

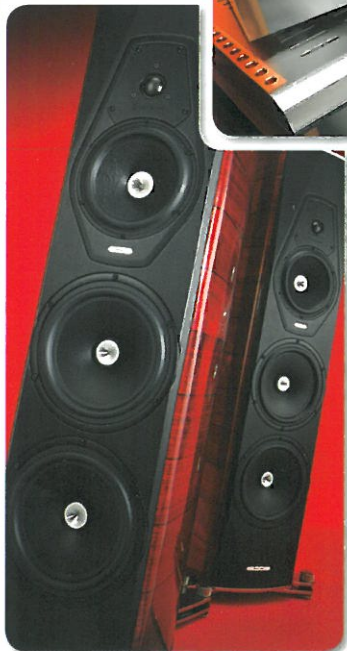
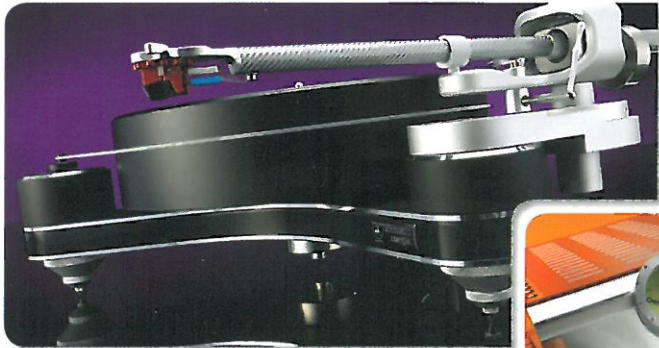
Hi-Fi Choice

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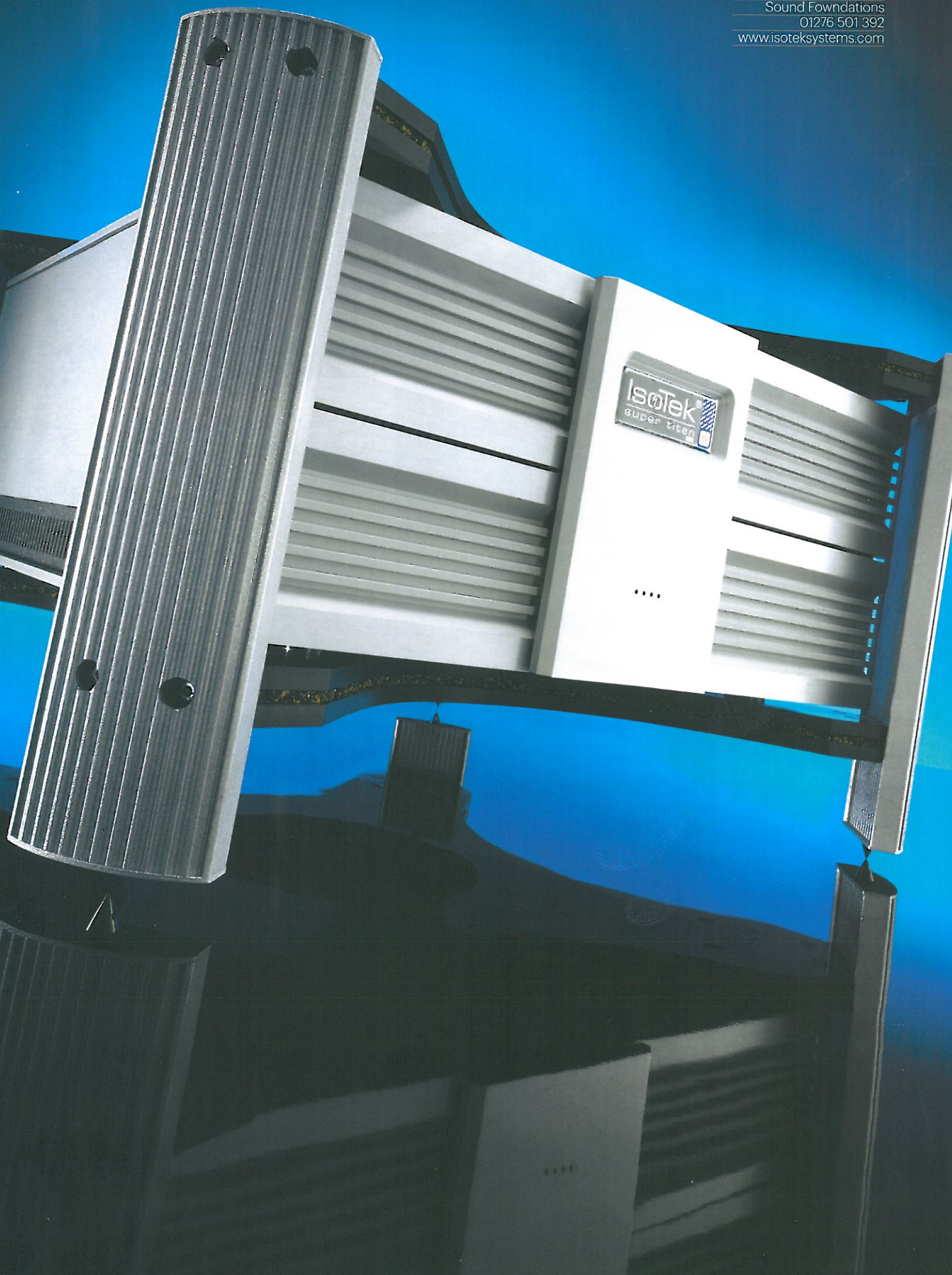


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IsoTek

Super Titan

The original Titan seemed to be as good as it got – then along came Super Titan

Awesome is a somewhat overworked adjective when it comes to hi-fi. It's routinely applied to products that (while impressive) do not fully deserve such a description. But with IsoTek's Super Titan, awesome is for once fully justified. Its massive size, 'battleship' build quality and amazing performance deserve nothing less.

Looking like a big power amp, IsoTek's Super Titan stands about 30cm tall and measures around 50cm square. It weighs an impressive 30kg and has four power outlets using silver-plated 32-amp Neutrik connectors. It's capable of delivering 9,200 watts of continuous power. Wow!

Transient power delivery is around 35,500 watts, with a constant current delivery of 32 amps. Basically, the Super Titan offers a doubling over the company's highly regarded Titan model; twice the power, twice as much filtering and double the number of power outlets. If that's not truly awesome, what is?

There's no doubt that mains quality is a serious limiting factor when it comes to sound quality. Like contaminated petrol in a car, mains noise and distortion has an adverse effect on performance, meaning your equipment operates below its full potential. The result is poorer sound quality. The solution? A mains purification device that deals effectively with noise issues without restricting current delivery.

Super Titan came into existence because there was nothing being made to partner really big high-current power amplifiers. So, first and foremost, this mains conditioner was designed and built to address this specific need. We used our review sample with a system that included a Musical Fidelity kW750 power amp. This gives a meaty 750 watt output, with more than double this into lower impedances. But, while the kW750 is a large and powerful amplifier, the Super Titan is intended for much bigger fare than this. With its massive reserves, it's even suitable for some of the huge American behemoths.

Now, this might imply Super Titan is a niche product, aimed only at those with big powerful systems and wallets to match. But it's also usable with smaller set-ups. Having such vast current capability means there's almost no limiting effect on available power – a fault that can and does afflict smaller power conditioners.

Having vast headroom means superb transient detail and no restriction of dynamics. While aiming to provide clean, pure mains, IsoTek is committed to designing units that do not act as a limiter in terms of current delivery. Super Titan is the ultimate expression of this approach to design.

But, does one really need a product like this? Is it necessary to go to such extremes? Of course, if you're a rich audiophile with a big system and money to burn, then investing in something like Super Titan won't be an issue. But what about those of us with smaller systems? Do we need one?

SOUND QUALITY

Annoyingly, the answer turns out to be a resounding 'yes'. Certainly, if your mains quality is badly contaminated with noise and distortion, and you have additional items like computers running off the supply, the improvement in clarity

and detail delivered by a device like this will be bigger than you'd ever imagine.

IsoTek's better mains purification devices, like Super Titan, deal with both differential and common-mode noise, along with RFI and EMI. Each mains outlet is isolated, which prevents cross-contamination. This means that self-noise generated by (say) a large power amp will not affect your preamp or CD player. Subjectively, this means you'll hear a cleaner, more solidly focussed sound that has greater clarity and separation. Depending on how dirty your mains supply is, the music will sound smoother and cleaner, yet crisper and more immediate at the same time. The sound will be noticeably more refined and effortless.

We'd say Super Titan will improve the sound of any hi-fi system it's used with. It will allow you to hear exactly how your equipment is performing. Moreover, the improved clarity and separation will allow you to fine-tune your hi-fi system as never before.

“Your music will sound smoother, cleaner and much more immediate”

You'll find that certain 'difficult' or disappointing recordings suddenly sound a whole lot better – in some cases, the improvement will be so great, you'll wonder how and why they could ever have sounded so bad. Lastly, your system will sound consistently good, regardless of when you listen.

Although Super Titan takes up quite a bit of floor space, it's otherwise undemanding. It doesn't get warm during normal use and it's whisper-quiet. Even with an ear close-by, there's no hum or buzz to be heard. So you can place it near to where you sit, without having to worry about mechanical noise or heat dissipation.

Our home mains supply is actually quite clean and we already use a high quality PS Audio Premiere mains conditioner. Even so, Super Titan resulted in an audible improvement. Be warned – don't mess with Super Titan unless you have the cash!

Jimmy Hughes



Clean-up Campaign

There are mains conditioners and then there's the Isotek Super Titan, says Paul Rigby...

There are mains conditioners and mains conditioners; for everyone who's had a good experience there'll be someone claiming a bad one. So you've got to take each product on its own terms, in your system, and not arrive at any preconceptions. This said, Isotek's name precedes them; if there's one company that's made its (fine) reputation from mains-related products, this is it. They do a lot of live demonstrations at hi-fi shows, where time after time, they demonstrate the efficacy of their products. This prompted me to review this, the Super Titan, a flagship of their range.

At £5,995 it's right on the edges of what even high end audiophiles would regard as acceptable, so for me it wouldn't be a case of it doing a bit of good here and there; to justify its price it would have to work wonders! Happily, I have a high end system (although even in this context £6,000 quid is pushing it), so I duly installed it and listened with interest...

It certainly looks the part; it's a beautiful thing in its own right, and massive weighing a beast-like 30kg and spanning 500x500x300mm, in no small part due to the fact that it has to deliver 32A. It builds upon the current Titan model but offers twice as much power and doubles the filtering capability: offering a group of four, seven stage, filters to help remove differential noise (the noise from your fridge, for example) and common mode noise which is a more insidious distortion that you only often notice once it's gone.

Designed to work as a sort of pre-power conditioning combo with the current Aquarius conditioner, the reported ideal configuration for sound quality is to plug your power amp (or monoblocks) directly into the Super Titan, the rest of your

front-end into the Aquarius and the Aquarius itself into the Super Titan. The point of the Super Titan? To deliver clean and consistent power. So what does it sound like?

SOUND QUALITY

Initially utilising Skunk Anansie's 'Stoosh' as a test CD on an Icon CD-XI CD player within a valve system, the listening tests began with the basic reference system presenting a tight, thumping bass with a dynamic rhythm guitar, smoky vocals with discernible acoustic guitar and cymbal elements on the periphery of the soundstage.

Next, the Aquarius mains conditioner presented a more focused soundstage with now, centrally placed, rhythm guitar and bass. The downside was a slight upper midrange lift but the reduction in distortion, improved bass grip and more acoustic guitar and cymbal effects held promise.

My monoblock power amps were then plugged directly into the Super Titan chassis. My reference system has never displayed such a wide and deep soundstage; bass power was immense, almost visceral, while Skin's sometimes subtle vocalisations proved that the upper midrange and treble were particularly nuanced and delicate.

Finally, the monoblocks remained while the front-end loaded Aquarius was connected to the Super Titan. What I heard surprised and shocked me because, up until this point I was presented with more and better

fireworks. The Super Titan removed that. For the first time, I was listening to the music and not the hi-fi. That focused soundstage of the Aquarius-only rig sounded false, in retrospect, and the basic reference sounded relatively veiled and lacking in bass power. Now, the soundstage had a more organic arrangement while each instrument could be heard clearly. In fact, I could have easily written the bass guitar part on a piece of paper; it was that lucid.

Via my Avid Acutus turntable, Ella Fitzgerald's performance on Speakers Corner's 'Cole Porter Songbook' was simply arresting. In standard reference mode, her performance was relatively stodgy, slow and tired. Post Super Titan, Fitzgerald revealed sparkle, a crisp enunciation and elegance. Also, a tremendous instrumental separation was drained of distortion by the Super Titan and, within the resultant gaps, new detail was revealed.

CONCLUSION

Power conditioning has always been of value, but with the Super Titan, it has finally come of age. Here is a system that never imposed itself upon the music. Here, in fact, the music was king, not the hardware. Yes, the Super Titan might cost a pretty penny but this is one of those high-end components which is actually worth every penny – providing you've got them in the first place!



HI-FI WORLD

VERDICT ★★★★★

Beautifully built and presented, this is an extremely effective mains conditioning device – but so it should be at the price!

FOR

- tonal accuracy
- incisive detail and clarity
- bass interpretation
- 3D soundstaging

AGAINST

- price!

AWARDS

2010
Product of the Year
ACCESSORY

IsoTek Super Titan Power Conditioner

\$10,000 www.isoteksystems.com

We've had excellent luck with IsoTek products over the past few years, and the Super Titan has worked flawlessly in our publisher's reference system. Combining some radical ideas to power conditioning with vault-like build quality, electronic and mechanical noise is eliminated from your system with the Super Titan.

It's Neutrik connectors for the four power cords going out to your system is just another example of how everything under the hood of the Super Titan has been taken to the extreme. With a maximum capacity of 32 amperes (from a 110-volt AC line), the Super Titan requires you to call your electrician to get the maximum capacity it can deliver, but the results are well worth it. You've never heard your system sound so free of electrical artifacts until you plug into a Super Titan.

