

Quiescent Mains Cable Loom The concept of vibration control in signal-carrying cables is a relatively well understood... Review By Kevin Fiske Of HIFICRITIC

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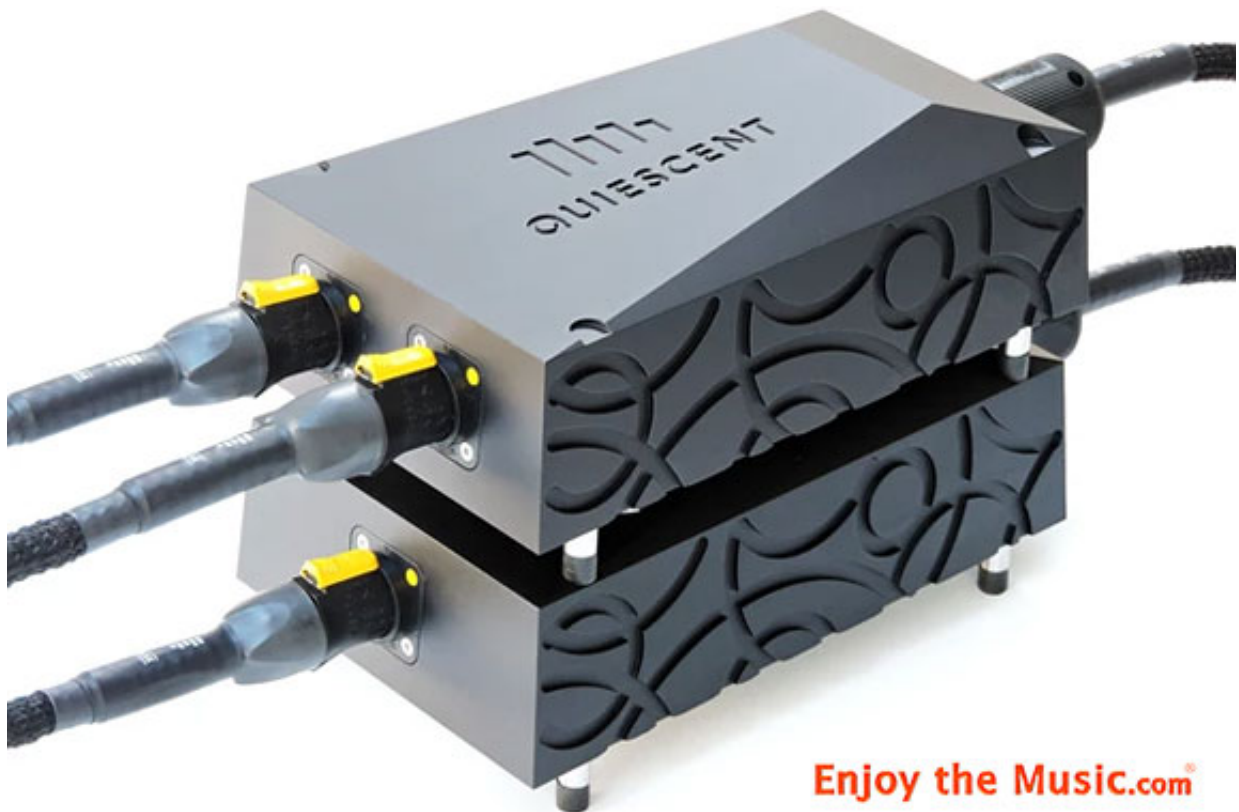
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Quiescent Mains Cable Loom

The concept of vibration control in signal-carrying cables is a relatively well understood, but can the same factors affect a system via its mains cable?

Review By Kevin Fiske Of *HIFICRITIC*



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Following my positive reviews in *HIFICRITIC* of the Quiescent Technologies *Peak Speaker Cables* (Vol. 12/2) and *Peak Interconnect* (Vol. 12/3) I was invited by the company to try its more costly *Apex Interconnect*. However, in my system the *Apex* sounded too fat in the bass and rather sluggish. I preferred the *Peak*. Quiescent's Steve Elford suspected my mains loom. Could one of his colleagues bring a selection of Quiescent – formerly Vertex AQ – mains products to try in my system?

Quiescent's interconnects, speaker and mains cables use materials and construction to inhibit energy wanting to leak inwards to excite the conductors: solid core round silver wire in a wide Teflon dielectric, sheathed in EMI/RFI absorbing tubing and an outer sleeve that absorbs acoustic energy.

The interconnects terminate in quality RCAs or XLRs, but each channel of the speaker cables has a further absorption module, about the size of a paperback book. It typically sits on the floor, with the speaker cables connecting to its terminals at one end and short captive tails going to the speaker. Weighing some 4.5 kgs, and machined out of solid aluminum with no parallel sides, the module contains non-intrusive EMI/RFI mitigation measures including a high-speed RF shunt and a multi-path, multi-length 3D ceramic labyrinth designed to drain microphonic energy from the conductors. Elford did the mathematics that informs the design of the labyrinth, his work reviewed and endorsed by the late Gareth Humphries-Jones, noted for his classified work on anti-vibration and anti-EMI/RFI technologies for the MoD.



Quiescent has now applied the absorption technology to the mains cabling and equipment support the company's Nigel Payne brought with him. He replaced the mains cable to my integrated 211 tube amplifier with a *Peak Mains Cable* and a *Mains Absorption Module*, and a significant reduction in background hash was instantly apparent: music emerged from a blacker background with more energy and clarity., and a female voice I assumed had been recorded at too high a level had lost some top-end brittleness, sounding more rounded and natural. With another *Peak* between the *Absorption Module* and my phono stage, the voice had now lost nearly all of its brittleness, the tonal density had improved further, and performers within the soundstage had become more localized, less diffuse.

Another *Absorption Module* and two more *Peak Mains Cables* were added to my CD transport and then the DAC, and again the improvements were obvious, and incremental. The *Apex Interconnect* thought to be sonically sluggish was now balanced, with a clean, fast and powerful extended bass.



Payne then moved to the *Zenith Component Coupler*, a new product with a 3D printed case containing a smaller version of the acoustic labyrinth, along with EMI and RFI drains. Used in threes, they elevate a component over seven centimeters, with a look that takes some getting used to.

In the past I have tried various supports, and none has survived in my system: either they changed the sound in a negative way or their cost was way out of proportion to their minimal sonic benefit. Yet underneath my CD transport three couplers proved disarmingly effective, removing further digital glare, lowering the noise floor and resulting in a presentation I can only describe as more relaxed, more open and more musical. Three more under the phono stage proved similarly beneficial, notably removing the final traces of brittleness from that female voice that we had been listening to.



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The Quiescent products liberated more of my system's native dynamic headroom, weight, agility and transparency, allowing blacker backgrounds, richer and more detailed tonality, more dimensional soundstaging and more precise timing.

The combination I tried costs some £7,500, which money could buy a considerable upgrade elsewhere – yet the logic of spending it on the mains loom instead is compelling: doing so lifts the performance of the *whole* system rather than that of just one element.

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Specifications

Extremely high-grade pure silver internal wiring with Teflon air-tube dielectric

Built-in ultra-fast RF shunt filter

Proprietary passive EMI and RFI absorption technology

Ultra-low resonance casework and complex three-dimensional acoustic absorption labyrinth

Dimensions: 240mm x 150mm x 75mm (LxWxH)

Weight: Approx 4.5 kgs.

Finish: Black anodized

Prices:

Peak mains cable from £638.40

Peak Mains Absorption Module from £1250

Peak Speaker Absorption Modules from £3335/per pair

Zenith Component Couplers from £415 (set of three)

Manufacturer

Quiescent Technologies

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