

Symetrica / Symetrica SE Balanced power supply.

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Some things take time. That's a fact.

Whilst sometimes ideas and inspiration fly straight to your consciousness, other things simply sit. Then sit some more.

My review of the **Z:Axis Audio Symetrica** was like that.

I promised Paul Stratton of Z:Axis Audio that I would put some notes down from the moment I took an Isotek Super Titan out of my audio chain and added a Symetrica Balanced Output Power Supply. Put simply the Symetrica worked wonders for my system. I just did not know how to articulate it. How to put pen to paper to record and explain it.

All I wanted to say was that I really liked it, it transformed my music for the better. It just worked. But that's a bit of a crap review!

So here we are, a year later, and even as I sit here listening to my Gamut RS7i speakers, driven by my Gamut M250i mono blocks, fed from my Einstein pre amplifier, which in turn is fed from my Totaldac D1-Direct DAC, I am not sure how to describe the Symetrica.

Over this year I have started to see more and more information on balanced supplies in the audio chat rooms though. Most links from the Audiophile forums espouse simple cheap units "used in hospitals". They are there to save lives so they must be good.

Others say you can make them yourself, but others know that the home audio world does acknowledge that things are done best when they are done properly. And in turn this sometimes costs a bit more.

My Symetrica retails for £6,500. That's not inexpensive, it is however half the price of some the other high end 'conditioners' and 'regenerators' and its performance is unquestionably so much better in my system. So perhaps it is not so expensive after all...?

The money side is of course subjective and will depend on your available funds and your willingness to part with said funds in order to achieve the best possible sound. Given what it has done to the sound of my system and that it is the price of just two of my interconnects I am going to conclude that it is cheap. Possibly too cheap. Because everyone knows that the more something cost the better it is. Right?

But the Symetrica is not just a balanced power supply.

It is in fact three balanced power supplies. It's also a common earth for all your equipment, a DC blocker. Oh, and a collection of 10 - yes 10! - Furutech sockets so that you can accommodate even the grandest of systems.

It is also a smart addition to any hifi rack and invites curiosity rather than the embarrassment of the standard "cheap" balanced units which hide on the pages of industrial electrical supplies websites.

So, here's the rub. How do I explain what the Symetrica does when I am not an engineer? Well I can't truth be known. I won't even try.

So, what about how it looks? Well, that's easier! It looks fabulous, like a piece of jewellery from the Deathstar. Blue display for the voltages, Red for the output or current draw from the unit. A row of small LEDs to show all outputs are functioning. I like it. And my wife has not complained. So it's a winner already.

How about this then. How does it sound? Well whilst the Isotek super Titan sounded harsh and sucked the joy out of my power amps and the music, this, well, it frees it all. It makes the music all sound pure, a little more alive, nice even. It just sounds right. And this was a bit of a revelation.

You see, I realised too late that just as it is the blood in our veins which keeps us alive, it's the power in our audio system that dictates how alive our music is. It is as simple as that.

Over the course of three years I went through 4 power amps of varying cost, 3 preamps, 3 sets of speakers including the lauded PMC Fact 12's and the world class Gamut RS7i's. I tried valves, varying interconnects, solid state and snake oil. I was not happy as it all sounded just a little too digital. A little too abrasive.

With the Symetrica I realised that this is where I should have started, the clue is out there on the forums. If you look you will find lots of people talking about a "source first" principal. Get this right then put the best interconnect between this and your preamp and then again to the amp etc. but start with the source and work forwards from there. On that basis the speakers should be last I suppose.

Well, not me, I started with the speakers, then amp then source, then when I had the funds I played with the interconnects, then swapped, and traded my way around for a few years chasing my tail until I realised that rubbish in means rubbish out. The Symetrica landed and my music opened up and became natural, alive, uncongested and, well 'right'..

Knowing what I know now, this is where I should have started. I should have bought a Symetrica balanced power supply and the best DAC I could afford. then added a cheaper amp and cheaper speakers and then slowly upgraded these over the years knowing my source was sorted and the blood in the veins of my system was capable of greater things.

So is that it? Is this a perfect story?

Well, not a completely perfect one. The only chink in the Symetrica's armour was my Einstein preamp. A unit with an exceptionally good internal power stage and a vampirish thirst. In many ways the fact that I was unsure what the Symetrica did for this wonderful piece of kit is testament to just what an amazing preamp the Einstein is. I would watch the power draw on the Symetrica's display shoot up when the Einstein fed my amps the sound of a rousing fast Crescendo or the thump of a tympani. The many valves glowing and enjoying the ride but not necessarily benefitting from the balanced unit. Well not to my ears.

When discussing this with Paul at Z:Axis we were not sure why the Einstein appeared immune to the magic of the Symetrica, until I had reason to borrow the new Symetrica SE.

Apparently a few small tweaks to the unit warrants two extra syllables to the name plate, but in short these tweaks now take everything just that little further toward nirvana. The changes include a new start up procedure which simplifies the supply into the unit, it adds a full set of Furutech NCF sockets to the rear and changes the way some of the internals are connected to each other. Despite not believing it possible, the SE made the music even more relaxed and fleet of foot and the Einstein now notices the difference too. The Einstein and the Symetrica SE are a match made in heaven and I am yet again in awe of how a power unit has so much of a positive impact on the sound.

So much so that it is this tweak, these two extra letters, and this further lift to my music which has led me to actually write these notes. Having listened to the Symetrica SE I actually can't stop myself from wanting to write about it.

Paul doesn't know this yet but he won't be getting this Symetrica SE back. I can't 'unhear it' so to speak.

So - here is the conclusion to the last 3 years, many many thousands of pounds of kit, multiple changes and the quest for the perfect system. Start with the source. And by this, I mean the power from that little socket on your wall and speak to Paul at Z:Axis. Then buy a Symetrica SE.

Yes, it's more than the grey boxes from the internet but it works better and looks better, and your wife will remain happy that the lounge has not turned into a screw fix depot.

This is a wonderful piece of HiFi equipment and turns a good system into a great system and a great system into the best.

At its current price it is a bargain. A stone-cold bargain.

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