

IsoTek

EVO3 Optimum mains cable

IS THERE ANY audiophile who still doubts that power cables make a difference? Even the simple expedient of polishing the pins of a standard mains plug with Brasso will yield an improvement to your system's sound, so the full cable assembly is bound to have a real effect. Logically then, different materials used in them will give differing results, and that's why we're seeing a number of quite expensive, fancy designs now coming out. IsoTek's new EVO3 Optimum is one such product, and replaces the company's previous GII. It's not an inexpensive cable, so it goes without saying that readers with mid-to-high-end systems should be thinking about investing such a sum on a product like this; budget systems can be improved by diverting funds elsewhere.

Silver service

It's a silver-plated copper design, using Ohno Continuous Cast (OCC) copper conductors of higher purity than conventional OFC copper. Three 3.0mm² conductors each have a square shaped configuration of 40 strands, claimed to increase electrical conductivity. Each one gets Teflon FEP dielectric (insulation), and is then twisted to aid RFI and EMI rejection. This is then surrounded by cotton damping to reduce microphony and then everything is double shielded by Mylar wrap and an OFC copper braid, which is given a tough, heat-resistant PVC outer jacket. IsoTek's own audiophile-grade 24-carat gold-plated connectors terminate it; there's a choice of C7, C15 and C19 IEC varieties. It's fair to say that the quality of finish is excellent even at the price, and the cable has a sense of ruggedness way beyond many such products I've reviewed in the past – it looks like this one at least is here to stay!

Given that Hampshire-based IsoTek has made a name for itself making a wide range of well designed and effective mains power conditioners, it's no surprise that the EVO3 Optimum turns in an



extremely impressive performance – even considering its lofty retail price. The improvement it makes over a standard power cable – the sort of kettle lead supplied with your average CD player or amplifier – is profound and should leave no one in any doubt about the importance of getting your mains power in as good condition as possible. Cue even a relatively lo-fi track like Dub Pistols' *Bad Card*, a brilliant bit of dubstep that sounds like it's been recorded in a bathroom with 8-bit samplers, and the difference is palpable. Where the song previously sounded scratchy, coarse and somewhat disjointed, the IsoTek brings smoothness, space and a sense of unforced ease that's so profound you begin to wonder if someone has switched your silver disc spinner without telling you. The track becomes tonally fuller, but the bass is tighter and more tuneful. The midband opens up in depth and breadth, only to reveal a lot of fine detail – in this case the scratches from the sampled vinyl record – but oddly it's no harsher. Quite the reverse in fact, and this goes for the treble too, which gets sweeter and more spacious.

Running the IsoTek up against similarly priced power cables narrows the gap considerably, but not completely. Indeed, the EVO3 Optimum has a wonderful

combination of natural musical flow to it, and a delicate, open midband that lets the flavour of the recording flood out. For example, a classic piece of eighties pop like the beautiful Thomas Dolby-produced *Appetite* by Prefab Sprout is rendered sublimely. You can really hear all the different layered synthesisers, even through the wash of sound that is the chorus, and singer Paddy MacAloon's vocals have a lovely, easy quality about them. Indeed, this power cable makes it easier to discern the plaintive feel of the lyrics than other such wires I've tried. Its finesse and insight are normally something you'd expect from the likes of my reference Furutech Powerflux cable, which costs £1,870 for 1.8m. So the IsoTek may be expensive, but still punches well above its price point.

The mains man

An excellent mains cable then, but for higher resolution systems only. Sure, you'll get a nice boost from plugging it into an Audiolab or a Cambridge Audio, but you would do better by spending £600 buying the next model up the range. Those running a well balanced, higher end system will get serious sonic gains, even if they're already using fairly expensive mains cabling. As such, this is well worth auditioning. **DP**

DETAILS

PRICE
£595 2m
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OUR VERDICT

