

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)

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OUR VERDICT

