

# IsoTek EVO3 Super Nova mains conditioner

by Stephen Priest

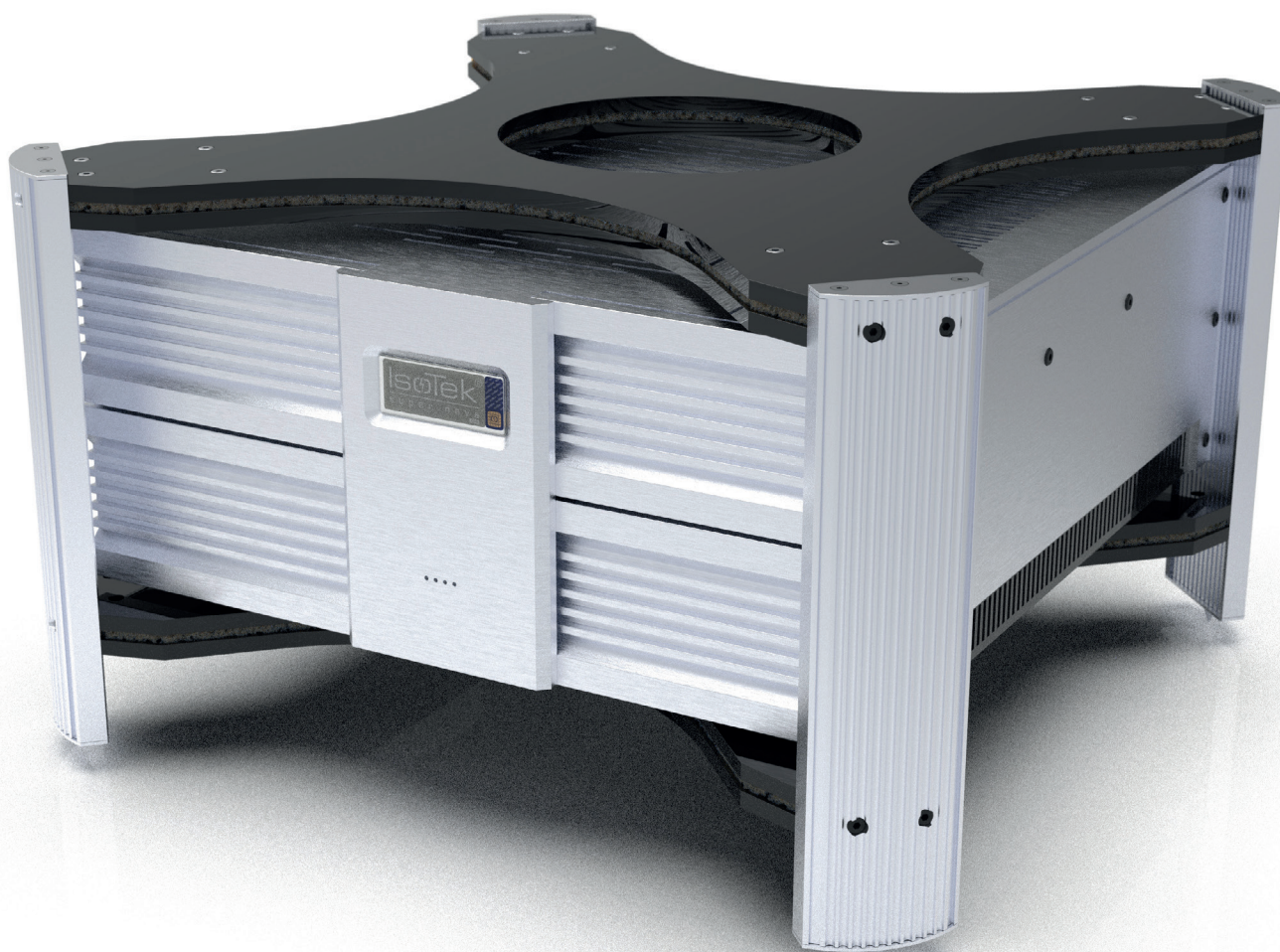
IsoTek's MD, Keith Martin, is a familiar – and omnipresent – figure at global audio exhibitions (remember those?) and I've experienced many of his expertly presented demonstrations. Despite this familiarity with the company and its products, the new EVO3 Super Nova is the first IsoTek product I've heard 'in anger' for quite some time. As Alan Sircom noted in his review in *Hi-Fi+* #167 the IsoTek Nova, it could easily be mistaken for a power amplifier in appearance. This comparison is even more apt here: Weighing in at some 45kg, this represents the pinnacle of IsoTek's technology in its Ultimate range and is a very serious-looking bit of kit. That weight isn't boosted by a brick, either – it's chock-full of top-spec componentry around eight individual circuits, – one for each of its outputs. It's a top-spec mains conditioning (or 'cleaning', as IsoTek put it) system, with newly designed choke technology and each power output being individually isolated and wholly independent of each other. This all results in claimed elimination of both common and differential mains noise. Each upper and lower set of four outputs is powered by a large switch located to the left and right of the rear panel. It's recommended for use with primary and source components that have a constant current draw, such as CD players, music servers, DACs and phono amplifiers. For amplifiers IsoTek offers a dedicated device similar in looks, called Super Titan which is also part of the Ultimate range.

Spoiler: This thing works. Very, very well indeed. I first tried it out, as recommended, with a CD player. Going in at the deep end (recording-wise and musically), I clicked onto 'Exterminating Angel' from The Creatures excellent (and very hard to find) album, *Anima Animus* from 1999. This is a full-on track with dark, nasty lyrics and equally shocking music to match. The change from bog-standard UK mains to the Super Nova was genuinely jaw-dropping. The opening bass slams

had a weight, speed and purpose that was previously lacking and immediacy and drive was brought to the fore to result in a highly visceral and involving experience. Siouxsie's (yes, her of the Banshees) voice was growling and authentically rough, the accompanying staccato strings tight and sinuous, whilst Peter 'Budgie' Clarke's (yes, him of the Banshees) unique, consistent tribal banging made for an uncomfortably enjoyable listen. Moving to streaming, the monumental last movement ('I pini della Via Appia') of Respighi's 'Pines of Rome' in a new recording by the Filarmonica della Scala conducted by Riccardo Chailly on Decca, was equally stirring. This is a very fine, transparent recording and this last movement is a fantastic exercise in sustained crescendo (when performed properly) which was demonstrated here with aplomb. Increased detail from an impressively quiet background ensured that instrumental nuances and compositional intricacies were brought to the fore. Also, here was the aforementioned gradual and 'natural' crescendo in the piece, with the eventual growth of instruments climaxing in the entry of the organ in the last few minutes of vast, glossy orchestration and dynamics were particularly realistic. I had equally edge-of-the-seat results in scale, speed and detail with, again, a 'new' high-quality recording of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* with the enigmatic Sergiu Celibidache and the Munich Philharmonic on their own Münchner Philharmoniker label. (Ironically, despite his posthumously released live recordings being superlative, he made very few recordings as he regarded them as no substitute for live performance).

It should be noted that the Super Nova also works extremely well with small scale music, too, such as intimate jazz trios or Bach's *Violin Partitas*, for example, highlighting again that lowered noise floor and instrumental presence, keeping things realistically 'within scale'. Also, being an armchair

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anarchist, despite it being recommended with use on 'primary' components, I went secondary, and I tried it with a Burmester integrated amplifier (032). The result, as I suspected, was equally effective and genuinely musically rewarding.

A fiver short of £10K for a mains conditioner is not cheap. However, it needs to be put in perspective – neither is a tuning modification on your performance level BMW, but the result is a whole bowl of fun. As an addition to, say, a system of £40–50K+ it would be an integral, even essential, contributor for an all-encompassing audio experience. Whatever is going on in that chunky chassis has a sprinkling of the fairy dust about it – or, alternatively, years of experience, dedication and knowledge of highest quality components and how to utilise them optimally! Spending the equivalent on audio cables (which many do) without first concentrating on your mains power quality could easily result in reduced performance and lesser communication than you would gain from this highly effective unit. If you're only just tinkering with thoughts of top-end mains cleaning system, head here first, chances are you'll be hooked, as I am. +

## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

**Type:** filtering 8 outlet mains conditioner

**Number of outlets:** 8× 5A three pin UK sockets for sources and preamps

**Outlet:** 4,600W

**Power cable:** IsoTek Premier, C19

**Specifications for:** UK, EU, US, ZA, Australia, Switzerland

**Dimensions (H×W×D):** 300 × 500 × 500mm

**Weight:** 45kg

**Price:** £9,995

**Manufacturer:** IsoTek Power Systems

**URL:** [isoteksystems.com](http://isoteksystems.com)

**UK Distributor:** Pulse Cinemas Showroom

**URL:** [pulsecinemas.com](http://pulsecinemas.com)

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