncro ...

Price .....

R29 990

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OUR RATING: 80/100

