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AN APPOINTEMENT WITH DIGITAL ACCURACY

— Playback Designs MPS-8 CD/SACD Player



Rhythm & Music: Classical, Blues, Jazz, Progressive Rock

FINE DETAILED RESOLUTION AND MUSICAL ACCURACY

By **GEORGE DE SA**

I'm a firm believer in using high quality cables in an audio system yet, I don't believe they are the priority. The components of the system come first and along with them, the room and basic setup – these are the main ingredients... the meat and potatoes. The next thing is the seasoning and good quality cables are just that... the salt and pepper but to tailor the audio dish to one's tastes and make it unforgettable, delving into the spices is a must... enter the high-end cabling. Here there's no hard and fast rules. Yes, the cables should be in-keeping with the overall system quality and price; however, critical listening is must in deciding whether a cable product does deliver on the value proposition. With that in mind, let me introduce you to a couple products from Furutech Co., Ltd. (Furutech) I've just auditioned: their flagship Power Reference III power cable and the GTO-D3 NCF(R) Distributor.

The Power Reference III is **Furutech's** flagship power cable product, incorporating all the company knows about cable architecture, materials, and construction. As a flagship product, it is aimed at showcasing the highest possible performance that **Furutech** can deliver in a power cable. The Reference III was introduced about 15 years ago and so is not a new product but it has received several accolades over the years and is still today the ultimate power cable offering from **Furutech**. Now, the GTO-D3 NCF(R) Distributor, is a recent **Furutech** product, launched in 2021. It sits as one of **Furutech's** latest passive power blocks and aims to ensure optimized and unimpeded power transfer. The GTO-D3 NCF(R) incorporates several of **Furutech's** proprietary power performance innovations at a cost-effective price. A prime objective of the GTO-D3 NCF(R), as a passive product, is optimizing power distribution without impeding flow.

The Manufacturer

For those unfamiliar with **Furutech**, the company hails from Japan, the land of the rising sun, headquartered in Shinagawa-Ku, Tokyo. **Furutech** was founded back in 1988 and both designs and manufactures a full range of cable products and accessories, including some audio electronic products. The com-

pany differentiates its cable products with a couple proprietary elements. The first is their two-stage *Alpha (a) Cryogenic and Ring Demagnetization* process, which is employed in their conductors to minimize noise and distortion. Second, is **Furutech's** in-house developed *Nano Crystal² Formula (NCF)* that is purported to enhance performance in a number of ways.

Let's Get More Specific AC Power Cord

Getting deeper into the technical features of these products, the *Power Reference III* cable incorporates **Furutech's** top of the line double-shielded *α (Alpha)-OCC* conductors. *Alpha* is a two-stage process that begins with a deep cryogenic freeze of all metal parts at between -196 to -250° C. **Furutech** states the cryo treatment bonds the molecules tighter, making the structure more stable, relieving internal stress and improving electrical conductivity.

The next stage in the *Alpha Process* is a *Ring Demagnetization*

treatment, which is said to use controlled attenuation to eliminate magnetization, further enhancing conductivity and improving vividness. **Furutech** holds that the *Alpha Process* works with the other design-in features to optimize AC power transfer and maximize several performance attributes. The copper used in the *Alpha Process* is *PC-OCC*, known for its performance advantages. The *Alpha* conductors are double-shielded and a *Formula GC-303* antimagnetic *EMI*-absorbent module surrounds a 2 ¾-inches section of the cable, intended to promote greater resolution and dynamics.

Furutech uses their *FI-25(R)* and *FI-25M(R)* rhodium-plated connectors with their patented ground/earth jumper technology and unique wire-clamping for improved (**Furutech Pure Transmission**) signal transfer. Three 49-strand (0.32mm/strand, 2.5mm/core) *Alpha-OCC* conductor cores are covered in irradiated *PE* insulation that reduces capacitance. The conductor bundle runs twin ultra-flexible lead-free *PVC* sheaths, the inner of which is carbon particle impregnated to suppress vibration.



The GTO-D3 NCF(R) Distributor

Let's now move to the technical aspects of the *GTO-D3 NCF(R) Distributor*. It is a passive power block with three in-line arranged dual-plug receptacle banks (6 outlets). All is independently star-wired with **Furutech's** high-purity μ -OFC Alpha-22 (3.8 Sq. mm) wire. Double layer FEP-fluoropolymer and polyethylene insulation shroud the conductor. The receptacles have rhodium plated non-magnetic phosphor bronze contacts and are insulated with RoHS compliant audio grade nylon/fiberglass with **Furutech's** own Nano Crystal² Formula (NCF).

NCF is an anti-static and anti-resonance material formed with nano-sized crystalline, piezo ceramic particles and carbon damping material. The *GTO-D3 NCF(R)* body and cover also incorporates NCF. Its chassis is of CNC machined aluminum with a special FEP damping foil to shield against RFI, while a layer of Formula GC-303 is bonded to the

bends as needed. Though garden hose thick, they only modestly resisted with twisting torque. The straight black tech-flex outer covering seemed durable as did the connectors, which had **Furutech's** typical over-built pins. Yet, the *Reference III* power cable are rather unadorned but for their 2 3/4-inches aluminum hexagon cylinder modules, their only extroverted expression. Those modules get extra care as well, with **Furutech** shipping the cables with elegant emerald-green, gold-embroidered velvet slip covers in place.

What did I have to work with?

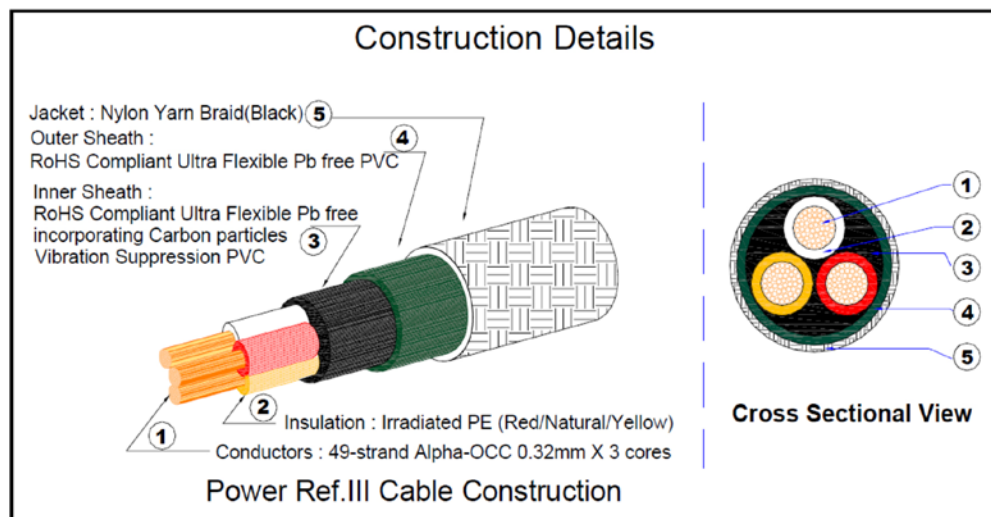
For this review, I was provided with two 1.8 m *Power Reference III* cables, one *GTO-D3 NCF(R) Distributor* and a 1.5 m **Furutech** FP-S35TC8/FPFI-28(R) custom power cable. The two *Reference III* cables were used to connect my **Bryston 7B³** mono-block power amplifiers to the

providing greater insight on the recording, while providing detail in a manner that was musically rewarding, thus, relaying the beauty of the music without clinical dissection. This resulted in very engaging listening sessions.

The **Furutech** *Power Reference III* cables presented soundstages in a very defined and clear manner, without flattening the soundstage but rather, preserving depth and layering. Imaging was precise and rock-solid, yet the *Reference III* didn't achieve this with cookie-cutter hard outlines but instead embodied the images with roundness, providing a sense of dimension, from left-to-right as well as front-to-back. The *Power Reference III* cables seemed to land right on that *Goldilocks* region, between ruthless-transparency and musical realism. Across the many tracks I listened to the *Power Reference III* cables consistently convinced me of their ability to deliver clarity and palpable nuance.

While listening to Ashley Monroe's, *Hands on You* from her album *Sparrow* via **Tidal HiFi**, not only was **Ashley's** voice rendered with delicacy and resolution, but the decay of the echo was also fully preserved. Too often echo and reverb comes with brightness and highlighting; however, that isn't the case with the *Power Reference III*; which instead provide insightful detail and completeness in the absence of treble emphasis. The treble always sounded extended, while at the same time both smooth and natural. Imaging was precise and layered, and bass notes on this track were tight, snappy and extended. The *Power Reference III* cables produced the rolling electric bass notes with appealing articulation and extension. On **Brandi Disterheft's**, *Prelude to the Crippling Thrill* also from **Tidal HiFi**, the *Reference III* cable did a superb job revealing the micro resonances of the upright bass, from the woody body to the strings. The instrument timbre, articulation, inflection, and dynamics were all notable strengths of the *Power Reference III* cables.

Moving to the track *The Shape of My Heart*, from **Dominic Miller's** *Shapes* album, again the treble notes were precise yet with no apparent etch or glazing – satin would apply here. **Sting's** voice was well focused and resolved as well as centrally locked and images presented themselves with buoyancy; the illusion of dimension and placement well developed within the soundstage. Timbral accuracy, timing and impact was



chassis bottom-plate to absorb EMI generated by the internal fittings.

Furutech's uses their top-end audio grade IEC inlet, the FI-09 NCF(R) in the *GTO-D3*. The three receptacles are each secured independently to chassis with their own **Furutech** GTX Wall Plate and top-of-the-line 106-D NCF cover. Care is taken right down to the feet, with piezo nano-ceramic and carbon damping isolator footers employed. The *GTO-D3 NCF(R)* weighs in at 3.2 kg.

Back to the AC Power Cord

The construction of both the *Reference III* power cables and the *GTO-D3* were very robust, and exuding quality in their fit-and-finish. The *Reference III* power cables were unexpectedly flexible, allowing curves and

GTO-D3 NCF(R) Distributor, which was in-turn connected to the wall outlet with the 1.5 m **Furutech** custom cable. Since my existing wall outlet plug is a **Furutech** GTX-D NCF(R) dual receptacle, on a 20A dedicated circuit, I had a full **Furutech** power chain to put to test. My **Pangea AC-9 MkII** power cables were used for comparison purposes.

The Listening Sessions

Listening to the **Furutech** *Power Reference III* cables with the *GTO-D3 (NCF)* in my system instantly demonstrated their proficiency for delivering impressive inner detail in the absence of unnatural highlighting or emphasis. It was obvious that the *Reference III* power cables were revealing,

« I love the track *New York* from **Cat Power's** *Jukebox* album. The dynamic prowess of the *Power Reference III* cables was well proved on this track, the **Furutech** cables delivering the opening kick-drum hits with punch and shudder... »

the sound of the guitar solo through the *Power Reference III*, yet a switch to the **Pangea AC-9 Mk II** demonstrated their comparative bloomy and ripe character. The **Furutech Reference III** balanced accuracy and detail retrieval with naturalness and musicality, treading the path between warmth and coolness so well.

I love the track *New York* from **Cat Power's** *Jukebox* album. If you haven't heard it, don't wait... time to add it to your play list. The dynamic prowess of the *Power Reference III* cables was well proved on this track, the **Furutech** cables delivering the opening kick-drum hits with punch and shudder. **Cat's** voice was open and airy, clear was a bell with the echo of the recording communicated fully. The amazing height of the soundstage, with **Cat** singing down on the audience was also splendidly done by the *Reference III*, via the **Pangea**, there was less on almost all counts except bass weight. However, though the ultimate sense of weight favoured the *AC-9*, the *Reference III* was clearly ahead in articulation, speed, and dynamic impact. I gave attention to the *GTO-D3 (NCF)* to determine just what it was bringing to the fight. I compared using the *GTO-D3* vs. connecting the *Power Reference III* cable directly to my *GTX-D NCF(R)* wall receptable. What I found was that with the *GTO-D3* in-play, the presentation was smoother, more liquid and might I say, more organic. With the track *New York*, there was less apparent quieter soundstage, the high frequencies somewhat subdued resulting in an increase in image separation – not so much more space between but more individualization. On the track *Earned It* by **The Weekend**, the effect was similar. The overall resonance and echo of the track was subdued drawing more attention to the bass. The midrange was smoother, making voices sound a little more corporeal, though with some shading of micro-detail. The effect on the soundstage was akin to turning down the flood lights, while leaving the spotlight on the performer. With the soundstage blacker, more attention was drawn to the performers. These effects were subtle, in combination with the *GTX-D* outlet, yet still noticeable. There greatest value is that the *GTO-D3* allows **Furutech NCF** benefits to be achieved across multiple components.

All in all, here are my conclusions

The **Furutech Power Reference III** cables and *GTO-D3 NCF(R)* *Distributor* were both welcome additions to my system. Given my own needs and preferences, the *Reference III* cables were a standout high performer. While apart from already having the *GTX-D (NCF)* wall receptable, the *GTO-D3* allows the benefits of **Furutech's** *NCF* technology to extend to multiple system components. I would recommend auditioning both products; however, I found the *Power Reference III* cables were exceptional in the skillful manner that they combine fine detail resolution and accuracy with realistic touch, tone, timbre, and musicality. Though not a new product, the *Power Reference III* still stands strong against the competition and a top performer among power cables I've auditioned.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Furutech (Juin 2022) Pricing :

Power Reference III Power Cable

1,8 m length: 1 797 \$ CAD

GTO-D3 NCF(R) Distributor : 2 097 \$ CAD

Distributor : Audiyo Inc., T. : 416.704.0105, <https://www.audiyo.com>

Mediagraphy

Ashley Monroe, Sparrow, Tidal HiFi

Brandi Disterheft, Prelude to the Crippling Thrill, Tidal HiFi

Dominic Miller, Shapes

Cat Power, Jukebox

The Weeknd, Fifty Shades of Gray