

IsoTek V5 Syncro Uni 16 DC Blocker

Chris Kelly

My relationship with IsoTek dates back to around 2007, before I entered the audio industry. I needed a quality multiway plug, and without hesitation, my dealer recommended that I purchase it, as it was specifically designed for audio applications by a highly skilled engineer. I am pleased to report that the unit has been in continuous service for nearly 20 years now. As I write this, it remains operational behind my equipment rack, performing its duties very effectively. Since then, I have transitioned to the other side of the counter, so to speak, yet whenever power systems are discussed, IsoTek is always the first name that comes to mind. Consequently, I approached this assignment with high expectations.

So, what is the V5 Syncro Uni 16? It is a small enclosure measuring 150 x 85 x 250 mm (HxWxD), featuring an IEC

input at one end and a UK 3-pin plug at the other. The review sample was finished in matte silver, with a black option also available. I am not going to delve deeply into the clever elements within that enclosure—you can read about those in detail on the IsoTek website. What matters to customers is what it is supposed to do and what it does. Its primary purpose is to, in IsoTek's words, “dramatically reduce/silence transformer vibration and hum from the transformers within electronic equipment, generally mechanical vibration.” At this stage of my hi-fi journey, I believe I have a well-sorted system, so I was rather intrigued to discover how dramatic the effect of the V5 Syncro might be.

Simple installation

Installation was simple enough. IsoTek strongly advises that the unit will be most effective when used between the power socket and the offending amplifier or for best results >>





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» a power distribution device, powering all your electronics. Why there? Because it has been designed to address the problem of vibrational transformer hum, which I have also heard referred to as "DC on the mains," although, as IsoTek points out, that is technically inaccurate.

Fitting the unit into the cramped space behind my rack required a bit of Tetris. However, once it was securely in position, I removed the existing mains lead from my PrimaLuna EVO300 Hybrid integrated amplifier and replaced it with the one supplied by IsoTek. I plugged that into the Syncro and connected the mains lead from the Syncro to the wall socket. After double-checking that all the plugs and sockets were properly inserted, I switched on the Syncro, followed by the amplifier. The latter gave its familiar power-on click, and the pre-amp valves began to glow.

On the back of the Syncro, a very bright white LED illuminated. I am uncertain why it needs to be this bright, but it did not cause any harm, apart from casting stark illumination upon the tangled nest of cables behind the system.

Before I sat down too comfortably, I read some notes kindly provided by the manufacturer in response to frequently asked questions. The first was "How does the power arriving at the V5 Syncro Uni 16 differ from the power that is leaving it?" Good question. The answer, paraphrased for brevity, is that it takes the incoming sine wave, which is likely compromised by other equipment on the same circuit, and converts it into a perfectly balanced and stable sine wave.

The rest of the review system consisted, unusually, solely of my gear: my Linn Sondek LP12 with the Vertere Dark Sabre MM cartridge mounted on the Ittok arm, alongside my Gold Note PH10 PSU two-box phono stage, my Yamaha CD-S3000 SACD/CD/DAC, and my Harbeth Compact stand-mount loudspeakers, now upgraded to the new XDii specification.

I began by listening to some of my usual test tunes from Qobuz. I had curated several tracks that I use as a baseline; more than that, and I start to lose the ability to make valid A/B comparisons.

First up, Dave Alvin's 'Johnny Ace Is Dead' from his splendid album *Eleven Eleven*. This is a prime slice of Americana, with Alvin's gruff baritone singing and narrating the sad story of the eponymous character's (spoiler alert!) premature demise. What I noticed almost immediately with this second IsoTek-powered listening was an enhanced sense of intimacy and realism. Every element of this very well-recorded piece seemed a touch more realistic, more three-dimensional. Let's consider this. The Syncro had

eliminated a hum that, in all honesty, I had not heard, and in the process, it had infused more life into a recording that I know well. We were off to an intriguing start, for sure.

Then it was yet another of my compulsory audition plays, Pink Floyd's 'One Of These Days' from 1971's *Meddle*. Oh yes, that really hits the spot. The iconic bass riff set the opening proceedings and carried on all the way through; it was mighty and meaty, prompting an increase in volume to almost anti-social levels, and Nick Mason's bass drums struck me in the chest when he joined in. Once again, the Syncro somehow managed to enhance my engagement in the drama of the music, so much so that I sat still and listened intently until the last notes of 'Echoes' faded from the Harbeths.

Impressed

So impressed was I at this point that I switched to YouTube on my television, which is connected to the Yamaha by optical cable. I wanted to watch the new 4K remastering of Floyd's renowned *Live at Pompeii* recording. The track released on YouTube is, in fact, the very same 'One Of These Days.' Now, with the high-resolution visuals coupled with the Syncro-powered sound, I was experiencing sensory overload. Amazingly, something with which I am so familiar could move me so profoundly.

Let's not dwell on a track-by-track review of everything I have played since the Syncro arrived. Suffice it to say that the effect has been the same every time and that an amplifier which I have consistently rated very highly - I handed over a considerable sum to own it - sounds even better with the clean sine wave provided by the Syncro.

I began with high expectations. Were they met? No - they were exceeded. I genuinely had no idea what I was missing before the Syncro arrived. Naturally, this has sparked a strong desire to explore other areas of the company's product portfolio. But in the meantime, I know it's summer, yet I have a letter to write... Dear Santa... +

Price and contact details

Price: IsoTek V5 Synchro Uni 16: £695, €699, \$695

Manufacturer IsoTek Systems

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