

The IsoTek Aquarius mains conditioner

By Alan Sircom



This product arrived just very slightly too late for consideration for this year's awards. So think of this as a preview for the 2010 Awards, because a mains product really has to do something extremely special to beat the IsoTek Aquarius.

The new 'EVO3' Aquarius sports a pair of 16 Amp, thermomagnetically fused high-current outlets, plus a quartet of 5 Amp, bayonet fused, auto-adjusting medium-current outlets. These feature the company's own 'Adaptive Gating' technology – an auto-sensing filter stage that adapts to the current draw of the load. First appearing in the high-end Nova and Sigmas power conditioners, this is claimed to provide the perfect filter delivery for each piece of equipment connected. It also calls upon IsoTek's new KERP (Kirchoff's Equal Resistance Path) technology developed for the latest EVO3 line of conditioners, said to deliver a more coherent sound, because it spells a very pure, symmetrical signal path through the unit.

IsoTek has also developed a new choke design, with improved magnetic material that is claimed to offer increased frequency bandwidth, 67,500 Amps of instantaneous and repeatable protection and a case that creates an effective faraday cage when closed.

I've been a GII Minisub user for some years. It was the product that above all others made mains conditioning a feature in the UK hi-fi scene, even winning over those most curmudgeonly of mains hold-outs, Naim users. It was keenly priced, sorted out the sound of mid-priced equipment perfectly and was the sort of thing that sat nicely in the equipment rack. I'm not the only GII Minisub user out there, and here's a hint... put it on eBay or trade it in before word gets out about just how good the Aquarius really is.

The whole auditioning process took about 30 seconds. Play piece of music on GII MiniSub. Play it again on Aquarius. Wonder why you were so attached to the GII MiniSub (in fairness, without the GII MiniSub, there would be no Aquarius, but those intervening years of development made their mark). What we have is a sound that is fuller, seemingly louder and more dynamic, rising out of a quieter background. All the things the MiniSub did to music a few years ago... but more so. Over the next two days or more, things get even better. Add in the Extreme power cable

(highly recommended in its own right, and if you buy the two together you shave £100 off the cable price) and things just improve still further. Going back to the original is like going back to hamburger when you've dined on steak. Going back to the original mains is like eating the box the burger came in.

And the downside? Well, the short answer is we're still looking.

Sometimes we worry about 'mk II' products when the original was so good. Will it be a *Godfather Part II*, or will it be a *Blues Brothers 2000*? Fortunately, it's a real treat and a giant leap forward, especially for (soon to be ex-) GII Minisub owners. Very highly recommended. +

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Number of outlets: 6

Type of outlets: 16A UK unswitched

Standard mains inlet: C20 IEC

Mains voltage: 100 - 240VAC

2 x High current 16 Amps

4 x Medium current 5 Amps

Maximum current: 16 Amps continuous

External mains fuse: 5 Amps (13Amps UK)

Dimensions: 444mm x 85mm x 305mm (WxHxD)

Weight (boxed): 9.0Kg

Price: £795 (available in black or silver); £1,090 with Extreme power cable

Manufactured by:

IsoTek Systems Ltd

URL: www.isoteksystems.com

Distributed in the UK by:

Sound Foundations

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