

Mains Attraction

ISOTEK SIGMAS (£995)

Isotek has carved a niche as maker of mains filters that don't necessarily sap the music from the system. The Sigmas joins the range as a cheaper hybrid of its two top products



ABOVE: The Sigmas sports a 10mm-thick milled aluminium front panel bearing two LEDs, with two power switches hidden underneath the casework

Tested by David Allcock

Trying to follow a successful product is always difficult; trying to follow a whole slew of successful products is even tougher. This is the task Isotek Systems faced when trying to bridge the gap between its MiniSub GII mains conditioner and high-end Titan and Nova combination. The result of its efforts is a Titan/Nova hybrid in a MiniSub-style chassis it calls the Sigmas.

Beneath the chassis are two power switches, actually thermo-magnetic fuses, housed in sculpted cut-outs. These activate the two parts of the Sigmas: the high-current 16 amp circuit, and a lower current 6 amp circuit. Build quality is excellent, and the unit feels more solid than the MiniSub GII, being only surpassed by the more expensive Nova and Titan units.

POWERING UP

If the MiniSub GII offered a significant step forward in terms of speed and imaging, the Sigmas was nothing short of a revelation. The ML Vantage speakers used for this test went from placing images just beyond the physical room boundaries when used with the MiniSub, to placing them half way into the neighbour's garden, and in doing so lost none of the solidity of the image. In fact this was improved, along with image focus, to deliver a far more believable soundstage.

Bass was also dramatically enhanced. Not only was it tighter and more extended, but it seemed to offer greater dynamic range, with more texturing to

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each note – a combination and magnitude of improvements I've only heard from the Titan/Nova combination.

Meanwhile, vocals and guitars showed gains in transparency and intelligibility, with the run of notes on the Spanish guitar at the climax to Carly Simon's 'Better Not Tell Her', sounding slightly blurred when the MiniSub GII was used. Through the Sigmas each note was a clearly defined entity with more space around it.

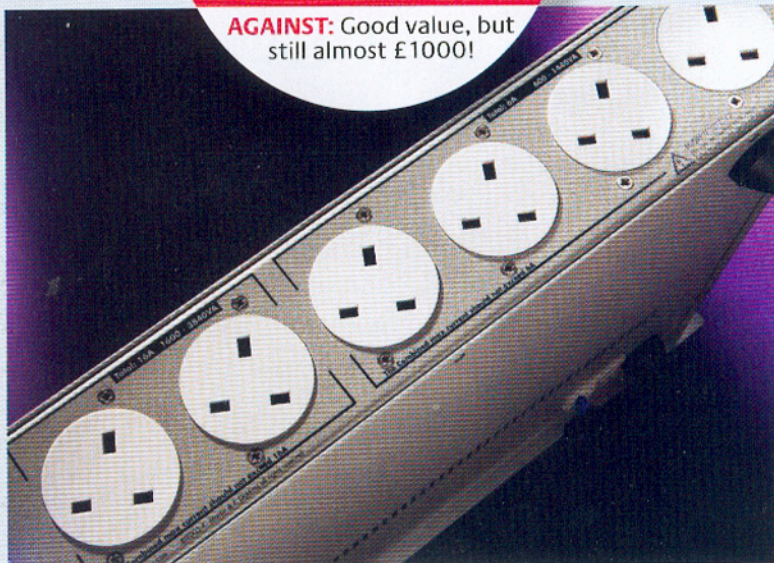
MONEY WELL SPENT

I would suggest that the £400 increase in cost over a MiniSub GII is money well spent. While the £3000 Nova and Titan combination will beat a single Sigmas, I would suggest the Sigmas gives around 80% of the Nova/Titan combination's performance at one-third of the price.

If you're thinking of buying a MiniSub GII, my advice would be to pull together the extra money and go for the Sigmas – your music will thank you for it many times over. ☺

FOR:
Near
Nova/Titan
performance at
a third the cost

AGAINST: Good value, but still almost £1000!



Hifi news
Verdict

ISOTEK SIGMAS

£995

FEATURES



SOUND QUALITY



BUILD QUALITY



VALUE FOR MONEY



A hybrid offspring of the company's reference Titan and Nova mains filters, the Sigmas is closer in cost to the MiniSub GII but in performance terms is more closely related to the company's flagship components, allowing you to hear into the mix and uncover information previously buried in your system's noise floor. Excellent build quality, protection circuits, a fully-adaptive filtration circuit and stunning performance make the Sigmas a true bargain. If you're even thinking of improving your mains filtration or buying such a component for the first time, you must hear the Sigmas first!

Hifi news
OVERALL RATING **17/20**

Manufacturer's specifications

WATTS AT 230V	3680W
WATTS AT 110V	1760W
NUMBER OF OUTLETS	6
CURRENT CAPABILITY	2 x 16A, 4 x 6A
WEIGHT	9.5kg
DIMENSIONS	444x85x310mm (whd)

Contact numbers

UK DISTRIBUTOR: Activ Distribution
TEL: 01635 291357 WEB www.isoteksystems.com

Review system breakdown

SOURCES Basis Gold Debut Standard turntable/Graham 2.0 arm/Benz Glider L2 cartridge/Klyne System 7 PX3.5 phono stage
AMPS Krell KRC-3 pre amp, Bryston 3B & 14B-SST power amps, NuForce Reference 9.0B monoblocks
SPEAKERS MartinLogan Vantage & Hyperion HPS-938
CABLES All interconnects Atlas Elektra, speaker cables Atlas Eichor and Townshend Isolda DCT Bi-Wire, all mains cables Isotek Elite Isotek Titan and Nova mains filters

We listened to

Carly Simon
Reflections
BMG 82876
59429 1 LP

Sharpe and Numan
Automatic
Polydor 839520-1 LP

The Corrs
In Blue
Atlantic
7567833522CD

