

AUDIOPRISM POWER FOUNDATION III

This is, you may note, a followup to our review of this AudioPrism power filter in *UHF* No. 82. The filter had done reasonably well the first time around, but not outstandingly, and we weren't satisfied with our own efforts. And so we are doing it again for a couple of reasons.

First, we made a mistake trying it in our Omega system. Though that system has a GutWire MaxCon Squared filter in it, it has two other filters as well, and the result was that we didn't take full advantage of the AudioPrism's possibilities. It would be easier to do in the Alpha system, with its two filters.

Second, we had expressed doubts about the quality of the power cord supplied with the AudioPrism. It isn't a cheap molded

cord like the ones supplied with nearly all audio components (including some expensive power filters), and it is fitted with Wattgate connectors at each end. On the other hand it appears not to be shielded, and we are convinced of the importance of shielding any power cable that sits close to the cables carrying audio, and to the system itself. We wanted to try it with a different cord, to see whether we were right.

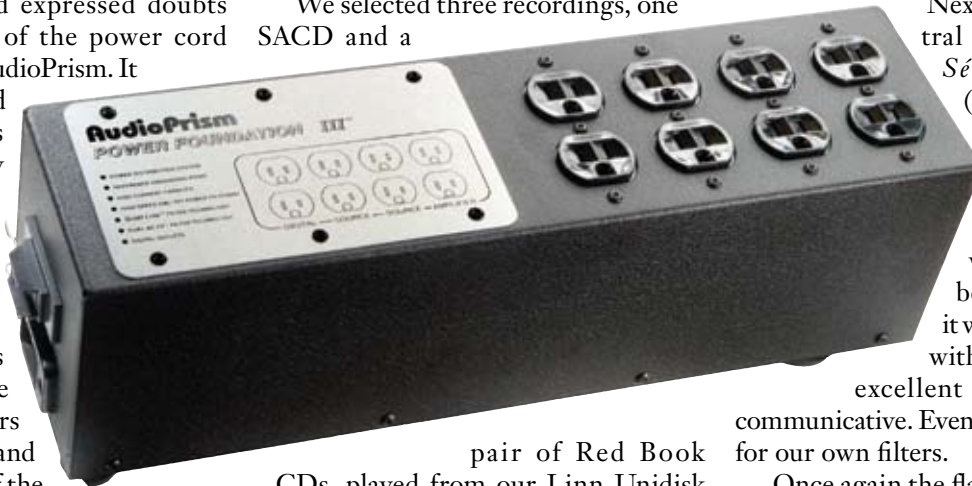
However we couldn't just pull a cord out of our stock, because the AudioPrism doesn't have the usual IEC 320 connector. It is rated for 20 amperes, not 15, and so it needs to use the appropriate connector. It looks much like the common one, but with its prongs rotated the other way, like this:



If you have a very large power amplifier it may be fitted with the same connector.

Our Alpha system has the advantage of being simpler than the Omega system, and somewhat more accessible too. It is fully filtered, with two different filters. Most of the gear goes through our original filter, an Inouye SPLC we have used for many years. The exception is the Moon W-5LE power amplifier. Because the Inouye has series components, it is not well-suited to large amps. Instead, the Moon's power source is filtered by a Foundation Research LC2, designed for power amplifiers, which replaces the amplifier's power cord.

We selected three recordings, one SACD and a



pair of Red Book CDs, played from our Linn Unidisk player. We listened with our own filters first, and then we heard them twice more. How did they sound with our own filters in place? Terrific. We did *not* try the recordings with no filtering at all, because we have done that numerous times, and it's not something we choose to do for fun.

Because the LC2 filter is also a power cord, we needed to give the Moon power amplifier a new power cord. We selected a GutWire B12, and plugged it into the Audioprism section labelled for power amps. The Unidisk was of course plugged into the "digital" section. The filter has two sections labelled "source," whatever that means. We plugged our Copland tube preamplifier into one of them.

The first selection was from the SACD version of the choral recording

Now the Green Blade Riset, always an exceptionally revealing piece. It sounded very good with the AudioPrism, but not nearly as good as it had been with our own filters. There was some loss of detail, with the solo flute being occasionally submerged by the singers. Rhythm remained very good, and the bottom end was solid, allowing even the subtle organ chords at the end to be heard.

The music seemed less loud, too, though when we turned it up it was evident that the difference was due to a psychoacoustic effect, not to an actual volume drop. "There's nothing very specific I can point to," said Albert, "but it left me disappointed."

Next came an orchestral piece, Glazunov's *Sérénade espagnole* (Analekta AN 2 9897), played by I Musici de Montréal. Once again it sounded very good, much better than we knew it would have sounded without filtering, with excellent rhythm that was communicative. Even so, it was no match for our own filters.

Once again the flaws were not major ones, rather they were collections of small flaws. String textures were rougher, and the music didn't flow the way it had before. Transients were a little too forward. "You can hear it when the violins play pizzicato," said Gerard.

Once again, the Audioprism had done well, but it did not beat or even equal our own gear, and so far the results were in line with those of our previous test.

For the final selection we went to Barbra Streisand's *Movie Album* (Columbia CK90742), and played Charlie Chaplin's celebrated nostalgic song, *Smile*.

Like all pop records this one was not recorded with purist methods, but with the right equipment it can be entirely engrossing. It was a lot less attractive with the AudioPrism, and this time we listed plenty of problems. Streisand's voice was less warm, and less mesmer-

izing too. Even the words were harder to follow, because the arrangement seemed busier, more chaotic. The violins of the large orchestra were a little more strident, and they were less natural too. “The details are all there if you take the trouble to look for them,” said Gerard, “but you *have* to look for them, because they just don’t come out to you.”

Not good so far. But now we pulled out another power cord, the 20 ampere version of the GutWire G Clef. It would, of course, make the AudioPrism filter half again as expensive, but if it did the trick...

It did. The choral piece still seemed a little softer, but we barely noticed that because in all other respects it was much improved. Voices were smoother and more natural than they had been. The details we had heard with our own filters, which had seemed hidden by the AudioPrism, were now apparent. The tutti at the end was clearer, revealing not only the organ but also a distant triangle.

“It’s still a touch less smooth than with our own filters,” said Gerard, “but that cable sure makes a difference.”

The Glazunov piece was a delight too, improved in every respect. The strings, which of course predominate in this

suite, were silkier, and the music flowed. The pizzicato passages were normal once again. “It’s musical,” said Reine, “it’s not just noise as it was before.”

The final recording, *Smile*, which had not pleased us much earlier, was now a delight. The orchestral opening was smooth, silky, inviting. The strings were more natural, but also more transparent, not covering up the singing. Streisand’s voice on this bittersweet song was warm and expressive. “It just flows with ease and fluidity,” said Albert. “It’s like...well, it’s like a smile.”

Could a power cord really make that much difference?

SUMMING IT UP...

Brand/model: Audioprism Power Foundation III filter, GutWire G Clef power cable

Price: \$899/\$459

Size (WDH): 39.5 x 11.8 x 12.4 cm

Most liked: Potentially superb even for a complex system

Least liked: Supplied with an inadequate power cable

Verdict: With the right cord, able to take out the trash

CROSSTALK

I can’t say I’m surprised. After our not quite satisfactory session last time, I was pretty sure AudioPrism had made an error putting a less than impressive power cable on this large and elaborate power filter.

Of course the cable adds a lot of money to the cost of the Power Foundation, pushing it out of contention for a lot of audiophiles (and videophiles too). Can’t be helped. This level of performance is not available at an economy price, or if it is I have yet to discover how.

—Gerard Rejskind

Participating in a review session is always a privilege. We may be disappointed by this or that product, yet at other times we are happy witnesses to the giant steps made by designers and manufacturers in the direction of excellence.

This was one of those times, because for the umpteenth time I heard confirmed

the claim that a cable can make all the difference to the sound of a music system. All by itself the Audioprism is satisfying, which is to say that it allows music to emerge in adequate fashion. However — and this is the surprise — when we substituted a superior power cord we exclaimed unanimously how much better it sounded. With this power cable, the AudioPrism is indeed tempting, and I would even say it *deserves* a good cable, that it might show off its qualities. So equipped, it promises years of joy.

—Reine Lessard

I don’t know if you need the help of a line filter where you live, but I know that installing one in a system always amazes me. It seems to open up the sound, to liberate it in a way, to clean its very texture and somehow remove layers of electronic haze.

This line filter did all that and more. I noticed I could better hear the space where

We shouldn’t have been surprised, because we’ve observed this sort of improvement before. Indeed, we got an audible improvement in our Omega system when we had changed a low-cost power bar for a shielded one, *even though not one key component was plugged into it*. Just its presence in close proximity to the system had been enough to alter the sound.

We do not, of course, claim that a filter like this “improves” the sound of a system. Rather, poor power — and as nearly as we can make out it’s *all* poor — causes serious problems with the performance of audio components. With the right filter, *and also the right power cords*, you can hear them as they were designed to sound.

This second review seems to confirm what we had suspected. AudioPrism has built a very good filter, but made a mistake adding that cable to it. Good cables, of course, are not cheap.

Our suggestion to the company is this. Don’t include a power cord at all with the Power Foundation III, and that might allow you to knock a good hundred dollars off the price. That will put your product into *very* competitive territory.

the music was taking place, the sum of an infinite variety of minute audio signals recreating the event. The music flowed with ease, unhindered, it seemed, by rugged edges.

And then, as I was going over my notes and reliving the listening test, I kept puzzling over what I was *actually talking about*. After all, this is about the electrical power coming out of the wall, the basic stuff that feeds the system, not about the performance of amps, speakers or a player! And yet I can’t deny it. It’s not even subtle. I guess it’s like filling the tank of a great car with a higher grade of gasoline and filtering the gunk out — only then does it reveal its true character and potential.

By the way, all that I have mentioned can be heard only using a high quality power cord linking this line filter to the power source, otherwise you won’t even discover its true potential.

—Albert Simon