



Isotek Evo3 Initium, Sequel & Optimum

I'll be the first to admit that power cables have not always been high on my agenda when it comes to system upgrades.

Yes, I understand the concept – the cleaner the power, the better the sound. But I've always considered signal-carrying cables (interlinks, speaker cables) more important, and more worthy of investment. And I believed that power conditioners would do enough on the power front.

I've had to change my mind in recent months, however. Having spent some time with Isotek's Evo3 cables, and having heard the incremental differences they make, I'd now suggest that even the sceptics among you at the very least, take a close listen to what cables like these can do.

Under review here are three of the cables from Isotek's Evo3 range. Most affordable among them, and also the most recent addition to the line-up is the Evo3 Initium, aimed at buyers on a budget – and who isn't these days?

Next up is the Premier, then the Sequel, followed by the Elite then the Optimum.

The Initium is meant as an introduction to what difference a good power cable can make, without forking out the price of a small car in the process.

The luminous green jacket is certainly eye-catching, but perhaps more importantly, you can see and feel the quality of the

plugs – two-pin Schuko at one end, IEC kettle-type plug on the other.

The Initium features a trio of high-purity oxygen-free copper conductors arranged with a slight rotational twist, which benefits rejection of radio frequency interference (RFI) and electromagnetic interference (EMI). OFC improves conductivity and uniformity.

The polyethylene insulation is chemically inert with a low dielectric constant over a broad frequency range. Cotton filler reduces microphony, while the paper wrap also helps to form a buffer with the PVC for enhanced dielectric properties.



Isotek Evo3 Initium

Does all of this make a difference to the sound? Replacing the standard power cord of our Oppo BDP-95EU with the Initium immediately resulted in sonic benefits: the sound was clearer, the bass was more tactile, and there was more air and detail.

I also thought that the image quality via our Optoma projector was better – slightly richer in tone, and cleaner in texture and edge sharpness, but the gains were certainly more subtle. Using the Initium to power our Electrocompaniet PI-2D integrated amp resulted in a wider stage and improved resolution of finer details.

Next up, the Evo3 Sequel takes the principles of the Initium a few steps further. The conductors are optimised-strand OFC with silver plating for further improved conductivity and purity, while the dielectric is upgraded to Teflon FEP, which surpasses the crack resistance and low friction coefficient of polyethylene.

Cotton is retained as the filler, but Mylar takes the place of paper for wrapping, creating a protective shield to counter HF radiation. There's also a copper shield to drain RFI, while the blue jacket is durable PVC. Finally, the cable is hand-terminated using gold-plated plugs and sockets.

As is always the case in hi-fi, incremental improvements become increasingly finer as you move up the quality ladder. Utilising the same test system, I replaced the Initium with the Sequel.



Isotek Evo3 Sequel

It says a lot for the Initium that it gets as close as it does to the admittedly superior Sequel in sonic terms. The broad traits are certainly similar – clean backgrounds, a spacious and generously dimensioned soundstage, and an overriding sense of focus and resolution.

The Sequel seemed to bring a smoother, finer hue and texture to the sound, linked to greater tonal breadth. The lower frequencies gained further traction and, perhaps because they were more succinctly rendered, also appeared to have more impetus.

Both staging and detail retrieval benefited from the swap to the Sequel, but the improvements were more subtle – detail seemed slightly better integrated, creating the finer texture alluded to earlier, while the soundstage gained more air than dimension.

The Evo3 Optimum is at the top of the Isotek Evo3 power cable range. It's distinguished by a raft of superior materials starting with the conductors, which are silver-plated OCC copper. OCC refers to Ohno Continuous Cast, a process that further improves the purity of the metal, with commensurate gains in conductivity, flexibility and corrosion resistance.

The three conductors aren't just thicker, but have a square shape when viewed in

cross-section. Each conductor consists of 40 strands, and each strand has the same square shape. The benefit is a larger contact surface between the strands, which in turn further enhances conductivity.

Each conductor is encased in a Teflon dielectric, and the conductors are then slightly twisted for EMI and RFI rejection. Cotton filler and a Mylar wrap are applied, followed by an interference-rejecting OFC shield. The red outer sleeve is hardy, flexible PVC, while gold-plated connectors again ensure a positive connection.

Given the Evo3 Optimum's top-end positioning, it's likely to be used in equally high-end systems with the resolution and finesse to pinpoint the sonic benefits it brings to a system. The Oppo/Electrocompaniet/KEF LS50 test system used here was thus perhaps a little too modest.

And yet, the Optimum's presence could be discerned in an overall more satisfying sense of tonal and textural integration. The music had more weight and substance, the tonal delivery seemed more linear, and the imaging was more succinct, allowing the spatial positioning of instruments and voices on the soundstage to become more obvious.

Our little experiment proved, in no uncertain terms, that a well-constructed power cable makes a significant difference. The Initium gets a clear vote for sonic and

monetary value, while the Sequel and Optimum suggest that there's a clear upgrade path beyond the Initium, too.

Deon Schoeman

VITAL STATS

Initium

Outer diameter 10 mm
 Outer jacket High-flexibility PVC
 Barrier/wrap Paper
 Dielectric Polyethylene
 Conductors 3x 2mm²
 oxygen-free copper

Sequel

Outer diameter 10 mm
 Outer jacket High-flexibility PVC
 Barrier/wrap Mylar
 Dielectric Fluorinated ethylene
 propylene
 Conductors 3x 2mm²
 oxygen-free copper

Optimum

Outer diameter 12,5 mm
 Outer jacket High-flexibility PVC
 Barrier/wrap Mylar
 Dielectric Fluorinated ethylene
 propylene
 Conductors 3x 3mm²
 high-purity OCC copper

Verdict

Still believe all power cables are created equal? Think again – or more importantly, listen. These Isotek cables make a bigger difference than you'd imagine. Initium is the value star.

Price

Evo3 Initium R995
 Evo3 Sequel R4 990
 Evo3 Optimum R14 990

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OUR RATING: 80/100

