

Furutech NCF Boosters Review

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By Fred Crowder

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Furutech has a new cable riser, named the Booster, which utilizes the company's Nano Crystal Formula (NCF) technology. I have been using Furutech NCF outlets, outlet covers and power cable connectors for quite a while and consider them a significant upgrade to my reference system.

Nano Crystal Formula is an active anti-resonance damping material. It features a mixture of crystalline material claimed to have two active properties: 1) it generates negative ions that eliminate static electricity, and 2) it converts thermal energy into infrared. (I understand this to mean that vibration is effectively converted to heat, which is then dissipated into the environment.) Furutech then combines this crystalline material with nano-sized ceramic particles and carbon powder for added piezoelectric damping properties using resin as the binding element.

The units come packed one to a box and do require some assembly. There is a base with H-shaped feet to provide stability. The base also has a metallic rod on each side, which can be lengthened by removing them from the base and adding additional stainless steel sections. Mounted on these rods is a movable cradle incorporating a resin containing the NCF material and ceramic particles. The cradle has a knurled knob on each side, which allows the user to secure the height of the cradle on the rods. Also mounted on the rods is a top piece that helps secure the cable in the device, and

two elastomeric damping rings. While the Boosters on their own reduce noise and improve the sound, the addition of the damping rings gives a more solid, organic and transparent presentation allowing a deeper view into the soundstage. This may sound somewhat complicated, but assembly is in reality very easy and takes about five minutes per Booster.

Much has been written about devices designed to elevate audio cables and power cords above the floor. Likewise, various arguments have been advanced about whether these devices work and, if so, why. My own experience gained over a rather lengthy period is that such devices can in almost all instances have a beneficial effect on the sound of an audio system, depending on a number of factors, including 1) the material from which the cable booster is made, 2) whether and how a particular cable/power cord is insulated/shielded, and 3) the flooring material on which the cable would otherwise rest. In general, unshielded cables show the greatest benefits from supporting devices, particularly when the flooring material is a synthetic fiber and is prone, particularly in the winter, to generate static electricity. Likewise, unshielded ribbon cables, such as those manufactured by Nordost, show a significant sonic benefit from being raised off the floor. In addition, cable risers designed like the Furutech Boosters have the added advantage of effectively managing and physically supporting unwieldy cables as well as providing damping of vibrations induced in the cable either from the flow of electrons through the cable or from vibrations in the environment. These vibrations can cause what I think of as “smearing” of the sound.



For a number of years I have used ceramic isolators similar to those used as high voltage isolators on utility poles and have in general been very happy with them. However, given the opportunity to audition the Furutech NCF Boosters, I did so readily, not really expecting any real improvement. *I was wrong!*

So what exactly do they sound like? Or, more to the point, what effect did they have on the sound of my system?

First, a few words about system configuration and placement of the Furutech NCF Boosters. My system is designed around Acapella Triolon Excalibur speakers, which are quite large and dominate one end of the listening room. Each is tri-wired with Jorma Prime speaker wire. Each of these sets of wire required three Boosters. Between the speakers are a pair of MTRX mono block amplifiers, each of which has a massive power cord running to a Furutech wall outlet. Each cord is currently suspended on ceramic isolators. The amps are connected to an Audio Note M-10 Line (Special Edition) preamp by a 2.5 meter run of balanced Jorma Prime, each leg of which required two Boosters. The preamp in turn is connected to my Ypsilon phono stage with Jorma Prime and then to a Ypsilon step up transformer and ultimately my Rockport Sirius turntable/Lyra Atlas SL cartridge with Nordost Odin 2 cables. Each of these is suspended in the air so no support was possible. In addition, there is an EMM Labs TX2 Transport connected to an EMM DA2 digital-to-analog converter with proprietary fiber optic cabling. Again, Jorma

Prime is running from the DA2 to the preamp but is in the air. AC cords are all from Stage



III, either Minotaur or Kraken. All are heavy and unwieldy and benefit from Boosters; however, I again am awaiting additional Boosters after having employed a total of fourteen thus far. So far, ten Boosters are in the system supporting the speaker wires and interconnects. Later, I will discuss an additional four Boosters that are being used under power cables.

In my system, the NCF Boosters increased resolution of detail and air at the upper frequencies and reduced noise and distortion. The effect was reduced fatigue and a more pleasant listening experience with digital media. The soundstage appeared to have greater volume with improved



depth and somewhat better localization of instruments on the stage. There seemed to be less emphasis of the recording technique and more emphasis on the instrument. The lowering of distortion was initially heard as a slight softening of highs and leading edges; however, listening over time convinced me that the sound was more consonant with what I hear at live performances. Midrange may have subjectively sounded a bit warmer. On music containing massed strings, there was a greater sense of the sound being produced by individual players in a section. Dynamics are excellent, particularly at the soft end of the spectrum. Overall, the sound was closer to

what I hear at a concert hall and less like a recording – more natural and less artificial. I do want to stress that while some of these changes were subtle, they were clearly audible.



Rather late in the review, after speaking with the importer, I realized that I had been focusing on one aspect of Booster usage but had completely ignored what the manufacturer considers their main engineered use, which is to stabilize AC plugs both at the wall and at the IEC input of components. If you are like me and use AC cords that have much in common with an adult anaconda, you have experienced the joy of having a connector pull out of a wall outlet or the IEC inlet on a component. Even when the connection is not broken, you wonder whether the electrical contact is being compromised. In order to explore this use with AC plugs, I purchased four additional Boosters.

One was employed at the wall to support a Stage III Kraken at the point where the Kraken plugs into the Furutech outlet. The Booster acts much like a vise gripping the male electrical plug to support the weight of the cord and secure the connection. One of the remaining Boosters was placed at the input of my HB Marble Powerslave where the IEC connector goes into the Powerslave. Again, it gripped the connector providing a much firmer connection. The two remaining Boosters are supporting the weight of Stage III Krakens providing power to the mono power supplies for my Audio Note M-10 SE preamp preventing the plugs from being pulled by the weight of the power cords from the component at one end and the Powerslave at the other. Based on additional listening, I can say that clamping the plugs at the wall and on the backs of components truly does improve the sound of a system in much the same way that using them as cable risers accomplishes, as well as improving the quality of the bass in exactly the way that you would expect a more secure electrical connection to accomplish.

In any event, I purchased the review samples and then turned around and ordered additional units. Very highly recommended.

Copy editor: Dan Rubin

USA Furutech Distributor's Comment:

Both Furutech of Japan and I would like to thank Mr. Crowder and Dagogo for the opportunity given us at Elite AV Distribution to submit for review Furutech's latest system-enhancing product, the NCF Boosters.

Mr. Crowder heard very quickly and easily the improvement in his system with the use of the Boosters, and described their effect quite clearly and succinctly. There is little more to add here other than to note that since the release of the original NCF Boosters, Furutech has started shipping the NCF Signal Booster, which is intended to provide a similar stabilizing and dampening effect to the RCA and/or XLR audio signal cables where they attach to components.

We feel that these products will allow enthusiasts to easily improve and fine-tune their systems to provide an increased enjoyment of music reproduction in the home.

Thanks again for this great review of the Furutech NCF Boosters.

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