

Unto the pure

Tony Bolton tries out IsoTek's new Sigmas EVO3 mains purifier and is stunned by the results.



I have been using a GII IsoTek Sigmas mains purifier on my upstairs system since it came on the market, and I was surprised to discover that this was some 8 years ago. Technology, and our usage of it moves on and the Sigmas has been updated, now called the Sigmas EVO3.

Similar in size to the previous

model this new version has redesigned casework which features a screen on the front panel that houses three buttons. The left one causes the incoming mains voltage to be displayed, the right shows the percentage of distortion that is detected on the incoming mains supply, and the centre one switches off the display.

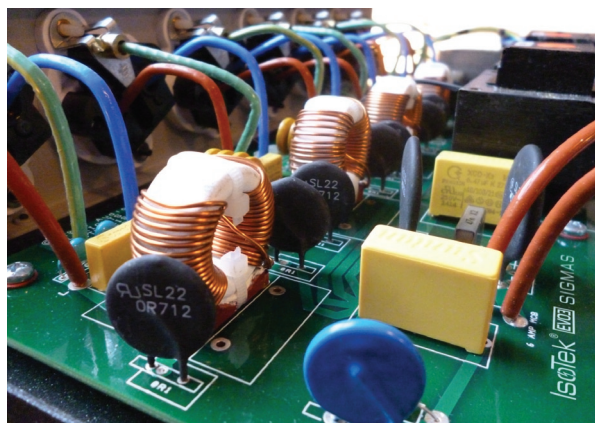
The only other controls are two switches mounted underneath at the front which provide power to the two high power (16 Amp) output sockets situated at the back left hand side, and the four lower power (10 Amp) sockets that occupy most of the rest of the back of the unit. The IEC mains input socket is also at the back on the left. An IsoTek EVO3 Premier power cable is provided.

IsoTek are understandably cautious about revealing too much of what is going on inside the Sigmas EVO3 but provided a block diagram to explain the circuit. Most of this is self explanatory and features the "Direct Coupled" technology from the Company's high power Titan purifier and the "Adaptive Gating" from the Nova, which is optimised

for source components. The former is claimed to provide optimal high current, low impedance filtering to maintain transient and dynamic performance from amplifiers and subwoofers, while the latter auto senses and adapts the current draw through the lower power sockets to the demands of the load plugged into it.

A new technology for the EVO3 series is KERP (Kerchoff's Equal Resistance Path) which ensures equal resistance and power delivery to all sockets. None of these are connected to another to avoid cross contamination of the power feed and each has its own dedicated filter network.

The internal wiring uses IsoTek's newly developed Ultra Pure - Ohno Continuous Cast copper, solid core internal wiring. This is silver plated before being insulated with Teflon. A fine Teflon strand is wound helically around the wire before a secondary Teflon tube is extruded over the top. This provides an air dielectric with virtually no capacitance. The printed circuit board uses 24 carat gold-plated 2oz copper. Power surges and



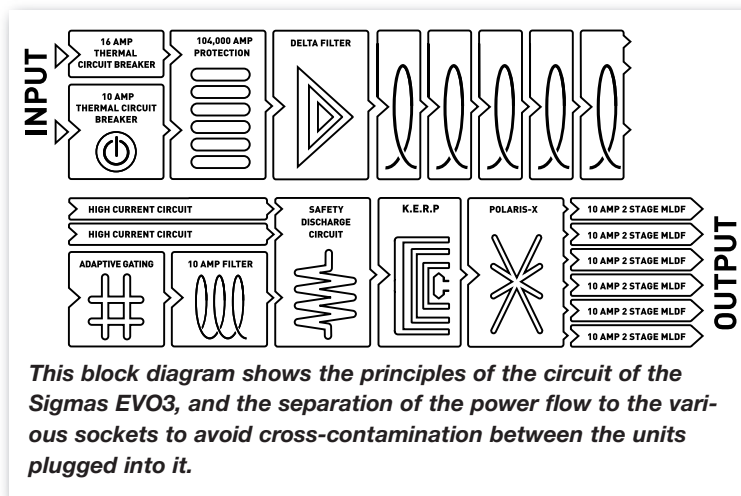
Normally the internal components of an IsoTek product are covered over but the Company have kindly let us have this internal shot to give some idea of how the inside looks, without giving away any trade secrets.

spikes are catered for with a claimed 108,000Amps of instantaneous protection via a pyramid array of voltage dependent resistor devices.

From the moment I plugged this device in, replacing the GII version, it was apparent that the Sigmas EVO3 was a bit special. It seemed as though my entire system had received a major adrenaline shot, with a sense of power and control over the music that was akin to a substantial system upgrade.

I discovered a whole new layer of low bass that had only previously been hinted at. Saint- Saens Organ Symphony sounded truly majestic

“.. with a weight to the lower notes that was made of pure granite, yet seemed to have the agility of an Olympic athlete.”



The two sockets (16Amp) in the red coloured area are for high power components such as amplifiers, while source components use the four lower power (10Amp) sockets in the black section. The IEC mains input is on the left.”

with a weight to the lower notes that was made of pure granite, yet seemed to have the agility of an Olympic athlete. Mid and upper band sounds gained in colour, texture and definition, so the complex section towards the end of the second movement, where the orchestra, organ and pianos combine, had a clarity that I have never heard through this system.

Gentler sounds from the Everly Brothers LP ‘Beat And Soul’ were very well described with a space around the voices that helped the imaging appear nearly three dimensional. Since this is a mono recording I found this level of air and definition to the sound very impressive. The opening track, a cover of Mickey and Sylvia’s ‘Love Is Strange’, had a throbbing beat below the guitars and vocals that drove the music along effortlessly, leaving the vocal harmonies floating through the air.

I also tried running my TV through the Sigmas EVO3 and found that, apart from very obvious improvements to the sound quality, the picture gained definition in the shape of the images. I use the BBC News channel as my default test for image quality since the studio lighting and other variables should, hopefully, be fairly consistent. I felt that colour saturation was improved, with darker shades and blacks seeming to be deeper and more consistently textured. Background detail through the windows behind the presenter were also better defined and there seemed to be a greater sense of the dimensionality of the studio.

I am truly impressed and amazed at how much of an improvement the Sigmas EVO3 is over the previous model. I tried comparing it to the GII Titan that I use on the downstairs system and found

that the Sigmas was surprisingly close to the bigger unit in perceived performance. The Titan was still better, but the performance gap had narrowed considerably.

Often a new version of a product offers improvements over the previous design but not enough to warrant current owners upgrading. This is one occasion where owners of the GII version will find such substantial benefits from upgrading to the EVO3 model that the financial outlay can be fully justified. Whether you use it in an audio or AV system, the improvements in every aspect of that equipment’s performance are so obvious that it is a complete ‘no-brainer’. This product is truly awesome in the effect it has upon a system and can be regarded as an essential purchase.

SYSTEM USED

Linn Sondek/ Hadcock 242 Cryo/ Clearaudio Concept MC.
Luxman E200 phonostage.
Townshend Allegri pre-amp.
2 x Quad 303 power amps.
Kelly KT3 loudspeakers.

MUSIC USED

Saint-Saens. ‘Symphony No.3 in C minor, Op. 78. “Organ Symphony”. Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Daniel Barenboim. Gaston Litaize, Organ. Deutsche Grammophon Records. 2530 619. 1976.

The Everly Brothers. ‘Beat And Soul’. Warner Brothers Records. W 1605. 1965.

ISOTEK SIGMAS EVO3 £2295.00



OUTSTANDING - amongst the best

VALUE - keenly priced

VERDICT

A mains purifier that offers a truly stunning improvement in performance over the previous model that more than justifies its price.

FOR

- wider perceived bandwidth
- improved dimensionality and imaging
- deeper colours and textures of visual images

AGAINST

- absolutely nothing

IsoTek Systems
www.isoteksystems.com