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Furutech Piezo Powerflux power cable review

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Specifications:

- 68-strand α (Alpha) OCC conductor, 0.127mm x 7 x 3 cores, 2.8mm diameter
- Insulation/Dielectric: Special Grade PE (Red/Natural/Yellow) 5.4mm diameter
- Inner Sheath: RoHS-compliant flexible PVC incorporating carbon powder
- Shield: 0.12mm diameter α (Alpha) Conductor wire braid
- Outer Sheath: RoHS-compliant flexible PVC (Purple/Red) 16.5mm diameter
- Jacket: Nylon braid approx. 17.5mm diameter

Part of the excitement of being an audiophile is the fun derived from browsing online classifieds. Within our respective budgets, we can have so much fun examining the various listed equipment from the laptop on your lap in a lazy Sunday afternoon. So many times I was bent on acquiring yet another piece of gear, from DACs to loudspeakers, when my wife put a restraining hand on my shoulder just in time. Sometimes the more research and reading I do, the more I appreciate what I have. Still, the classifieds gave me ideas bountiful for further research excursions.

As much as I endeavor to remind my fellow Dagogoans that they should use their unique position in the trade to avail themselves of a broad spectrum of equipment to experience and review, I am beginning to realize that it is psychologically debilitating to not engage in serious equipment purchase once in a while. As a fully-credentialed member of our addictive audio pursuit, I feel it is appropriate to invest back in the industry we cover.

The one classified product category that I have not surveyed for some time is power cables. Considering that a power cable represents the last meter and a half or two in the miles of long, industrial utility lines that lead from the power company to our AC outlets, spending thousands of dollars on power cables can seem irrational and wasteful. But just like everything else in our hobby, listening is the ultimate determinant of whether a product deserves attention or not. On

paper, the superior interface is supposed to preserve as much original information as possible while imparting minimal coloration to the sound. High-end AC cables should allow equipment to function at its optimum by providing the most pristine power possible. The waters are further muddied when different AC cable designs can be heard imparting differing sonics to the equipment they power.

Since the last time I published a review on a power cable, namely the Isoclean Super Focus & Supreme Focus in February 2007, I have auditioned no less than six power cables of various small and sometimes even unknown upstart operations. Some of these were designed and marketed by companies to complement their own amplifier or speaker lines, and some were primary products by specialty cable companies. While all sounded superior to generic power cords to widely varying degrees, these AC cables were all budget-priced and presented modest and inconsistent performances at best.

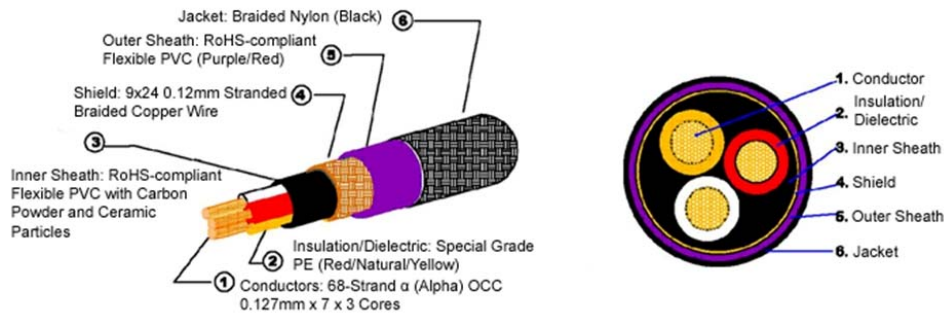
The comparison system I used featured three \$2,300 Isoclean Super Focus power cables, two feeding a pair of Pass Labs XA100.5 monoblock amplifiers directly from the AC outlets, and one feeding the Audio Note DAC5 Special via the Isoclean \$4,600 80A3 filter, in turn fed by their \$4,400 Supreme Focus power cable. Besides the Isoclean products I also have several Combak Harmonix Studio Master and Granite Audio #560 power cables at my disposal. Even as I found myself reluctant to review yet another power cord, the press release of Furutech's latest Piezo Powerflux power cable sent to me by Jonathan Scull of Scull Communications contained details unlike anything I had read from similar product offerings.

Being a sizeable operation in its own field, Furutech volunteers detailed information on its latest power cable for public examination, a most confident gesture as to be rare among its competitions. The Powerflux press release provides the following:

"Furutech Powerflux conductors are 68-strand α (Alpha) OCC strands with a special-grade PE insulation or dielectric. (Alpha conductors are fine OCC wire treated with Furutech™ Alpha Cryogenic and Demagnetizing process.) The dielectric is surrounded by an inner sheath of RoHS-compliant PVC incorporating carbon powder that enhances damping, and that in turn is covered by a full α (Alpha) conductor wire braid shield. Another flexible PVC outer sheath and a Nylon braid jacket finish the job.

The extraordinary FI-50 series connectors are a result of the meticulous way that Furutech engineers examine and improve each and every element of signal transfer using breakthrough technologies to reach their Pure Transmission Technology goal.

Furutech™ beautifully-finished FI-50(R) IEC and FI-50M(R) Piezo Ceramic series connector housings are made of multiple layers of carbon fiber in a damping and insulating acetal copolymer, surrounded by nonmagnetic stainless steel bands. The connector bodies combine two "active" materials: Nano-sized ceramic particles and powdered carbon. Nylon and fiberglass are incorporated as well forming an extremely effective, mechanically and electrically nonresonant connector body that may just be the most sophisticated in the world."



One technology that stands out from the others incorporated into the new Furutech power cable but not mentioned in the press release is the Ground Jumper System, now called the Floating Field Damper to better describe its function. According to Scull Communications, Furutech's U.S. public relations firm:

"Current flowing through a cable and its connector creates magnetic (and electrostatic) fields around them, building and collapsing 60 times per second in 120VAC systems. This magnetic field induces current flow -- electrical potential -- in small parts like the screws holding the connector shell together which have to be metal for tight clamping. The current flow in these small parts actually creates 'floating' magnetic fields around them, and they interfere with the cable/connector's larger surrounding magnetic field resulting in noise and distortion."

"The Furutech Floating Field Damper solves the biggest problem you never realized you had by star grounding the metal parts in which floating magnetic fields are induced by current flow. As represented in the images below, a precisely engineered, spring metal bridge in the connector body ties the various metal parts together and shunts whatever electrical potentials generated to ground. This significantly lowers noise by reducing distortion for ultra-clean and stable power transfer."

Scot Markwell of Elite AV Distribution, Furutech's U.S. Distributor, and Jonathan Scull each sent a Piezo Powerflux to me to facilitate a more complete user experience. My gratitude toward these two gentlemen for their gracious consideration.



The first Piezo Powerflux was assigned to the Audio Note DAC5 Special, and was at first auditioned without the second Powerflux in the system. Replacing the Isoclean Super Focus, which made the tube DAC less tube-like with increased dynamic contrasts and spectral extensions, the

Furutech Piezo Powerflux provided not as pronounced an improvement in dynamic contrast and spectral extension as a more pristine portrayal of soundstaging dimensionality and instrument tonality.

Take the JVC XRCD [Dotou Banri](#) disc by the group Ondekoza, for example, in track 5 “Yuki no Ashita (Snowy Morning)” which depicts a lone flutist treading in snow, the solemn mood amplified by the overlooking taiko drum. With the Isoclean SF powering the DAC5 Special, I was gratified to hear how the DAC could be transformed. On top of the level of gentleness that so many tube aficionados would pay thousands to have in a digital source, there was a force and punctuality no DAC I have heard, tube or solid-state, has managed heretofore in my experience. Via the Furutech, the presence of the flute was startling, with more ambience cues and low-level details than the Isoclean or any power cord I have used below \$4,200.

The Furutech’s presentation of piano solo playing was an altogether finer and richer portrayal of the stringed instrument’s intrinsic tonal makeup. When comparing the two digital recordings of the Chopin Ballades, one a 1999 Evgeny Kissin RCA Victor Red Seal redbook CD recorded in 20-bit, the other a 2004 hybrid SACD by the same company but remastered from a 1959 recording by the quintessential Chopinist Arthur Rubinstein via the DSD remastering process, the Furutech presented not the punchy dynamics of the Isoclean, sounding *slightly* softer on attacks and transitions, yet the overall effect was one of superior microdynamic rendition and a more continuous presentation. By contrast, the Isoclean fell short on the revelation of the harmonics as accorded by the Furutech. Essentially, the DAC5 Special sounded as if it was on steroids when powered by the Isoclean, putting forth stronger spectral extensions and dynamic contrasts, while the Furutech was feeding the DAC5 Special with vitamins and nutrients to make it work more smoothly, bringing out the best of the machine in its most original form, but with richer details and better harmonic information.

In a most unreal aspect, this ability of the Furutech to bring out the deeper tonality of recorded instruments was almost the equal of Isoclean’s \$4,200 Supreme Focus. To be fair, the Supreme Focus combined the million-dollar attributes of the Audio Note DAC5 Special in its beautiful tonality and powerful dynamics with the Pass Labs XA100.5 monoblocks’ high-precision spatial and textural makeup, thus injecting a system with finesse and force. The Furutech came closer to the \$4,200 competition than all other cables I have auditioned for less than half the cost.

It was the combined workings of the two Piezo Powerflux cables in the Audio Note DAC5 Special and the Pass Labs X0.2 preamplifier system (3 chassis) that captured unequivocally the incredible nuances of the two machines working in tandem. Within the abundance of details that flowed from the DAC5 Special were super dynamics and dazzling tonalities that the two power cables were purveying onward to the X0.2, as was evident later most delicately by the preamplifier as well. It was as if a new level of communication was established between the source and the preamplifier because of the Furutechs.

It was thus interesting to see how the Furutechs also assumed duty in feeding the aforementioned Pass Labs monoblocks to satisfactory but not consummating performances. With the Furutech cords, the monoblocks did become more accomplished-sounding, with richer musicality and spatiality, giving the reproduction of solo instruments an additional degree of listener involvement not heard from the Isoclean Super Focus. A deeper tonal sophistication was conjured up from the XA100.5’s by the Furutech cords in the Master Music label’s XRCD24 disc [Touching Folklore Music Masterpiece](#), in which the monoblocks’ newfound ability to hone in the beautiful tonal characteristics of the guitar absolutely captivated me. Piano aside, the sound of the guitar is perhaps the most prevalent in our collective memory, and yet I haven’t heard a guitar sounding so magnetic in texture and rich in spatial attributes as with the Furutech cables installed. I want to know what guitar Mr. Suzuki used for the recording.

However, the advantage of the Furutech's in driving the Pass Labs at once receded in comparison with the Isoclean Super Focus, especially where driving the Rockport Mira Grand II loudspeaker system is concerned, although the Isoclean could not compare with the Furutech in powering the DAC5 Special and X0.2.

Whereas the comparably priced Isoclean would induced the most contrasting dynamics from the monoblocks, the Furutech cables went their own way in persistently retrieving low-level details and complex tonal shadings from the amplifiers. With the two Furutech Piezo Powerflux, the monoblocks sounded a little cleaner and more harmonically coherent, but not as muscular and vivid as what the two Isoclean Super Focus always made them sound. I suppose with such power, I really ought not seek more muscle from the Pass Labs but more finesse and infinitesimally layered sound as found via the Furutech cables. Still, for the majority of readers, unless your speakers ultra-efficiency and sound explosive on a 3-watt amplifier, hence rendering the case for using the Isoclean Supreme Focus moot, I will delegate the Isoclean to feeding hungry amplifiers of real-world speakers and the Furutech Piezo Powerflux as the perfect companion for source equipment. For readers not using a preamplifier, perhaps the colossal investment in the \$4,200 Isoclean Supreme Focus for the digital player would be most rewarding; but for the rest of us requiring a preamplifier, investing in two of the Furutech Piezo Powerflux cables will yield sonic dividends that are still more affordable than the one Isoclean. Recommended.

As for myself, I continue to receive power cables from companies that just wanted a comment or two from me, and the Furutech experience reaffirmed what I have been feeling all along: Power cables of competent designs are abundant, while those of solid technological content, superior workmanship and groundbreaking performance are few and far between. I await the next power cable design that will excite me the way the Furutech did.