Short Takes

Nordost QSINE AC Enhancer & QWAVE AC Line Harmonizer

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A couple of plug-ins devices have come my way designed to reduce low-level system noise, from AC line racket to EMI and RFI. I take a "let's see what happens" approach to such products. But with both the Nordost and the Furutech, the effects were subtle, intriguing, and repeatably enhancing. The longer I used them the more reluctant I was to give them up.

Nordost QSINE AC Enhancer and QWAVE AC Line Harmonizer

Since I've reviewed Nordost's QBase8 MKIII power distributor (Issue 348), adding the QSINE and QWAVE AC plug-ins seemed the next logical step. Designed for use within Nordost's family of AC enhancement products, they are also marketed as "stand-alone" items. Housed in an attractive mechanically tuned carbon-fiber body, each device is activated by simply plugging it into any spare socket that connects to the AC line of your system. According to Nordost, the QSINE "affects the AC signal by introducing a specific frequency field onto the circuit path. This field indirectly reshapes the sine wave, which, in turn, lowers the effects of EMI noise embedded in the AC power." QWAVE, on the other hand, "introduces carefully calculated ranges of pulsed frequencies, clocked from the original 50 or 60Hz waveform, directly onto the AC line."

From the get-go, it was plain to hear that in my system these Qs worked optimally as a tag-team, a bit less well individually. I wasn't hearing lower "noise" *per se*—at least not in the sense of whoosh or hiss artifacts or 60Hz ground hum. Backgrounds were marked by a dead-calm silence. A foundational *stillness* that became a springboard for increased low-level detail, notably on piano notes or the bowed strings of a violin. There was greater image stability and an increase in the clarity, detail, and pacing of musical instruments. Also, QSINE and QWAVE seemed to magnify the benefits of the QB8, revealing greater transparency and removing a thin veil of cloudiness that draped orchestras. Section layering among the players was more precisely focused. Micro-dynamic elements that had previously been obscured were brought to the fore. Tonal balance was improved. In my system I quickly forget these devices were there, until I unplugged them, which resulted in a slight contraction of three-dimensionality. The Qs proved themselves a subtle but not insignificant piece of the sonic puzzle. tas