

Constantine Soo listens to his system via
Music Interface Technologies'
£1,999 Z Powerbar power conditioner

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Please note that this is an American Review on the American version of the Z-Powerbar and the specifications differ from that of the UK/Euro version. The main differences between the US and the UK version are the voltage spec and the UK/Euro version has six outlets and one earth point.

Specification:

Type: Power conditioner with surge and spike protection

Outlets: 5 Hospital Grade, audiophile type duplex outlets

Outlet types:

3 Hospital Grade, audiophile type grey outlets with patented Stabilizer circuitry

1 Digital isolated Hospital Grade orange duplex

1 Hospital Grade red unswitched duplex **Outlet total:** 12

Dimensions: W 17 x D 10.75 x H 4 (inch) (rack mount W = 19")

MSRP: £1,999

Power conditioners in the \$2,000 price neighborhood abound, and I have been sent numerous designs within that price range for auditioning that produced results ranging from inconsistent to dismal. If the advice of Doug Schroeder, one of Dagogo's Senior Reviewers, is to be followed, then anything that produces less than readily discernible results are to be dismissed as a waste of a reviewer's time and energy. And, DS has had good things to say about cable and power products from the Rocklin, California company of Music Interface Technologies, or MIT. See his [May 2007 Review](#) of MIT's AVt MA interconnects, speaker cables, and the Z-Stabilizer, and his [October 2007 Review](#) of MIT's Z Stabilizer II HG, Oracle AC 1, AC2 and Z Cord AC power cables.

I reviewed a \$6,400 Furutech Pure Power 6 power conditioner in the December 2007 Issue, and now I'm sent a £1,999 MIT power conditioner dubbed Z Powerbar to review. The stakes are obviously different this time, and the Z Powerbar is intended obviously for a different group of audiophiles from that of the Furutech. Or is it? For nearly a quarter century, MIT has established itself as one of the few, top high-end audio cable product manufacturers in the audio industry, and judging from the wide variety of products being offered by the company in the present day, the resources that the company has been accruing from the considerable success in the marketplace must have been substantial as well. The brain behind such an organization is Bruce Brisson. Bruce is one of the forerunners in the high-end audio cable design sector of the industry. When audiophiles were starting to become aware of the sonic impacts of the standard "chicken wire" in the 1970s, Bruce was one

of the pioneers that brought about that change in consumer attitude towards cable designs. In fact, Bruce was the brain behind many of the Monster Cable's considerable success in its older cable products.

2008 marks the 25th year of operation of Music Interface Technologies, Bruce's own company. Today, music connoisseurs of all levels and audiophiles of any budget can choose from a profoundly diverse range of MIT products, ranging from the \$99.95 AVt 3 to the \$6,499 Oracle V1.2 in audio interconnects, and from the \$249.95 AVt3 speaker cable to the top-of-the-line Oracle V1.2 Speaker Interface at \$21,995 the pair.

Complementing these lines of cable products, among various categories of cable accessories, is a series of AC power products.



The most spectacular execution of MIT technologies in the AC series is the Oracle AC 2 at \$3,995, a power cable that is the embodiment of all technological prowess of MIT in AC management, which “takes the unique conductor configuration and low-resistance silver-clad conductors of the AC 1 and builds upon it by providing the complete AC filter circuitry originally found in the Z-Stabilizer (tuned for audio frequencies). This unique patented, parallel circuitry removes all frequencies other than 50-60Hz. Includes PFC, so that your components receive 50-60Hz 110V power (and nothing else) providing absolutely noise-free power and thus, noise-free sound. The result is greater clarity, dynamics, and imaging at all volume levels including extremely sensitive low volume situations.”

PFC stands for Power Factor Correction, a technology that maximizes AC efficiency by controlling the AC sine wave's phase angle. Such technology is now incorporated into the Z Powerbar, MIT's latest AC power product. Another unique design that is also featured in the Z Powerbar is MIT's in-house-designed parallel tuned filtration. Operations of this technique is based on MIT's patented “AC Filterpoles™”, “a tuned LCR technology ... that eliminates reflections by efficiently absorbing all forms of AC noise from the mains and then converting it into harmless thermal heat.”

MIT claims this new technique is superior to the series filtering technique adopted commonly by AC products of other makes. See the MIT Whitepaper PDF file titled, ["Power-line Noise: How Series Filters Work – \(and why they don't always\)"](#), among other informative articles located [in this webpage](#).

At £1,999, the Z Powerbar costs less than half of the Oracle AC 2, that is because the Z Powerbar does not employ an excessive quantity of the company's state-of-the-art cable technology, so MIT is not charging you for it. Instead, the Z Powerbar is equipped with the PFC circuitry from the Oracle AC 2 while incorporating technologies embedded into the \$999 Z Strip and \$499 Z Stabilizer II. Furthermore, the Z Powerbar offers a total of 10 Hospital Grade outlets in 5 sets of duplexes, with surge and spike protection for noise-free A/V performance and improved service life, 15-amp breaker with reset switch, satellite/cable/telephone protection circuits, and silent AV power distribution near fluorescent lights and low voltage lighting.

The 5 sets of duplex are in the respective colors of red, grey and orange, and different types of equipment are to be plugged into the duplex according to the markings underneath each. The two orange outlets on the far right, for example, are marked ISO on top and DIGITAL FILTERED at the bottom; the six grey outlets to their left are marked Z STABILIZED HOSPITAL GRADE OUTLETS. Finally, the two red outlets to the far left are

marked UNSWITCHED, most useful for monitors that have memory settings. Power capacity of the Z Powerbar is rated at 1,800 watts.



OUTLETS ASSIGNMENT

The Z Powerbar was conceived to provide for an entire home theatre system's power concerns, including HDTV and phone circuits. For the purpose of this review, the focus would be on the Z Powerbar's contribution to 2-channel playback. With that said, even as a 2-channel system, current system setup at my house has become bewildering even to myself, as the 47 Laboratory PiTracer CD transport requires 2 power cables already. Then, there is the 3-chassis Wadia Reference Series 9 Decoding Computer: another 3 more. Power consumption for the 47 Lab system was unknown but likely negligible, and the Wadia manual stated 65 watts for the system.

The Japanese CD transport draws power from two Model 4700 Power Humpty power supplies. As the Z Powerbar's DIGITAL FILTERED duplex is tasked to isolate digital processing noise from the rest of the system, I plugged the power cable of the PiTracer that supports digital processing into the first digital outlet of the Z Powerbar. The PiTracer's second power cable, which powers motor functions, was plugged directly into the wall so that the potentially noisier return is further separated from the first power cable.

The Wadia RS9 is empowered in an even more prodigious proportion than the PiTracer by the utilization of dedicated power supply systems in each mono decoding computer. For the second of the Z Powerbar's two digital outlets, I inserted the Wadia 931 Digital Controller into it, while the two Wadia 921 mono Decoding Computers were plugged into the Z Powerbar's switched, stabilized grey outlets.

Four Furutech Power Reference III AC cables provided for the AC connections of this front-end, with an Harmonix Reimyo Studio Master power cable filling in the role of the PiTracer's previously mentioned power cable.

On amplifications, this review was carried out with the pair of \$38,000 Red Rock Audio Renaissance tube monoblocks and the \$15,000 Pass Labs XA100.5 monoblocks. The pair of Red Rock had a specified total power consumption of 1,000 watts, while the Pass Labs were rated at 270 watts each. As such, all fell well within the limit of the Z Powerbar even when taken together with the digital front-end, and they were driven by the Wadia directly. Loudspeaker was the Tannoy Churchill Wideband.

An Isoclean Super Focus power cable was responsible for sending AC from the wall to the Z Powerbar, while two more Super Focus' powered the amplifiers from the Z Powerbar.



European version

AUDITIONING

With the Z Powerbar turned on 24/7, the audition period progressed into the third week when the Z Powerbar was beginning to contribute positively to the entire system, at which point the formulation of dynamics had

developed more fully and dimensionality of instruments was more vivid. The exchanges of acoustic guitar soloists in the Master Music label release of Masterpiece in JVC XRCD24 thus became less and less compressed along the burn-in process, while the tonality attained increasing realism. But the MIT was never about enhancement of my musical experience.

For it was not until I unplugged everything from the MIT and re-inserted the power cables into the four Isoclean ICP-003G wall outlets for comparison that I realized what I never sacrificed by using the Z Powerbar. In terms of dynamics, spatiality and tonality, the untreated AC coursing through my power cables sounded predominantly similar to that as treated by the Z Powerbar in most ways, except that the music was decidedly more enjoyable with the MIT.

For instance, the transients with which the musicians' playing of instruments was reproduced with the MIT became slightly more agile and thus more lifelike, while the extension of frequencies at opposite ends exhibited increased presence. The discs that best demonstrated this aspect was the FIM K2HD sampler, This is K2 HD Sound! and the label's latest release under the LIM umbrella, Antiphone Blues (see FIM product page) a re-release re-processed with the K2 HD technology. With either the Red Rock Audio Renaissance directly-heated SET monoblocks or the Pass Labs XA100.5 solid-state monoblocks, the Z Powerbar did not manifest any degree of dynamics truncation during playback of orchestral passages. In fact, with the MIT, the Pass Labs induced colossal dynamics and volumes from the speakers in a more discernible, less chaotic rendition of performance.

The MIT's effect with equipment of comparatively less robust built-in AC filtration schemes was even more noticeable.

Not as prodigious in power supply implementation as in the likes of the Red Rock or the Pass Labs, Teac Esoteric's \$4,000 AI-10 digital integrated amplifier featured a 205 VA toroidal transformer as flanked by two 18,000 μF capacitors per channel, and it performed analog-to-digital and digital-to-analog conversions during operation. In this context, the Z Powerbar's prowess became more readily noticeable. With the MIT, the Esoteric-driven Tannoy became more in control of the complex dynamics of acoustic guitars. The exchanges of soloists in the Master Music XRCD24 revealed a higher level of realism in tonality that was previously dormant.



AFTERTHOUGHT

It would seem that the Z Powerbar's contribution to the likes of the comparably heavy-duty Red Rock and Pass Labs monoblocks was not as impactful as to the \$4,000 Esoteric. Potentially, this may have to do with the Red Rock and Pass Labs' heavy power supply fortifications, which, at their MSRP's of \$39,000 and \$15,000 respectively, were already endowed with multiple stages of power regulations that the comparatively modest MIT was also offering, albeit at a more modest level.

The heavy power regulations of the 47 Labs PiTracer and the Wadia Reference Series 9 also served notice to the possible degree of improvement that the MIT Z Powerbar could muster. In the most unusual case of the RS9, the 921 mono DACs featured their own power supply design derived from the discontinued PowerDAC of 1999, the first Wadia design that incorporated a high-power version of the company's revolutionary Swift Current™ technology, and the only DAC in the audio industry thus far designed to drive a pair of loudspeaker directly, regardless of load. In this context, a considerable degree of advantage given supposedly by the MIT's power conditioning was likely preceded by the RS9 system's levels of superb power regulation in separate chassis, fully dedicated to provide the most sophisticated level of digital-to-analog conversion.

In retrospect, the Esoteric was a fun and terrific-sounding machine to use on its own, although side-by-side comparisons revealed the superiority of monoblock amplifiers twice as heavy and four to nine times costlier. More importantly, the fact that the Z Powerbar did not manifest its own character on the presentation was noteworthy, because for the half dozen power conditioners that had graced my system before the MIT, they all introduced their own coloration inadvertently.

From this experience, the MIT Z Powerbar proved itself to be the rare power conditioner type that was able to provide a very judicious degree of AC processing in the presence of equipment with heavy-duty power regulations, while becoming more effective, on the other hand, for equipment that would benefit from additional, external power conditioning.

For £1,999, the MIT Z Powerbar may not be the lowest-priced for the application of a power strip with spike and surge protection, but it becomes an exciting product when you factor-in the suite of applied technologies in the Z Powerbar. Then, by its non-additive nature to high-fidelity sound reproduction, the value of the Bruce Brisson-concoction jumps up several notches.

Besides, when a company of such longevity and engineering resources as MIT launches its first full- featured power conditioner, how can we not take note?