

# POWER PLAY

**A two-outlet mains filter designed to enhance system performance, with a capability for amplifiers as well as low-power source components. David Allcock is electrified**

## DETAILS

	Isotek Orion
	£300
	01635 291355
	www.isoteksystems.com
	Great price, big effect
	Not a thing

Only recently has the UK started taking the filtration and treatment of the mains supply seriously. The company that took the bull by the horns and made the UK sit up and listen was Isotek.

This process started with the company's first product, the £900 SubStation, and has continued with the Qube, Minisub and Cleanline. Now, sitting between the GII Minisub and the Cleanline (redesigned and now named the Solus), is the £300 Orion, designed to supply both amplifiers and source components.

The Orion is designed around a new aluminium extrusion, in this case supplied with two outlets, but it can optionally be supplied with four or six sockets as required. The top of the extrusion sports a pair of 13A mains sockets, and a 13A IEC inlet with an earth post can be found on one end.

The socket nearest the mains inlet is designated the high power outlet for amplification products, with an advertised ability to supply 2300W, while the second socket, and subsequent sockets, is designated for lower power source devices. These are said to be able to supply a continuous 700W.

Internally the design uses a series of multiple shunt, multiple series and multiple delta filters with a technology christened Polaris-X. The idea of this combination is to prevent the connected devices effectively 'seeing' each other, not merely filtering the mains and preventing noise from attached devices leaking back into the rest of the system, but also providing individual filters between the two sockets.

## UNNERVING

It took just one bar of Norah Jones' 'Come Away With Me' to realise the Orion not only surpassed the abilities of the SubStation but was unnervingly close in performance to the £1500 Qube. With the Orion supplying power to a Krell KRC-3 and Bryston 3B-SST there was an immediate improvement in bass extension and control compared with using the mains directly from the wall socket. The bass and percussion on 'Cold, Cold Heart' imparted more texture and extension than with the straight

mains and was only lacking a hint of separation between the sound of the strings and the instruments body in comparison with the Qube.

The midrange was also enhanced, with improved transparency and liquidity, making for an utterly unforced and natural vocal performance; you could almost feel the vocal breath as Norah sang 'Come Away With Me', while reverting to the mains brought a slightly mechanical, artificial quality to the sound.

The high-frequency improvements were concentrated in the areas of spaciousness and smoothness, without compromising detail and precision. Almost as

illusion of being in the presence of musicians.

Layering was also enhanced, allowing the listener to visualise the relationship between performers on the depth plane more effortlessly.

## HOME CINEMA TOO

Regardless of what the Orion powered – I used it with my home cinema system, too – there were invariably sonic improvements. With source

**'The Orion was unnervingly close to the £1500 Qube'**



impressive was the improvement in dynamics, both macro and micro. Many critics of mains filters cite dynamic compression as a major problem when using filtration with amplification, but the Orion destroyed this myth for me, if anything making the sound seemingly more dynamic, a side effect perhaps of the lower noise floor. What's more, micro dynamic shifts were much more easily perceived.

Meanwhile, the lateral soundstage displayed increased spaciousness between instruments and performers and this, mated with increased palpability, enhanced the

components these improvements were greater than those I found using a SubStation isolation unit. As for the effect of the Orion on amplifiers, this was incredibly close to the sonic improvements gained using a Qube.

With a price of only £300, I would be hard pressed to find a more effective way of spending this money to improve an audio system. The Orion deserves unequivocal recommendation. ▣

## DATA FILE

### HI-FI NEWS VERDICT

Isotek should be commended for a product of this quality and performance being made available at such a modest price. So great are the improvements it brings across the board that the Orion could be considered a mandatory addition to any high-quality audio or home cinema system.