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GutWire Audio Cables G Clef Power Cable

Filters and Cables

Throw away your power amplifier's cheap electrical cord. We have what you might need instead.

Not happy with the sound of your system? Wondering whether a new amplifier or speaker might perk you up when you listen to music? Perhaps the ideal upgrade lies elsewhere.

On these pages we offer tests of three products: a filter for the electricity going to your power amplifier, a high end power cable, and a new version of a pure silver interconnect cable. Can they help? Read for yourself, and then try one out.

GutWire G-Clef power cord

The LC-2 filter, as you've noticed, replaces the power cord on an amplifier. But what if you just want a better power cord? We know the difference that can make. We previously reviewed such cords as the *Wireworld* Aurora and the *XLO* 10 (*UHF* No. 53). And a number of our readers have greatly improved their sound by simple making up their own power cords fitted with better connectors.

The *GutWire* G-Clef is a Canadian-made cable, with heavily-shielded wire and premium connectors. The AC plug is the famous hospital grade type from *Hubbell*, and the IEC 320 is from *Furutech* in Japan. If we tell you that the IEC connector by itself sells for C\$100, you'll understand why the price tag on the complete cable is not for the impoverished. The G-Clef costs \$380 (equivalent to \$299 US).

An unusual feature you may notice is a small wire coming off the output end of the cable,

with a small alligator clip on it. That's the ground wire...if you don't connect it to the chassis of the unit you are powering, the G-Clef is ungrounded.

Of course, authorities responsible for public safety, such as the CSA, are going to frown on this. Electrical appliances *must* be grounded unless they are double insulated, like certain power tools, HI-fi and home theatre systems, however, present, a special challenge to this *diktat*. Even a simple system can have eight different units, all of them (according to regulations) grounded through the third prong in the power outlet. But the eight units will also all be grounded to *each other* through their connecting cables. And that can be serious trouble.

The reason may not be immediately intuitive: if one connection to ground is good, how can two connections be bad?

If the connections were perfect there wouldn't be a problem, but in practice, each connection "looks" to the system like a small resistor. The double connection can allow noise and (especially) hum to travel along a chassis, jumping to another chassis where it can cause trouble.

We don't often run into the problem, but it can happen. For instance, the *YBA* CD-1 player (*UHF* No. 46) buzzed terribly until we installed an ungrounded power cord. The G-Clef lets you connect the clip if you want a ground or leave it off if it causes trouble.

Safety warning: there is a reason ungrounded appliances are not considered to be safe...they may not be. Let's say that, to prevent hum, you use an ungrounded power cord on your CD player. The player is grounded anyway, because it is connected to the amplifier which (we assume) is itself grounded. If you undo the audio connection, however, the chassis of player will now be floating. If the player has significant power line leakage to the chassis, you are now exposed to electric shock if you touch it. This may seem farfetched, but in Canada someone dies electrocuted nearly every day.

But on to the test.

The G-Clef is unlikely to pass unnoticed. Not only is it thick, but its outer jacket is bright red. The company says the jacket needs to be lose, because the cable "sounds" different if it is tightened. Its stiffness may preclude its use in some systems, because it requires considerable clearance behind the equipment. What's more, it may need to be supported. On our preamplifier, whose IEC connector is oriented horizontally, the G-Clef's weight actually pulled it out of the socket!

But the improvement due to a pair of these power cables is something else.

From earlier power cord tests we knew where to place them. If you have just one, put it on your DAC, or on your CD player. If you have a second one, put it on your preamplifier. That's what we did, after having listened

with the \$3 cords. The LC2 filter (which is now part of the system) remained on your amplifier.

"Just when you think you've reached the summit," said Reine, "there is something beyond. This time it's like cleaning out your ears" There was increased separation of the orchestral instruments in *The Song of the Nightingale*, and there was also more reverberation. That allowed us to hear what we couldn't hear before: for instance, at one point soprano Maria Bayo turns to her right while she is singing. The subtle but unmistakable alteration in the mix of direct sound and reverberation allowed us to visualize it.

Of course her voice was even clearer, and the bell (with

which she does a remarkable duet) was also clearer...and seemed to go on a little longer before dying away.

Amazing! And remember--these cables don't carry any audio, they merely give the equipment a better link to the power company.

On *Comes Love*, the strong 3-D effect was even clearer, each instrument emerging more clearly from the ensemble. The sound was improved over the entire range of audible frequencies. The clarinet played with humor and virtuosity, and we could have touched the sousaphone.

We're no longer using many \$3 cords, but we plan to

dump few that are left. "I challenge anyone to claim power cables don't matter," said Reine, finishing up her notes.

Follow-up

In *UHF* No. 58, we said the G-Clef power cord, with its alligator clip grounding cord, was ungrounded unless you used the clip. The company tells us we misinterpreted its literature...as we would have realized had we done an ohmmeter test.

In fact, the G-Clef's abundant shielding is connected at both ends. However there is a separate electrostatic shield on the outside of the cord, and it is which is connected to the clip. *GutWire* suggests experimenting with different grounding schemes.

CROSSTALK

Nobody should attempt to upgrade a component unless they've upgraded its power cable first. As a matter of fact, I doubt if manufacturers really know the full potential of their own designs until they have done so themselves.

Replacing the power cables on the converter and the preamp with the GutWire was a wonderful improvement, if not as spectacular as the first. These cables, the color of crushed strawberries, gave a deeper polish to the musical textures, revealing countless additional details and sweetening the whole listening experience. Fascinating.

--Albert Simon

After this test session, there can't be any possible doubt. You *have* to rid your electrical circuits of all possible noise. Like now.

As for the GutWires...They are half an inch thick, stiff, and colored a spectacular red. Not necessarily a synonym for beauty. Comfy in my

chair, I awaited the first recording, a little dubious. Could the result justify their price and their presence in my living room?

I've just emerged from my state of ecstasy, and I say *in petto* that, just when you think you've reached the summit, there's another mountain to climb, handhold by handhold, to finally reach the summit of the sublime. I've just lived the experience. I know--you've thinking that with my sensitivity and my emotion, I must be laying it on a little thick.

This time it was my ears that got cleaned out. What comfort! Almost unbelievable. There are so many attractive, subtle and vital details that add even more beauty to a musical work. I wasn't asking for more. You can't miss what you've never had. But having had it, I can't be happy with a notch below.

I *defy* anyone to deny this: a cable that sets up a direct line from your equipment to the electrical source can make an immense difference. I won't attempt to put it into technical

terms, though I've got my own ideas on this, but in music I believe I am capable of discernment. I know when I've had pleasure, how much pleasure I've had, and where the pleasure came from. These cables gave me pleasure that was unexpected.

--Reine Lessard

No surprises for me. I've been getting more and more disenchanted with what the power company sends us down their expensive lines. It's okay for the house lights, not okay for music.

Why does everyone still use \$3 cords?

The lesson is this: the power grid is not the strongest link in you hi-fi system.

--Gerard Rejskind