

Nordost QPoint harmonisers and QSource power supply

by Alan Sircom

Although several cable brands have branched out into other fields in audio, Nordost was the first to extend its coherent cable ethos out to products that work throughout a good audio system. These have included QRT power purifiers, distribution, cones, feet, and risers, treatments, discs, and more recently grounding devices. QPoint resonance harmonisers and the QSource linear power supply that feeds them (and other devices) take things a stage further.

QPoint addresses the problem that every powered component has an electromagnetic resonance; in essence, it hums along with the juice. The significance and intensity of that resonance varies from part to part, but it's always a non-zero figure, and when you think of the number of elements in a single audio device all quietly humming different tunes, it's not hard to imagine just how much that gets in the way of the sound of your system. You can't eliminate that resonance so, as the name suggests, QPoint acts to harmonise or synchronise that resonance, by placing a thin puck-shaped device in line with the most component-rich part of an audio device. If you are unwilling to pop open the lid and take a look inside, Google is your friend here; look at an internal photograph of your product, find the bit of the circuit board that has the most components and place the QPoint there. QPoints emit what Nordost coyly calls 'a subtle field' that brings the resonance of each element in line. Before you start guffawing at the back, think of it this way; get a dozen mechanical metronomes, set them to the same tempo, wind them up, and set them off, but not all at once. You start with discord, but the metronomes quickly synchronise; one dominant metronome defines the beat, and the more submissive ones follow along, like some bizarre rhythmic BDSM session. The QPoint produces the dominant resonance, and its field brings all those components within a device into lock-step. There are two different field effects that you should experiment with to see which works best in your system. Typically, a system responds to 'all Type I' or 'all Type II' (the LED at the front of the QPoint indicates which of the two field types is operating, and there's a toggle switch to move between them). However, in some larger pre/power systems, the sources and preamp respond best to Type I and the power amps Type II. You should aim to use one QPoint per device eventually.



As standard, the QPoints come with 5V 'wall-wart' switch-mode power supplies and Lemo connectors. However, Nordost also designed the QSource linear power supply to give the system a bit of a boost. QSource features six Lemo connectors, with a high-performance transformer, and QRT treatment that delivers smoother, cleaner DC to those six outputs. While this might seem like gilding the lily for the QPoints, two of the six outputs can be configured to deliver power to other devices that rely on switch-mode supplies. The most obvious candidate at this price point is Roon's Nucleus, but those who use ▶

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PRICES AND CONTACT DETAILS

Nordost QPoints: £690 each

Nordost QSource: £2,300

Manufactured by: Nordost

URL: nordost.com

Distributed by: Renaissance Audio

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- ▶ smaller phono stages, DACs, or headphone amps can also apply. The QSource requires a proper power cord (naturally) and has a grounding connector to attach into a QKore system.

Predictably, I got QPoints dead wrong at first; placing the QPoint under a power supply of a device does lower the noise floor of that device, but that's only a fraction of what it can do. Fortunately, I made the bold, emasculating step of reading the instructions and tried again. The sense of bringing the whole system production together is palpable. It's like 'blueprinting' and 'balancing' an engine, where an engineer re-builds an engine to the tightest possible tolerances, using components made as produced, only more optimally. In a similar manner, QPoints bring exactness and focus to the sound.

In most cases, the first and most immediately identifiable change to the sound is its coherence; the music sounds more 'right' and musicians sound more like they are playing together with QPoints in place. After that, you tend to notice an increased sense of dynamic freedom to the sound, a little like your amp and loudspeakers increased in size and power handling. This isn't 'wayward', but more precisely controlled, with more broad, dynamic force.

The more integrated and complex the unit, the more significant the change; I used it to excellent effect with a Melco M10 and the Mark Levinson No 5805 integrated amp also tested in this issue. In any setting (including those mentioned above), the change is quick and easy to hear – a minute of the title track from Nils Frahm's *All Melody* [Erased Tapes] or the Sibelius Piano Trio playing the first movement of the Korpo [Yarlung Records] should do it.

Adding the QSource was impressive in its own right. The wall-wart power supply for the QPoint was sufficiently isolated from the central system AC distribution block, so its influence should have been minimal, especially as we are talking about subtle fields working on resonance harmonisation. Moreover, it helped clarify the differences between the two settings on the QSource,

making one pop into focus more. Just as significantly, using the separate power feed had a significant effect when using a wall-powered hard disk drive.

However, QPoints and QSource are probably not for the neophyte. They are the kind of products that fit into an already relatively 'Nordosted' system, somewhere around the Tyr level of performance, and I am also reasonably sure that most QPoints go into systems that go beyond the simple integrated amp solution. The cynic in me imagines the listener is already 'softened up' for QPoints, but I also suspect QPoints requires an already pretty well 'sorted' system and this brings its ducks in a row (or more accurately, a more orderly, harmonised, and synchronised row). QPoints is more about 'quality' than 'quantity'; however, so don't just let price be your guide.

There is a sense of drilling deeper into system performance with QPoint, and deeper still with QSource. Equipment that is already singing sings a lot better with QPoint and QSource in place. The acid test here is removing them; in a well put together system, taking them out of the system is an immediate and undeniable step in the wrong direction. If the audio components are the cake, proper cabling and physical and electrical grounding are the icing, then QPoint and QSource is the cherry on top. Ultimately, that means tastier cake! +