

## Furutech NCF Booster: Not just a supporting role



**The audio world is littered with weird accessories that cost a bomb and do little. One could be tempted to categorise the Furutech NCF Booster as one of those – but as it turns out, there’s more to this support/damping system than meets the eye**

By now, even the most cynical audio enthusiasts will agree that cables and interconnects can have an effect on the sound of a system. That’s simply because the enhanced conductivity of a well-designed audio cable, and its ability to reject noise and interference through improved shielding, has to pay sonic dividends.

It’s also true that different cable designs, conductor materials and shielding methods lead to different sonic results – and not always positive ones in the context of a specific system. If the concept of an ideal cable is one that conveys the original signal from end to end unmolested, then too many cables still add an own, specific signature.

End-users may use these inherent traits to fine-tune overall system performance, or to make up for system shortcomings, but it’s a path fraught with compromise. Instead, it would be better to opt for cables and interlinks that get closest to ensuring signal integrity, so that the true performance of a system and its components can be identified and (hopefully) enjoyed.

### **AT FACE VALUE**

But what about an accessory that seeks to enhance what’s already there? The Furutech NCF Booster is just such a device. It aims to improve audio system performance by addressing the potential interaction between cables and their immediate environment.

More specifically, it combines cable support and damping functions in a single, elegantly simple device.

The NCF Booster looks like a broad clamp, located on a heavy base via a pair of extendable stainless steel shafts. The bottom part of the clamp has fasteners that allow it to be fixed at any point along the shafts. The top part fits snugly over it, and is fixed via a pair of rubber O-rings.

The NCF Booster can be used to lift thick power and speaker cables from the floor, and to support power cables at the wall plug and/or component receptacle ends. You'll need quite a few to achieve this in a typical system.

### **UNDER THE COVERS**

Besides supporting cables, Furutech claims that the NCF Booster performs a damping function by virtue of the NCF (Nano-Crystal2 Formula) material it's constructed from. According to Furutech, the proprietary compound generates negative ions, which eliminate static. It also converts thermal energy into far infrared.

In the Booster, NCF is combined with tiny, nano-sized ceramic particles and carbon fibre which add piezo-electric damping properties to the device, allowing a high degree of electrical and mechanical damping.

If you want a more detailed description, you can find it on the Furutech website [here](#).

Frankly, I was sceptical about just how effective the NCF Booster would be in practice. That despite the fact that the device has been a huge seller in Japan since being launched last year, delaying its availability in other markets, while being showered with praise from various quarters.



NCF Booster promises damping and support functions

### **SETTING UP**

I received an array of six NCF Boosters, and decided to kick off by using three to stabilise the power cables at the component receptacle ends of the Naim Uniti2 (used as a pre-amp), the PS Audio Stellar S300 power amp, and the PS Audio DirectStream DAC in my system.

The remaining three NFC Boosters were then used to support the power cables running from the PS Audio P5 power regenerator to the components in the system. The need for height adjustment became very apparent in practice, as it allowed the cables to be lifted well off the floor while also ensuring optimum alignment with the power receptacles of both the P5 and the various system components.

Later, I used four boosters to elevate the speaker cables from the floor, with the two remaining units on the Uniti2 and the Stellar S300. And finally, I moved those two boosters from the Naim and the Stellar, and used them to elevate the power cables.

Each time, I listened to a selection of tracks without the Furutech boosters, then with them positioned in the system, and then again with the devices removed.

I expected the differences to be subtle, if audible at all, so what followed came as a bit of shock!

### **SOUNDS LIKE ...**

In the first configuration, with the focus on the power receptacles and power cables, the sound was immediately more lucid and accessible. The staging width increased, and there the sound picture provided a clearer view of the music, specifically as far as the finer nuances were concerned.

On 'Mama You Been On My Mind' from Bettye LaVette's latest release, Things Have Changed, Bettye's vocals gained additional traction and colour. The simple piano accompaniment was presented with greater impact, and the subtle electric guitar in the background was more prominent, but without disturbing the delicate balance and cohesion of the music.

But the most marked difference, at least in my system, was the extension of the tonal range, specifically in the lower frequency region. Bass notes were recreated with greater urge and intensity, and the music image gained a more solid tonal foundation.

The percussion on 'The Times They Are A-Changing' was presented with real impact, and the electric bass gained extra heft and slam, but with a level of definition that allowed the fuzz-edged solo guitar and LaVette's seasoned vocals to shine with a particularly appealing glow and clarity.



Shafts can be lengthened with screw-in extensions

The mix of Cuban big band Orquesta Akokán's live, warts-and-all eponymous debut is a good test of system resolution, given the sheer breadth of musical action packed into two channels. From exuberant trumpets to swinging trombones, from intricately rendered percussion to an eloquent bass, and a full cast of enthusiastic vocalist, this is a performance filled to the brim with sound.

Again, the NCF Boosters expanded the stage to more easily accommodate the often frenetic musical action, benefiting overall insight and enjoyment. The lower registers gained additional muscle and definition, while the trebles seemed cleaner and more focussed.

'Your Mind Is On Vacation' from Holly Cole's latest release, <Holly>, features the Canadian jazz singer's sensuous vocals against a backdrop of deep, driving bass, some snappy percussion, and an engrossing interplay between piano and electric keyboards.

Here, the bass was really lifted by the NCF Boosters, gaining both impact and definition, and allowing the rest of the arrangement to come to the fore with greater tonal range and clarity. The result was a better balanced, more accessible sound and ultimately more engaging sound.

The NCF Booster added authority and stature to Ivo Pogorelich's insightful readings of Mozart's piano sonatas K283 and K331, allowing the full majesty of the piano to come to the fore. There were some gains in dynamics and imaging, too, but again, it was the foundation and the substance of the music that benefited most.

The results were less pronounced when I moved some of the boosters away from the power cords to lift the speaker cables. Yes, the soundstage still gained accessibility, and there was an enhanced cohesion to the delivery, but the succinctness and extended tonal range was less noticeable.

## **THE BOTTOM LINE**

Thus, I have to conclude that, in this particular system, the power feeds benefited most from the NCF Boosters' presence – and more so than I would have believed. Clearly, the NCF resin's damping properties and anti-static properties aren't only significant, but also benefit ultimate sonic performance.

Of course, the NCF Boosters also tidy up cable runs, and ensure more secure power cord connections at the component receptacle end. And their adjustable height means they can adapt to a wide range of applications.

The price remains the only obstacle. R5 000 a piece seems like a lot of money, especially when you probably need a least a half-dozen. But then, many audiophiles spend that, and more, on a single speaker cable run or interlink set.

In that context, the Furutech NCF Booster represents a fascinating and effective upgrade to high-end systems. –

**DEON SCHOEMAN**

## **PROS**

Reduce noise, add transparency and improve tonal depth – yes really!

## **CONS**

A typical system needs at least six, if not more – and they aren't exactly cheap.

## **VITAL STATS**

**Construction:** NCF nylon resin base and clamps, stainless steel locating shafts

**Base unit:** ABS resin body with counterweighted shock-absorbing plate

**Support unit:** ABS resin and NCF nylon resin

**Top clamp unit:** stainless steel block and NCF nylon resin

**Dimensions:** 94 x 99,7 mm

**Height:** base level – 80 mm. Extended level -140 mm

## **PRICE**

R5 000 each

## **SUPPLIED BY**

**The Audio Visual Boutique**

## **TESTED WITH**

Vivid Audio V1.5 loudspeakers

PS Audio DirectStream DAC with Bridge II

Esoteric UX-3SE universal player

Avid Diva II SP turntable

Sutherland 20/20 phono stage

Naim Uniti2 all-in-one player

PS Audio Stellar S300 power amp

PS Audio P5 power regenerator

TelluriumQ Black, Nordost Tyr and XLO Reference cables and interlinks

Electrocompaniet PI-2D integrated amp

Synology DS213+ NAS

## **SOFTWARE**

Bettye Lavette – *Things Have Changed* (Verve 44/16 FLAC)

Holly Cole – *Holly* (Universal DSD64)

Mozart – *Piano Sonatas K283 and K331* – Ivo Pogorelich (DG 44/16 FLAC)

Orquesta Akokán – *Orquesta Akokán* (Daptone 44/16 FLAC)