

SOUNDBITES



ISOTEK EVO3 PREMIER MAINS CABLE £79.95

Last November, Hampshire based mains specialists, IsoTek, introduced a new affordable mains cable called the EVO3 (Evolution 3) Premier that costs £79.95. The core of the cable are three 2sq mm conductors made from 99.9999% OFC

which are silver coated. This is covered in an extruded Teflon dielectric and given a rotational twist to aid EMI and RFI rejection. A cotton filler reduces microphony and adds internal strength. Between this and the flexible, heat resistant PVC outer sheath is a paper wrap.

The moulded IEC and three pin mains plugs were specially designed and manufactured by IsoTek, and boast solid copper conductors coated in 24ct gold.

Using the cable to power a Leema Acoustics Agena phono stage, replacing a first generation IsoTek cable, the effect was transformative. The older cable had a raw honesty in its presentation. This one had at least the same honesty behind it, but was more sophisticated. I found that there were improvements from tonal colour to its substantiveness. It felt weightier yet more agile, and more fluid and detailed.

Changing over to using it to power the Leema Antilla CD player, I again found an

improvement. This time the EVO3 Premier replaced a Merlin Cables lead. In this case the sound had more open and obvious detailing. The Merlin had a smoothness that was very pleasant, but with the Premier I could pinpoint the start and finish of a sound with greater accuracy.

I also tried it on the Leema Tucana II amplifier (150W). It did a reasonable job but the sound felt as though there was a little bit of restraint in it. Used on the less demanding Rotel RA-04 amplifier (40W) I found it benefitted the sound.

This lead seems to offer a level of performance that can compete effectively with considerably more expensive cables. It works very well with low current equipment, and with low powered budget amplifiers. I think it is so effective and such good value for money that I now have three. **TB**

IsoTek
www.isoteksystems.com

IsoTek EVO3 Polaris and Premier

IsoTek is on a mission to convince those of us that appreciate sound quality that the condition of the mains is equally as important as the components we use to reproduce sound. The argument is that without electricity there would be no audio reproduction, it is intrinsic to everything that CD players, turntables and amplifiers do. The theory is that if you put in dirty power you will get out dirty sound.

The likelihood of polluted mains is greater now than it has ever been. The main culprit is the confounded computer – most of us have them at home and they are renowned for emitting all sorts of nasties into the mains. The other scourge of good sound is RFI, airborne interference created by the wireless networks that so many of us depend on today. That too gets into the power lines, and if you use a home plug to send broadband around your home you are surely making matters even worse.

To combat this, IsoTek has been building serious power conditioners for quite some time, but they are expensive things and many are yet to be convinced of their worth. The company has introduced the EVO3 products so that we can find out what benefits might accrue without spending too much. EVO3 consists of an extension block and a power cable at entry level prices but with high quality build. This is not mere hyperbole either, these components offer remarkable value by comparison with the competitors I've seen.

The EVO3 Premier power cable plugs have solid copper connectors with 24k gold plating, the cable itself uses silver plated six nines oxygen free copper (OFC) conductors in a Teflon FEP dielectric, the sort of thing that also makes an excellent audio cable. The cables are pressure terminated and encased in a moulded plug assembly.

The EVO3 Polaris is a six outlet distributor that removes common mode and differential noise, with a claimed reduction in RFI of 30dB. Each outlet is independent to avoid cross contamination and internal wiring is also in silver plated OFC with a PTFE dielectric. You need to buy a separate power cable to connect it to the wall but it's very nicely put together and looks a lot better than most as well.

Sound quality

I tested these components with a Leema Tucana integrated amplifier and Metrum Acoustics Hex DAC, the source was a Naim Unitiserve, but it takes a while to boot up and so was left out of the loop. Firstly I changed from a regular black mains cable to the Premier on the amp, using my existing Russ Andrews extension block. This resulted in a distinct cleaning up of the sound, one that notably lowered the noise floor which let through more high frequency sparkle and more of the acoustic in the recording. That seemed pretty impressive but what I didn't expect was for the timing to get better as well. Moving the DAC from standard to Premier cable had

a marked benefit for dynamic range, a consequence of lowering the noise floor, as well as a refinement and a general opening up of the soundstage. Going back to the standard cables made things sound coarse.

Moving from the Russ Andrews extension to the Polaris with standard cables was also beneficial with more space, lower noise and greater resolution becoming apparent. To get a better idea of the potential of this extension I also dug out a cheap Duraplug extension block and contrasted that with the Polaris, the improvement was unsurprisingly even greater with an increase in timing precision, depth of bass and a much greater sense of musical flow. I also compared standard and Premier power leads from the Duraplug extension and discovered that their benefits were not as clear-cut as they are with the Polaris or Russ Andrews. In other words if you can't connect the system directly to the wall then the Polaris is the thing to get first.

These two products work well on their own but the sum is clearly greater than the parts. There is a cumulative effect in using both together that makes a striking difference to the overall performance of the system. They really open up the soundstage and let you hear more music because noise is reduced. This was the effect that they had on a DAC and amp that already have some serious power supply regulation onboard, so I would expect the change to be even greater with more affordable equipment. Highly recommended then, and particularly good value for money in these straitened times. **JK**



DETAILS

PRICE: £250 (POLARIS), £85 (PREMIER)

CONTACT:
01276 501392

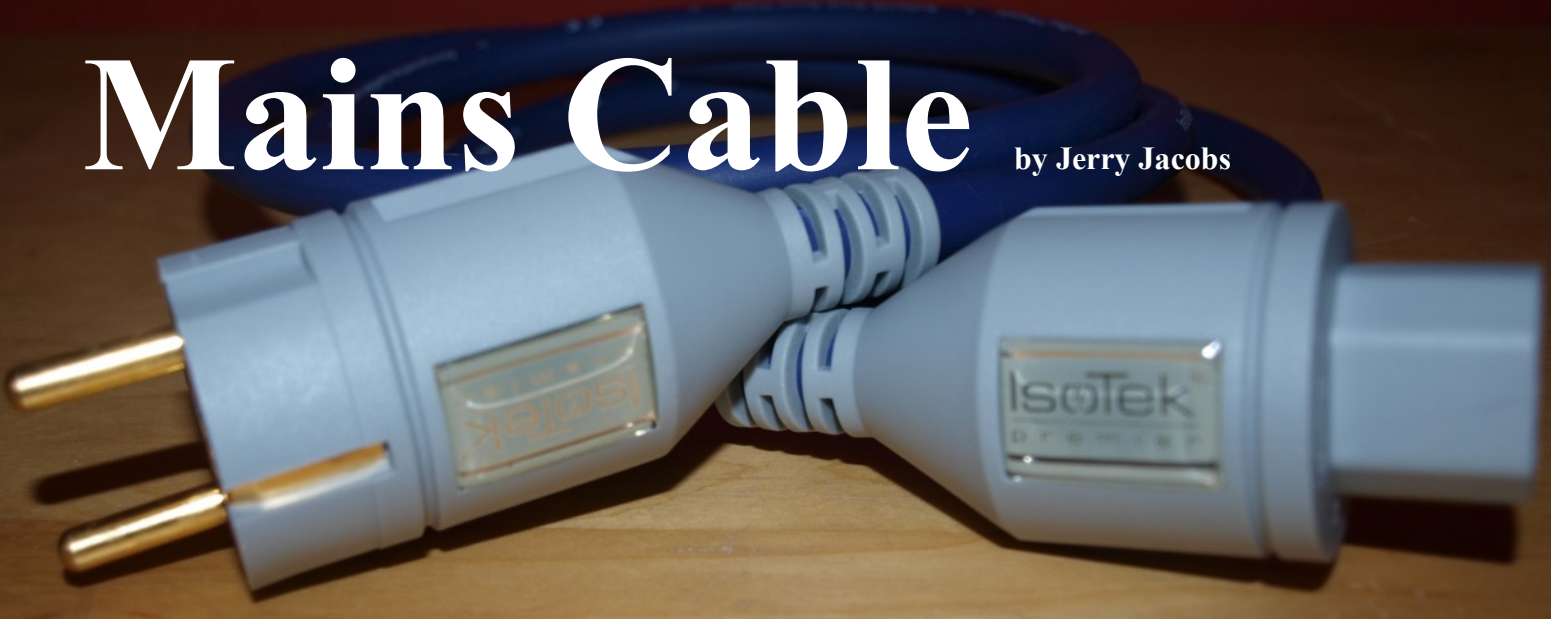
WEBSITE:
ISOTEKSYSTEMS.COM

OUR VERDICT



Isotek EVO 3 Mains Cable

by Jerry Jacobs



I hadn't planned to review this cable at all, but one was supplied by David Brook at Mains Cables R Us (MCRU) as part of the package with the excellent LongDog Audio VDt1 DAC that I recently reviewed here. Swapping out this mains cable for one of my own favourites produced an unexpected diminishment in sound quality. "Hmm", I thought, "interesting".

Solidity and control, dynamics and resolution, clarity and precision. All seemed to benefit from this cable on the LDA DAC.

At £95 or so for a 1.5m length, reasonably flexible

How can mains cables affect the sound of a component? - I have no idea, but experience demands me to accept that they do.

and looking very well made and presented, this cable is by no means expensive as such things go.

It's available in any configuration of plugs you care to think of, including high current, Schuko, Figure-8, UK 3-pin, US 2-pin etc

Technicalities

Three 2 sq mm conductors made from silver-coated 99.9999% OFC (oxygen free copper) are used to carry the current. The dielectric covering is extruded Teflon and the conductors are given a rotational twist to improve RFI rejection.

A cotton filler reduces microphony and bolsters the internal strength of the cable and a paper wrap is used to secure the construction prior to the application of the flexible PVC jacket

The moulded IEC and three pin mains plugs are designed and made by Isotek, and the solid copper

conducting components are coated in 24ct gold.

Comparisons

Ah, the 'sound' of mains cables. One of the more contentious issues in hifi! How can mains cables affect the sound of a

component? - I have no idea, but experience demands me to accept that they do. I could list a discouragingly large number of mains cables that spoil a component's sound for me.

I tend to keep several brands, each with their own sonic characteristics that suit some components but that do not necessarily synergise with others.

Here's a comparison between the Isotek cable and a couple of my established favourites

So, the Isotek EVO3 Premier power cable is a bit of a no-brainer as far as I am concerned

Nordost Magus (re-branded as Blue Heaven at around £150 for 1m) has been one of my 'keeper' mains cables for quite a while. As well as looking great with its lovely deep blue outer sheath, it also performs admirably sonically! It has a slightly relaxed but fluid take on the music; there's a natural flow and tonal richness that is very appealing. In comparison to the Isotek, though, it seems a bit too laid back, less tonally neutral and missing out on some of the excitement, boldness and solidity of more rhythmically propelled music. The Isotek EVO3 Premier sounded closest to my old MusicWorks mains cable, the latest version of which retails at around £350 for a 1.8m length. Similarly controlled and dynamic, it was actually quite difficult to tell them apart on small to medium scale music. When the music really gets going, though, and with higher powered amps like my 250wpc Krell, the benefits of the more expensive cable can be heard as a further expansion of dynamic freedom and heft. With a lower powered amp like a Topping TP-60 27wpc t-amp, or with low powered source components, differences of this kind were marginal at best.

Summary

All 3 of the power cables mentioned here are fine examples of the cable maker's art, and I would happily commend any and all of them to you. The Nordost has a bit more 'flavour', and that may suit your system or preferences. The MusicWorks is similarly neutral, defined and explicit as the Isotek, and is capable of taking a high powered amplifier's dynamic freedom even further - but it also costs several times as much!

So, the Isotek EVO3 Premier power cable is a bit of a no-brainer as far as I am concerned - the benefits of high end power cable design, but without the high price.

Equipment used:

Speakers: MBL 116F, Dynaudio Excite X14,
Waterfall Audio Victoria Evo Power Amps:
Atoll AM-80, Topping TP-60 and Krell KAV-250a
Pre-amp: Restek Consens
Source: Vincent CD S7 CD Player.
Signal cables: RFC Pluto & Oscar's Audio Dark Knight i/c and Tellurium Q Black speaker cables.
Mains cables: Nordost Magus, MusicWorks



A bit of a no brainer says Jerry Jacobs