

RUSSELL K'S NEW RED 50 - SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

hi-fi+

REPRODUCING THE RECORDED ARTS MAY 2015 • 123

www.hifiplus.com

ISSN 1465-5950
£4.99
9 771465 595035 23

SCAN-TASTIC

THE NEW 'RAIDHO FOR LESS DOUGH'
SCANSONIC MB-2.5 LEADS OUR
SPEAKER SPECTACULAR!

AUDIO ANALOGUE VIVACE

B&W CM10 S2

MAGICO M-PROJECT

MARTEN COLTRANE SUPREME 2

QAT RS3

WIN ARIA MINI 2TB MUSIC
SERVER WORTH £2,295!!!



PERFECT POWER FROM ISOTEK'S
EVO3 MOSAIC GENESIS

IsoTek EVO3 Mosaic Genesis power regenerator

by Nicholas Ripley

Power regeneration is a big thing among most serious audiophiles, but is quietly all but ignored in the UK. IsoTek's EVO3 Mosaic Genesis is on a one-regenerator mission to prove us Limeys wrong.

The AC power (or 'mains' as we like to call it) is reasonably good across much of the UK. However, 'reasonably good' is not in many audiophile vocabularies, and power conditioning and regeneration are starting to be taken seriously here, thanks in no small part to the work of IsoTek. The EVO3 Mosaic Genesis is a hybrid, with feet in both camps, pulling together some of the technology from IsoTek's top EVO3 Genesis 'generator' and Super Titan conditioner.

A power regenerator essentially takes the waveform of your AC mains, references it against a built-in sine-wave generator, then amplifies that signal to deliver a synchronous, DC-offset-free, 230V AC power, with a voltage variation of just a few per cent. This last point is more important than people often consider: given the best guarantee you can get from the power companies in the UK is 230V is +10% to -6%, which brings the UK in line with EU mains harmonisation legislation, although many power companies still work to the older 240V $\pm 6\%$ standard by default. This variation in power can prove problematic, and with increased demand and competition forcing cost-cutting, the likelihood that the UK retains its 'reasonably good' mains is called into question.

The EVO3 Mosaic Genesis regenerator uses a Class AB amplifier and heavy-weight transformer delivering a 230V $\pm 2\%$ voltage (fed from a 20A IEC input), to five power sockets – three for low-power source components or preamps, and two high-current SuperTitan derived direct-coupled outputs for power amps. If in doubt (say, an integrated

amp), go with the higher-power output sockets. With EVO3, IsoTek developed a technology called KERP (Kirchoff's Equal Resistance Path) for equal resistance and power delivery to all outlets. To minimise the chance of noise from the original mains leaking into the regenerated power, copper foil acts a shield between primary and secondary windings on the transformer. The internal wiring uses IsoTek's new UP-OCC (Ultra Pure Ohno Continuous Cast) high purity copper solid core internal wire, which is silver-plated before being insulated with Teflon.

IsoTek's EVO3 Mosaic Genesis also features 100,000A of instantaneous protection, and a series of voltage-dependent resistors to protect against AC power spikes – this not only protects devices plugged into the EVO3 Mosaic Genesis, but also prevents the regenerator from acting like a big, expensive fuse in times of crisis.

The EVO3 Mosaic Genesis has a handy blue LED read-out, which can be turned off should you so wish. You can monitor input and output voltage and THD (expressed as a percentage), as well as current and mains frequency. ▶



“Play your system at 7pm. Now play it again at 1am. It’s likely the 1am system sounds a lot better than the 7pm system.”



- ▶ The first two are perhaps the most interesting, but need to be handled with care – not because they undermine the sound, and not because they might cause any issue with the IsoTek device or anything connected to it. No, the simple reason is it can become almost a nervous twitch, a visual audiophilia nervosa indicator. You will end up constantly monitoring your AC distortion figure and comparing it to the outputted distortion. That way, madness lies.

Nevertheless, the input voltage and distortion figures do make for some grim reading. You see the distortion shoot up and the voltage go haywire in the early evening, as the world heads home to watch TV or use their iPads wirelessly. In my system, anything above about 2% distortion on the AC could be heard as adding grain and a hard ‘edge’ to the mid and treble, especially on high-performance audio, and anything below about 225V robbed bass of its detail, dynamics, and life. At its worst (7pm–8:30pm, Easter Monday), the figures were closer to 220V and 3.8% distortion, and this was clearly audible. The regenerator got this to a constant 230V and between 0.18%– 0.33% distortion, and this was clearly audible too, putting back what Coronation Street, EastEnders, and FaceBook took away.

How much of an effect will depend largely on the kind of electronics you are using and the demands they place on their AC inputs. This is hard to predict, especially with imported products that might have been tested in 110V environments like the USA and Japan. Of the devices I put through the IsoTek wringer, most benefitted from AC regeneration, while some (my Audio Research preamp for example) were transformed by it. None were ambivalent or were worsened by the presence of a regenerator. Given the price tag of the EVO3 Mosaic Genesis, it’s unlikely to be used with a £150 amplifier

of 25 years ago, but this seems not to be price-related, or quality of power supply related – I used it on a friend’s system who uses an old Sony ES CD player, with Audiolab 8000 pre amplifier and power amplifier and it worked wonders, too.

What does it sound like? That’s simple. Play your system at 7pm. Now play it again at 1am. It’s pretty likely the 1am system sounds a lot better than the 7pm system. The IsoTek EVO3 Mosaic Genesis makes your 7pm system sound more like your system at 1am. It brings out that best in your system, whether that best is cleaner, more extended treble, less hash or grain in the sound, a little more exuberance, or a lot more control.

IsoTek’s EVO3 Mosaic Genesis is the perfect game-raiser for small high-performance audio systems, and one that will become harder to live without over time, because our power is not going to get any better. It’s a one-stop shop of conditioner and regenerator that, once heard in action, it’s hard to live without. Highly recommended. +

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Details: IsoTek EVO3 Mosaic Genesis hybrid power conditioner/regenerator

Manufactured by: IsoTek Systems

URL: www.isoteksystems.com

The power and the glory

Despite years of inveterate tweaking, **David Price** never fully realised quite what a difference using regenerated mains could bring. Does this mean an end to the fiddling?

There are two types of audiophile – those who listen to music and those that fiddle around with their systems. I fit into both categories, and as my setup has got better, I have spent a proportionally smaller amount of time messing with it. That's great, it was always the intention, and things are moving in the right direction. Perhaps by the time I am on the edge of deafness, I will have beaten the upgrade bug!

If we're brutally frank, one of the joys of this hobby/passion/vocation (delete as appropriate) is that there is so much room for fiddling. The hi-fi industry is a veritable repository of people who just can't sit still, who always want to go one better. This isn't bad in itself, because like maximum security prisons it keeps large numbers of dazed and confused people off the streets. A lot of these folk spend great amounts of time chasing rainbows so to speak, believing that this or that new mod will change their lives.

Whether it is exotic organic damping compounds, electrostatic charge field reducers, disc demagnetisers or whatever, there's a ready market for what I call 'hi-fi hocus pocus', and it never ceases to amaze me how much money is spent. Such wonder tweaks give the rest of the hi-fi accessory market a bad name. For every fancy £300 RCA phono plug that makes next to no difference, there's a £30 interconnect lead that usefully upgrades the free ones that

The bass is cleaner, and a layer of upper midband mush has been stripped away

'snog, marry or avoid', as the saying goes?

Decades spent reviewing all manner of products claimed to dramatically upgrade hi-fi systems, has taught me that you can't reliably predict results so you have to hear the difference for yourself. Cables are the classic example of this; the effects they have can be subtle or profound, depending on your system and you never know until you try. This goes for both signal and mains cables; some have a modest effect, others can be significant.

If mains leads can improve the sonics of a system, then what about the mains itself? When I lived in London, this was a big issue for me and I struggled to get my hi-fi to sound good, trying anything that claimed to alleviate the effect of the noise-riddled AC mains supply. I had varying success; some mains conditioners worked a bit, others seemed to 'over damp' the sound, making it smoother but flat and lifeless. This was especially detectable when playing vinyl, and in the end I gave up – electing instead just to use

good mains leads with plugs cleaned by Kontak. It sweetened things up, yet didn't detract in any way.

When I moved to the wilds of Wiltshire, I became less inclined to fiddle with my mains because it's pretty good here. For example, it's quiet enough to tell when the fridge has switched on in the kitchen, because the sound gets slightly more brittle, whereas in London, it was just so noisy that everything sounded mushy and harsh all the time. So it was interesting to try IsoTek's EVO3 Mosaic Genesis mains regenerator and power conditioner. I have been to a number of hi-fi shows where the company has run demonstrations of its products, and time after time it has improved the sound. Indeed, I chose them in the *Hi-Fi Choice* hi-res demonstration at the Bristol Sound and Vision show in 2012 and 2013. So although I have a real respect for IsoTek power products, I honestly doubted that they would make a difference out here in the sticks. I plugged the EVO3 Mosaic Genesis in not expecting much...

Getting it right

I was wrong. It has brought about an improvement of the scale I had not envisaged. It has made my reference system sound tonally smoother, darker and deeper, with more widescreen presentation thanks to improved width and depth. The bass is cleaner, and a layer of upper midband mush has been stripped away. For years I have been trying to find an amplifier clean and smooth enough to drive my finicky Yamaha NS-1000M loudspeakers, and now they seem far less bright and more amenable to everything asked to work with them.

Unsurprisingly, the better the loudspeaker, the more the improvement the IsoTek has brought. My budget reference Cambridge Audio AeroMax 6 floorstander, seems better detailed and more dynamic, while my expensive Quad electrostatics are far less mushy and muddled than I have heard them before, especially in the treble region. Indeed, my opinion of them has been raised. At £5,995 the IsoTek is very expensive, but delivers a resounding improvement, one much greater than expected. Indeed if I'm honest, it is probably more than a lifetime of tweaking has ever done ●



IsoTek's EVO3 Mosaic Genesis achieves more than a lifetime of tweaking can



DAVID PRICE
The tweak that was

To Infinity and Beyond

The IsoTek EVO 3 Mosaic Genesis

By Jeff Dorgay

One of the most important things you can do for your system, and surely the thing you should do first, is to address the power in your listening room. Unless you live in the middle of nowhere, chances are almost 100% that you've got power coming in that is full of noise and distortion. That's right, distortion. Plug a Fluke analyzer into your AC socket and you'll be shocked at just how much distortion is in the AC power that you're feeding to your components. Even if you had super clean power, there is still a considerable amount around the house from all of your other electronic components and wireless devices. And God forbid your next door neighbor is doing a lot of arc welding in the evening when you're trying to listen to your hifi system.





PrimaLuna®

Our Name Is Sound. You Know It.

DiALogue Premium HP Integrated Amplifier.
The finest tube integrated at any price. Any.



\$4399

Take what you consider to be the best tube integrated out there, do a web search, then look at "images." Compare their interior pictures to ours, and you'll see what everybody else sees. Look for parts quality, build quality, and engineering. Compare the weight, and learn for yourself why our designs can give you tube life that can go *ten years or more*. **And the sound?**



"PrimaLuna's DiALogue Premium HP is an integrated amplifier whose sound quality approaches that of pairings of reference Class A preamps and power amps. PrimaLuna has another winner" — Robert Deutsch, *Stereophile*, December 2014

When you have the best integrated amp, it isn't tough to make it the best headphone amp. The DiALogue Premium HP will best purpose-built headphone amps, and we can show you why.

Go to primaluna-usa.com for our **upcoming videos** and we will show you *exactly* what you get for your hard earned money.
info@primaluna-usa.com 909.931.0219

REVIEW

Conventional wisdom says that the power supply in your components and its associated filtration should take care of this, and to some extent that is true. The more massive and well designed the power supply in your amp, preamp, DAC and other components is, the better the sound. But you're still starting with dirty power. The suspension in your car filters most of the undulations in the road out, keeping you comfortable, but that same car always rides that much nicer when you hit a patch of smooth, just rolled pavement, doesn't it? Same thing here. The cleaner the power going in, the better sound coming out of your system.

A great power line conditioner should not do anything to alter the tonal balance of your system. What it *should* do is drop the noise floor, remove power related artifacts and in the end allow a smoother, more defined, less fatiguing sound, because your system doesn't have to traverse all of those bumps.

I've been using the IsoTek SuperTitan in my main reference system now for a couple of years, and after trying nearly everything else, it still passes muster in terms of not doing any harm and lowering the noise floor dramatically. The minute I plug directly into the wall, however, I feel the loss of its presence instantly. And even though the SuperTitan does a fabulous job, what if you eliminated the wall altogether? *(continued)*

Enter the IsoTek EVO 3 Mosaic Genesis

Another alternative would be to generate fresh power and start from there. Others have tried this, with modest success, but in our experience have always fallen somewhat short in terms of ultimate dynamics and sonic coloration. As happy as I am with my SuperTitan, I must admit skepticism to this approach when U.S. importer Kevin Wolff was explaining the Genesis. No more than 15 seconds after inserting the Genesis into my reference system—consisting of a Pass Labs XsPre, Xs300 monoblocks, Gryphon Kalliope DAC and Quad 2815 speakers—that skepticism was dismissed.

Because the Genesis regenerates fresh AC power, rebuilding the AC sine wave with distortion figures in the .2–.3 percent range (where a typical US power outlet has 10–50 times this much distortion), if you're anticipating a smoother ride, you've got it. Just like taking a Ferrari with fresh racing tires out on the track, installing the Genesis helps your system to follow the curves, contrasts and other nuances with much less effort.

As good as the SuperTitan is, using the Genesis for the front end of the system redefines quiet for this music lover. With the Quads only requiring 6 watts each, the decision to run one outlet of the Genesis into an IsoTek EVO 3 Sirius power bar to power the speakers proves a good one and the Quads do benefit in the same way that the electronics do from being fed pure AC.



The only bad news here is that the three Genesis outlets can only supply 150 watts of regenerated power. Should you need more, the standard EVO 3 Genesis with 600 watts of capacity is the model for you.

Wolff goes on to clarify, stating “The amplifier section of the EVO 3 Mosaic Genesis is more closely related to the EVO 3 SuperTitan, vs. the amplifier section of the Mosaic, but that makes for a great future upgrade. The SuperTitan is at another technological level that cannot be shrunk and keeps its uniqueness. This form factor was chosen so that if you needed more than five outlets total, you could fit two of them on a rack. The Mosaic Genesis was designed to bridge the gap between absolutely great and the outer ranges of what is possible.”

At \$11,995, the Mosaic Genesis is by no means an entry-level power product and it does include one of IsoTek's power cords in the box. A number of conditioners, even at this price, still make you buy a \$1,000–\$2,000 power cord, so this is a nice touch. In the context of a modest system, the Genesis is most likely an unjustified expense, but in terms of the reference system used here, with a price tag of about \$150k, the Genesis is definitely well worth the cost. The additional liveliness and natural rendition it adds to the presentation would not be heard by adding \$12,000 worth of cable or a fancy equipment rack. The improvement that the Genesis makes to the system

is not really available any other way, so in that sense it is totally unique.

With the Genesis in the system, even heavy rock sounds louder, more impactful, thanks to the lower noise floor. Classical, acoustic and vocal lovers will notice a greater delta between Genesis and no Genesis. Everything rendered sounds more organic, more natural as if another barrier has been removed between you and the music. The Pass now sounds more grain-free, like a passive preamplifier, yet with the dynamic drive of an active preamplifier, if that makes sense. The ultra clean power delivery of the Genesis helps the system to sound less electronic, if you will.

Varied scenarios

With three outlets at your disposal, what to plug in? In my original reference system, the Genesis effect was indeed impressive, so the next two places to try it were in the analog half of the chain and in bringing my four-box dCS Paganini system to replace the Gryphon.

Utilizing the Rogers phono-stage that we reviewed back in issue 62, which is an all vacuum tube design, was positively stunning, and reminds me of every tube component I've ever plugged into the SuperTitan. The noise floor drop with every tube preamp I plugged into the Genesis was greater than any solid-state component, except for the dCS stack. *(continued)*

Bowers & Wilkins

Sounds beautiful

With the new CM Series, beauty is so much more than skin deep. Of course, with their clean lines and high-quality finishes these are some of the most elegant speakers we've ever produced. But thanks to our Decoupled Double Domes and tweeter-on-top technology you won't believe how beautiful your music can sound.

bowers-wilkins.com



Decoupled Double Dome tweeter



Those with a high end digital player and the spare cash to match need a Genesis. While the Nordost cable upgrade to the Paganini was spectacular, again, the Genesis pushes the boundaries even further. Spinning the latest MoFi SACD of the Miles Davis classic *Kind of Blue* is a sheer freak out. The dCS stack has precious little grain or harshness in its presentation that you don't even notice until you pull the Genesis out. Everything gets smaller, more brittle, and less lifelike. I experienced the same thing with my Dylan SACDs played through the stack—his voice is so much more realistic, with more tonal saturation, more decay and more delicacy.

Make no mistake

Call me crazy, but if you have a mega system, you really should audition an IsoTek EVO 3 Genesis, or its big brother, the EVO 3 Genesis. Especially if you've optimized your system as far as you think it can go. If you've taken your system to 11, this will take it to 12. I guarantee you will be so enthused with the results that it will sell itself. ●

REVIEW

The IsoTek EVO 3
Mosaic Genesis
\$11,995

MANUFACTURER

IsoTek Power Systems Ltd.

CONTACT

www.isoteksystems.com
(manufacturer)
www.vanaltd.com
(NA distributor)

PERIPHERALS

Analog source

AVID Volvere SP/SME V/
Kiseki PurpleHeart NS

Phonostage

Rogers PA1-A

Digital source

Gryphon Kalliope,
dCS Paganini stack

Preamplifier

Robert Koda K-10

Power Amplifier

Pass Labs Xs300
monoblocks

Cable

Cardas Clear

Power

IsoTek Super Titan