

Isotek Mini Sub GII



A reworking of Isotek's Mini power conditioner makes for greater definition and dynamics

Isotek Mini Sub GII	
PRICE	£500
SUPPLIER	Activ Distribution
CONTACT	01635 291357
WEBSITE	www.activdistribution.com

Just a year ago I reviewed Isotek's original Mini Sub and was highly impressed. It has now become the Mini Sub GII and boasts a substantial number of internal alterations – not to mention a new and rather snazzy 5mm-thick anodised stainless-steel front panel with laser-engraved badge work. The GII also has a sibling in the form of The Vision – an AV version of this power conditioner that has a slightly different filtration layout and which is available for £549. Both units are designed and built in the UK.

The internal changes include a custom-made choke with three times the original capacity, plus a new and larger circuitboard design. This has a ground plane upper surface that acts as a high-grade common mode filter across the whole board with the result that the unit acts as a true faraday cage, offering complete RFI isolation of the

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internal components. Surge protection for plugged-in components has been increased by stabilising the voltage and increasing the unit's absorption ability to a claimed figure of over 200%. Other alterations to the original design include complete star earthing to reduce further any cross contamination between components, and the suppression of the blue LED to eliminate high-frequency noise. All internal wiring is multi-strand silver-plated OFC with a PTFE dielectric.

One further modification concerns the fuses to the rear of the unit which are now accessible from the outside. This means there is no need ever to enter the unit. Otherwise, visually the Isotek retains the same layout and cosmetics, although

the plug sockets can now be rotated 180° to allow for differing location requirements.

While on the subject of cables I am pleased to note the Mini Sub is no longer cable sensitive, and braided cables no longer seem to provoke a slightly dulled feeling to the sound. The new series of 'gates' used have been calculated to give the filters a mathematically-correct operating environment under all conditions.

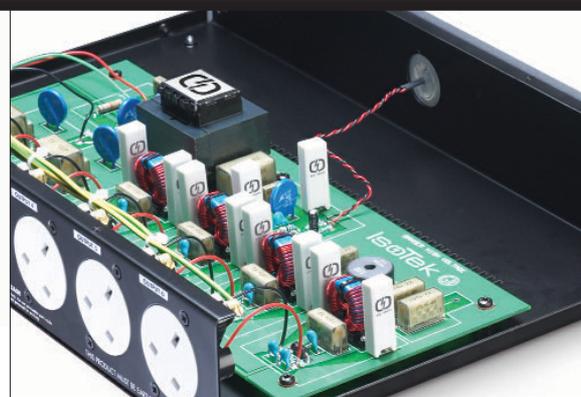
Apart from the cable compatibility, the GII seemed to work very satisfactorily with Naim equipment, something that the previous model didn't do so well. Activ Distribution advises me that this is partially due to the new gate design and the increase in choke size.

The sonic differences of all these technical changes were apparent from the moment the unit was plugged in. The immediate impression was that the relative volume had increased – a sensation I feel was more due to the perceived increase in dynamic range – and the greater definition given to the all-important gaps in between the notes. By this I mean that the stops and starts – ie the very rhythm of the music –

seemed to be more apparent, making the difference between sound and silence greater and therefore more effective.

As with most changes to a system, going back to a previous model makes differences more obvious, and this process made me aware of the comparable lack of bass weight and a previously unnoticed tendency to a slight bloom at certain frequencies when reverting to the Mark 1 design.

I have used a Mark 1 Mini Sub as part of one of my systems since I reviewed it because I felt it made a significant improvement to the sound of a hi-fi when compared to that of direct mains. I feel that the GII brings even greater improvements, to such an extent that I would urge any Mark 1



owners to visit investigate the retro-fittable upgrade at a cost of £275.

If you don't own a Mini Sub, then whether your system is old, new, grand or modest, I would unreservedly recommend auditioning one. It is one of the most effective units I have had the pleasure of using. ■

Tony Bolton

Technology

Power goes into the GII via the mains fuse. After this the high current (10A) feed is drawn off, sent through a filter, and then a delta filter (common-mode rejection between live and neutral/live and earth/earth and neutral) before arriving at outputs one and two. Outputs three to six receive current that has travelled via another fuse, a filter, a series of gates, another filter, and finally a delta filter before arriving at the sockets. These have a current capacity of 6.3A. As for its physical size, the G II Isotek measures 444 x 85 x 305mm (whd) and weighs 7kg.

Features

- Better isolation and filtration of power
- Increased perception of dynamic range
- More compatible with Naim Audio components