

IsoTek V5 Titan

power conditioner

Alan Sircom

When you've listened to a lot of power conditioners over the years, a dirty little secret emerges. In many cases, the bigger the power conditioner, the worse it gets. Power conditioners designed for heavy duty use with big power amplifiers tend to suck the life and the dynamics out of the sound. Unlike ones for smaller systems that more often than not add to the overall performance, often conditioners designed for meaty power amps are consigned to the 'necessary evil' bin; if you have to use one because the sound is otherwise so polluted as to make music unlistenable, then go for it. Otherwise... often best left well alone.

There are always exceptions to this rule, and one of the best was the IsoTek Titan, especially in its EVO3 guise. It didn't rob the system of dynamics and didn't make music sound flat. But IsoTek's EVO3 is no more; the V5 Titan is its replacement. The worry is whether in making the change, the company throws the baby out with the bathwater. Given how Aquarius sounds in V5 guise next to its EVO3 predecessor, things augur well for the second product in the IsoTek line to undergo the V5 treatment. But big is different when it comes to juice boxes.

Aside from the new, more rounded bodywork of the V5 line, the most obvious change to the Titan is the move from two power sockets to three. I admit to some initial head-scratching on this one as most listeners will either have a stereo or two mono power amps. I guess in a bi-amped system, you might have a stereo amp driving one set of drivers and two mono amps powering the others, but that seems a little specialist for a product like the Titan. A quick glance at the installation manual suddenly made that third plug seem a lot more sensible; it's for subwoofers. While I've been an advocate for 2.1 stereo systems for a long time, such systems are still comparatively rare on the UK audio scene, but these systems are growing in popularity globally and in the case of some of the beefier subs out there, they can be quite a power user. Given the original Titan chassis was in production for the better part of 18 years, it's a good idea to future-proof the V5 Titan for the potential shape of systems to come.

A nice new case and an extra input is all fine and dandy, but that's only the start. The game has been thoroughly raised with the V5 Titan. For example, the V5 Titan now offers 153,000A of surge protection and 75,000A continuous protection. That may sound like gilding the lily in regions where such surges are rare; but even in such cases 'rare' is not 'never' and the consequences of such a surge on a pair of high-end power amplifiers (and the speakers to which they are connected) are catastrophic in the extreme. Like its V5 chum Aquarius, the V5 Titan includes an easy reset RCBO fuse system should its protection circuit kick in and save the day.

Fun for the rest of us

Surge protection is a handy thing to have in the event of impending amplifier doom, but for the most part, we don't play our systems during massive electrical storms and – in the UK and EU especially – the added protection is more 'back-up' than 'first line of defence' and what's more important is how a power conditioner treats the juice. And here too, the V5 Titan has been extensively reworked, entirely for the benefit of the sound quality.

The changes to the V5 fall into two basic categories; improvements to the circuit that create measureable improvements, and revisions to the internal architecture that are more 'sonic good housekeeping' that contribute to the overall performance.

Dealing with the latter first, a lot of the underlying performance parameters of the V5 Titan remain the same from its predecessor; it still uses a Direct Coupled fully star-earthed architecture with a large input transformer and four smaller output transformers. However, this basic design has been subtly reworked to improve the sonic performance with little 'tweaks' like sealing many of the larger components in resin, which effectively translate vibration to heat (not much heat... the V5 Titan doesn't run hot), and that gives a purer power feed.

Those transformers are not the same ones used in the V5 Titan's predecessor. Couple that fact with PCBs that have undergone a 50% increase in copper-loading and IsoTek's suggestion of two-fold inductance upgrade, an 80% increase in current handling, and the improvement in amperage and reduction of resistance sound right.

EQUIPMENT REVIEW
IsoTek V5 Titan



A wholly new development for the V5 Titan is the new System Link output, which allows multiple IsoTek conditioners to connect to a single wall socket while retaining a star-earth architecture across the whole system. This was first seen in IsoTek's Mosaic series products, and works extremely well with the V5 Aquarius. System Link uses a Neutrik-connection cable taken from one V5 product (ideally the V5 Titan) to connect to others. This has an added bonus for people with dedicated mains spurs and high-grade floating wall sockets... you don't need multiple sockets. In systems where the power amp sockets are along a rear wall and the main electronics along a side wall, this can be a major – and hitherto overlooked – advantage.

Direct coupled

The new V5 Titan Direct Coupled design concept is a dramatic improvement over the original award winning design because IsoTek have considered every aspect of the concept, which has been painstakingly reconsidered and without fundamentally changing the topology or concept, the circuit has been fully optimised in ways that were not possible when IsoTek developed the original Titan

model. The new circuit has not only Direct Coupling but also exceeding low DCR /ACR impedance. This solution gives an amazingly open sound stage with no loss of bass dynamics. The V5 Titan solution is (notionally at least) considerably better than any isolation transformer, because isolation transformers have higher impedance losses due to the use of magnetic materials (ideally high silicon steel), designed to create galvanic isolation.

For power amplifiers in particular, this is the best of both possible worlds; the transformer is helping deliver a smoother power to the amplifier and this power is treated to filtration that at once works and doesn't interfere with the sonic performance of the amp. No more grey flatness. No more hobbled rhythms. Your amp sounds better from cleaner juice without the sonic clamp imposed on the sound by the filter itself.

Adding the V5 Titan wipes that noise out at a single stroke, without undermining the performance of the system. Your power is a lot cleaner and the sound of a power amplifier reflects that clean feed in so many ways.

The usual cliché about 'lowering the noise floor' applies of course (that's in essence what the V5 Titan does, >>

EQUIPMENT REVIEW
IsoTek V5 Titan



The V5 Titan does its disappearing act in all the right ways to some distinctly exotic and powerful beasts. It transformed the sound of my Burmester 911 Mk3 power amplifier.



» after all), but that's just the start of the fun. A more accurate description is that the V5 Titan lets your power amplifiers sound like they were designed to sound. Granted that makes the reviewer's job that bit harder because the sound of the V5 Titan is only heard in the reflection of the power amp to which it is connected, but that is how it is... and how it should be.

What's more, the V5 Titan does its disappearing act in all the right ways to some distinctly exotic and powerful beasts; it transformed the sound of my Burmester 911 Mk 3 power amplifier, for example, in a way I've rarely heard at this price.

Pop in and out

Of course, you can hear what it does by popping the V5 Titan in and out of the system. The Burmester amp sounds thinner with a more uneven treble, a harsher midband, and that awesome control over the bass drivers is less grippy. And that bass is less 'smeared' by comparison too. Short of living a life of almost puritanical mains discipline, you simply won't be able to replicate this performance at home without a V5 Titan or similar, and the 'or similar' part from other brands often comes with a far steeper price tag, or impact on the dynamic freedom of the system!

The IsoTek EVO3 Titan was an oasis of calm for systems that use big power amps, and the V5 Titan improves upon that performance in every way. Once you've (not) heard it working, it's hard to go back. +

Technical specifications

Type Power Conditioner
Number of outlets 3 + System Link
Type of outlets UK, EU, US, Aus
Mains inlet 16A IEC C20
Mains voltage 100-240V / 50-60Hz
High current – 230V ×3 (16A 3,680W total)
High current – 115V ×3 (16A 1,840W total)
SYSTEM LINK ×1
Surge protection 153,000A
Dimensions (W×H×D) 220 × 147 × 350mm
Weight 12kg

Manufacturer Isotek Systems isoteksystems.com

UK distributor Fine Sounds UK

www.finesounds.uk +44(0)1592 744710