

MCRU The First power cord

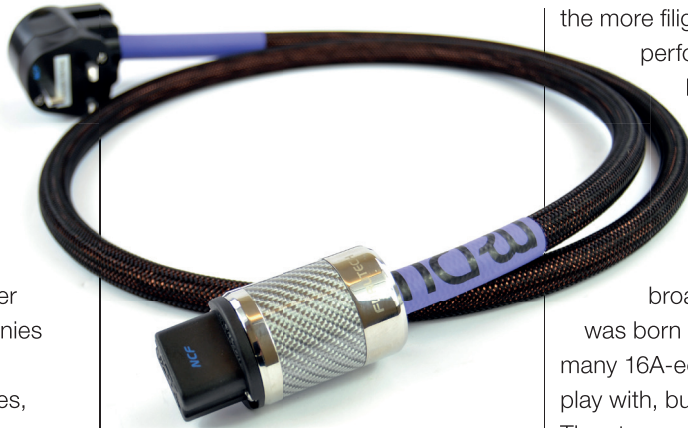
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Normally, when we get a power cord to review, it doesn't come with a strict use case. Sure, there are recommendations regarding power cables designed for use with current-drawing heavy-hitter power amps, and some companies make a spread of power cords within a line designed for sources, integrated amplifiers, and power amplifiers but MCRU's The First is different; it is designed specifically to be used between the wall and a power conditioner.

OK, so neither your audio system nor your house is going to self-destruct if you use The First in another context, but it's made to be inserted at the spear-tip of your system's mains and before a power conditioner. Its use elsewhere is less clearly defined. To fill that role, The First uses hefty 5.5mm² conductors with a copper earthing screen. This is wrapped in a carbon-infused polyester braided outer shield and cryo treated.

Three and a half Firsts

In fact, you don't get one version of The First... you get three (and a half), with different grades of connector and fuse. The 'half' part is the top grade of rhodium-plated Furutech power connector (either a FI-50 NCT for regular 13A power conditioners, or the FI-52 NCT if your conditioner uses the larger 16A connector). As you go up the range, you move from a Hi-Fi Tuning fuse to Synergistic Research Orange and ultimately Purple, and you move through the Furutech range from copper to gold-plated to rhodium-plated connectors using Nano Crystal



Formula bodies. Because The First was destined to sit between the wall and an IsoTek Aquarius V5 mains conditioner, we needed that FI-52 NCT-equipped version of The First. It went up against IsoTek's own EVO3 Premier power cord at one end of the scale and a run of Nordost Valhalla V2 at the other.

One of the big things with any pre-power conditioner cable is about the risk reduction, and here the risk is dynamic compression. Get it even slightly wrong and the whole system shrinks a bit, sounding a little smaller and greyer in the process. There aren't many other considerations, as

the more filigree aspects of musical performance are defined more by the sound coming out of the conditioner, but the importance of that first cable cannot be understated.

In truth, having such a broad spread of price points was born largely out of having not many 16A-equipped power cords to play with, but the results were telling. The step up between IsoTek's own cable and The First was significant, but the jump between The First and Valhalla V2 was not. Compared to IsoTek's power cable, The First created a more dynamic sound from a system connected to the Aquarius V5, to the point where I would consider using it with devices at its limits (like a Burmester 911 Mk 3 power amplifier) without fear of it 'ennumbling' the performance. Compared to Nordost's Valhalla V2, the pair were going toe-to-toe. On balance, I'd give the nod to Nordost (it seemed to extend that dynamic performance further into the treble and just 'got out of the way' of the sound slightly more), but given the price differential, it's clear MCRU is punching well above its weight.

Price and contact details

Option 1 Furutech FI-1363 NCF mains plug – SR Purple Fuse – Furutech FI-50/52 NCF IEC connector. Prices from £995 (1.2m) to £1,195 (2.2m)

Option 2 Furutech FI-1363 Gold plated mains plug – SR Orange Fuse – Furutech FI-28 G IEC connector. Prices from £595 (1.2m) to £795 (2.2m)

Option 3 Furutech FI-1363 copper mains plug – Hi-Fi Tuning Fuse – Furutech FI-11 copper IEC connector. Prices from £395 (1.2m) to £595 (2.2m)

Manufactured by MCRU

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First, never last

MCRU is short for 'Mains Cables 'R' Us' and the company's mission statement is 'from mains to music'. So, it knows a thing or three about 'the juice' and it shows with The First. A 'mission specialist' cable needs to do just one thing and do it well, and The First certainly does just that. I also think it's called 'The First' for another reason. If this is your first MCRU cable, based on performance, it probably won't be your last. +