

# The Audio Beat

# IsoTek's Full System Enhancer Kit

by Roy Gregory, January 28, 2019

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Special tracks designed to speed component burn-in or eliminate residual magnetic fields that have built up over time are nothing new. They are so established that few people even question their sonic benefits -- even if there are still those who dispute the explanation for those benefits -- and no test or setup disc seems complete without them. But just having a burn-in track is far from the whole story. It will work brilliantly on everything from your CD transport to your speakers -- but that isn't everything. Not only does it ignore the analog replay chain, a realm in which the signals are much smaller and burn-in thus much more critical, but the advent of computer audio has created a whole new category of components that are no less susceptible to burn-in than anything else in the audio chain. However, devoid of analog signal processing, they require a completely different approach.

My own experience suggests that the cables that run through a great many tonearms never actually achieve burn-in, so small are the signals they handle, while the

same problem applies to captive tonearm leads, or external leads that haven't been removed and burnt in separately -- and that's before we start thinking about what lies beyond the inputs of your phono stage. Clearly that's not an experience that's unique to me, as IsoTek has launched the Full System Enhancer Kit, a system-conditioning solution that's specifically designed to fill the gaps in the existing range of burn-in tools. The Kit, which costs \*\*\* , consists of two parts: a dedicated burn-in CD and an inline RIAA filter about the size of an XLR plug that enables you to use the burn-in tracks with analog equipment. You can also buy the filter separately for \*\*\* .

Let's start with the disc. CD only (I'm guessing they can't justify an SACD hybrid, although that really would cover all the bases), this contains four tracks: a 30-minute combined burn-in and degauss track that's intended to be used on repeat; a shorter, five-minute version of the same combined track, intended to be used once a week; a 15-minute combined burn-in and degauss track intended

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specifically for the phono replay chain (which must be used with the supplied filter); and finally a 17.5-minute data track designed to burn in and degauss music servers/streamers.

bet that you'll be able to buy one off the shelf shortly -- with no prizes for guessing where from.

So far so good, and all very effective and efficient; but for me, where things get really interesting is when you use that third track in conjunction with the supplied filter. Supplied by sister company Blue Horizon, the prosaically named RIAA filter is

a neat solution to a significant problem that most audiophiles aren't even aware they have. With an RCA socket on one end and an RCA plug on the other, the fat barrel in between contains a passive RIAA network and resistors to reduce the input signal level. Connect it between your CD player and the inputs on your phono stage, play the "Phono Burn-In" track on the

IsoTek CD on repeat and, presto, a continuous signal designed to burn-in your phono stage, complete with the appropriate EQ and selectable for MM or MC level via a switch on the filter itself.

This is very ingenious and, for vinyl lovers, very, very useful. But that's not all. With a little ingenuity, you can extend the benefits of the RIAA filter further still, taking in the all-important tonearm leads as well. All you need is a cartridge-type adapter of the kind I described in a previous blog. This combines the body of a dead cartridge with a patch lead to allow you to connect a burn-in machine to your tonearm -- but the RIAA filter would be better still. The only change required would be the substitution of female RCA sockets in place of the plugs on the patch cord. Mind you, if you lack the manual dexterity or parts required to manufacture such a device, I think it's a pretty safe

If you are serious about vinyl replay, then I can't recommend the IsoTek Full System Enhancer Kit highly enough. Burn in your analog replay chain and you'll be shocked at just how firmly it has had its foot on the

throat of your record replay. Personally, I'd recommend splashing out on both the Kit and a separate filter -- that way you can burn-in both channels at once and, even if you already possess one or more burn-in and degauss tracks, the dedicated examples on this disc are still worth having. At close to \*\*\* that's not exactly small beer, but this is no one-time fix.

Not only should you repeat the treatment on a regular basis, but if most of my vinyl-loving acquaintances are anything to go by, then the notion of owning one tonearm or tonearm wand, together with one 'table and phono stage is entirely alien. Instead, their systems resemble a revolving door of different record-replay combinations -- all of which will need burning in or refreshing each time they reach the top of the heap. Finally -- and if you still need convincing, do I really need to point out that \*\*\* is also considerably less than the cost of most of those individual components, let alone complete replay chains?

Having the right tools for any job is crucial to both getting that job done and getting the best results. The Full System Enhancer Kit is exactly that -- the right tool at the right price, and the right place for it is in your audio toolbox. Like any good tool, it's a solid investment in the equipment you'll be maintaining, keeping your system tip-top and ready to play.

