

6Moons Review

Reviewer: Paul Candy - 6moons

Digital Source: CEC TL51X transport, Audiomat Tempo 2.6 DAC, Windows XP based laptop, M2Tech hiFace USB-S/PDIF interface

Analog Source: Well-Tempered Lab Amadeus, Pro-Ject Tube Box SE phono stage, Ortofon Rondo Blue cartridge

Amps: Audiomat OpÈra RÈfÈrence integrated

Speakers: Green Mountain Audio Callisto (on sand-filled Skylan stands), 2 x REL Q108 Mk II subwoofers.

Cables: MIT Magnum M1.3 interconnects & speaker cables, MIT Magnum digital cable, Wireworld Equinox 6 interconnects & speaker cables, Sablon Audio Panatela interconnect [in for review]

AC Cables: MIT Magnum AC1, Wireworld Aurora 5≤ & Silver Electra 5≤, Sablon Audio Robusto & Gran Corona [in for review]

Stands: Grand Prix Audio Monaco four-tier rack on Apex footers with silicon nitride bearings

Powerline conditioning: BPT Pure Power Center with Wattgate, Bybee Quantum Purifier and ERS cloth options, GutWire MaxCon

Sundry accessories: Acoustic Revive RR-77, Auric Illuminator, Audio Magic/Quantum Physics Noise Disruptors, Caig Pro Gold, Echo Busters acoustic room treatments, Isoclean fuses, HiFi Tuning Disc Demagnetizer, Nitty Gritty record cleaning machine, Soundcare Superspikes (on speaker stands), dedicated AC line with Wattgate 381 outlet, CruzeFIRST Audio Maestro outlets [in for review]

Room size: 11 x 18 x 8 □, long wall setup, suspended hardwood floors with large area sisal rug, walls are standard drywall over fiberglas insulation

Review components retail: Maestro \$79

Whilst reviewing the Robusto power cables Mark suggested I try CruzeFIRST Audio's Maestro outlets which some folks claim to be a particularly fine match with Sablon Audio's power cords. Shortly after firing an email to Fernando Cruz, I received four Maestro outlets to fully outfit my system. I put two in the wall outlets that feed my system, the other two in a DIY box I've used in the past for outlet comparisons. Basically it's a quad-outlet box with a short run of 12/3 Romex wired to a Hubbell AC plug. No doubt the Romex and Hubbell add their own sonic signatures but at least every outlet I swap in is in the same boat. I now swapped out one of the Maestros for either a Wattgate 381 or commercial grade Leviton as are used throughout our home. By the way, outlet swapping is a truly mind-numbing experience. I don't recommend it at all but then again, every dyed-in-the-wool audiophile knows that sweating the details is the key to obtaining that audio high. I performed all my switching and swapping when the wife and kids weren't around to avoid even more ridicule and scorn than I am normally subjected to already.



The Maestro is based on several years of research and collaboration between CruzeFIRST Audio and Tripoint Audio who use Maestro outlets in their spectacularly expensive Spartan power line conditioner which retails for \$35,000! The Maestro is a rather ordinary looking spec-grade 20-amp outlet constructed with a high-purity copper:brass alloy without plating. It is cryogenically treated with a professional microprocessor-controlled deep immersion process followed up with a rather sticky sweet-smelling coating that not only damps resonances and vibration but also reduces EMI/RFI. Details on this were not forthcoming other than that it is a proprietary formulation developed by CruzeFIRST Audio. Prior to shipping each outlet gets subjected to a two-week proprietary break-in process. Fernando then says to expect another 3-4 days of further run-in upon installation to reach optimum performance.

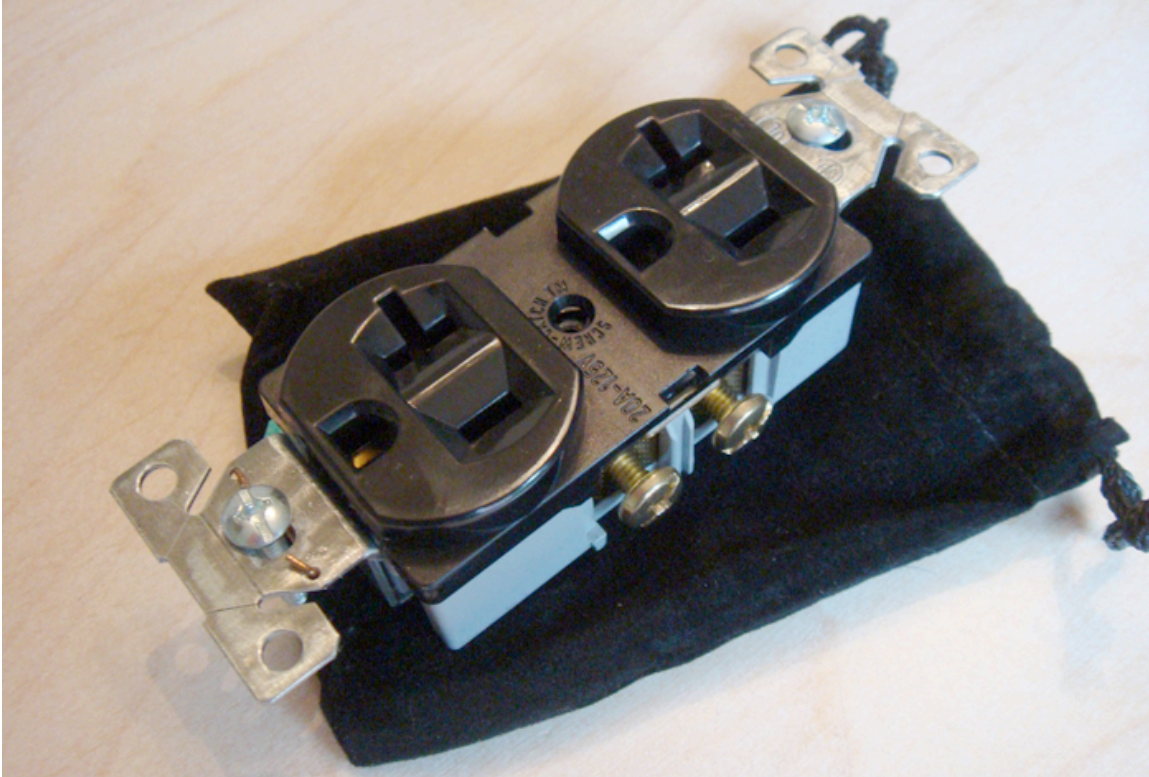
Like Mark Coles, Fernando embarked on considerable research of available aftermarket outlets. While he found many to offer very real sonic benefits, they came at a cost of various sonic signatures that eventually compromised musical fidelity. According to Fernando, "after trying everything I could get my hands on and always liking certain things those outlets did yet always with a compromise, I decided to study and research the materials, processes and treatments involved along with their associated sonic characteristics. My first conclusion was that certain types of materials were more getting in the way than helping. We focused on plating, mass effectiveness, EMI/RFI rejection and mechanical distortion. When we set out to develop the outlet, we understood that the main objective was to be non-restrictive with regards to current flow and sonically non-

bloating or editorializing (traits I'd heard with other materials). We address these shortcomings with our choice of materials in the Maestro outlet. The last piece of the puzzle was RFI and EMI rejection. This we developed in collaboration with Tripoint Audio who were key in performing testing and benchmarking. They too were looking for the best possible outlet to use in their Spartan flagship AC line conditioner."

"Tripoint auditioned everything available and found that while some outlets worked extremely well in some areas, at the end of the day all did more harm than good by masking and bloating the music. Most altered or equalized the sound because of fancy plating and specific alloy mixtures. In addition we believe that mechanical resonance and tuning are also important in audio grade outlets where most other outlets fall short."

I noticed a difference as soon as I installed the outlets and fired up my system. I'm not sure I noticed any further improvement over time. They sounded different/better from the go. The benefit of having a DIY outlet box is to easily compare outlets. I flipped between Maestro, Wattgate 381 and commercial-grade Leviton which is used throughout our home. As in previous experiments I was surprised just how much an ordinary wall outlet can compromise a system's sound. The Leviton was thin, hashy and pinched. Everything sounded more distant and lacking in light and life. With the Maestro I noted a lower noise floor with more apparent micro detail, greater separation between instrumental and vocal images, higher dynamic range with gradations between loud and quiet more pronounced and a more open expansive top end. Bass went a bit deeper too and who doesn't want that? I would not describe this as one of those jaw-dropping moments where the heavens parted and angels descended to dance on the needle. You should hear a more obvious difference changing preamps or phono cartridges but the difference between standard Leviton (your generic home outlet) and Maestro was clearly audible and all for the good without negatives. All this for well under \$100.

Years ago I picked the Wattgate 381 over a bevy of Oyaide outlets as I thought that best suited my system at the time. While I liked a lot of what the Oyaides did, they seemed to have a tad too much character. I thought the Wattgate more neutral. Until I dropped in the Maestros. Now the Wattgates sounded a little fat and overheated in the midrange where the Maestros seemed to lack any overt personality yet cleaned up some low-level noise and opened up the soundstage. How a bloody outlet can do that is beyond me. While I noted all these traits with the Maestro to varying degrees regardless of what power cable I used, I observed a particularly nice match with Mark's Robusto and Gran Corona. I attributed this to the specific connectors Sablon uses and the metals in the outlet. The cables with better connectors consistently sounded better with the Maestro. This leads me to believe that the connectors are a major if not prime determinate of a power cable's performance. With Mark's cables and Fernando's outlets I enjoyed one of those rare audiophile situations where one plus one equalled three. I got more music. Period.



You can spend a lot more on fancy outlets of course. Whether they are worth it or not I cannot say. I can think of few ways however to demonstrably improve your system's playback for under \$100. Better yet install a dedicated line, a Maestro or two and you'll have improved your system for little money. Another alternative is MIT's Z-Duplex Super which is really more a power conditioner than outlet. Since I have just the one wired into our TV room system, ripping it out for comparisons wasn't an option. But I will say that if noise reduction and surge protection on a budget are what you're primarily after, this is well worth considering too.

Paul Candy

Quality of packing: Maestro packed in cloth bag inside cardboard box. Cables packed in well-protected ordinary cardboard boxes.

Reusability of packing: Appears reusable several times.

Quality of owner's manual: Outlet comes with installation instructions. If you don't feel comfortable installing an outlet—get an electrician.

Condition of components received: Flawless.

Completeness of delivery: Perfect.

Website comments: Covers everything you need to know

Human interactions: Professional and friendly.

Pricing: Maestro is excellent value. Panatela and Gran Corona are quite reasonable.

Final comments & suggestions: One suggestion to CruzeFIRST Audio - offer a good quality IEC equipped multi-outlet power strip.

Addendum: At time of publication Fernando informed me that outlet strips with surge protection and passive filtering plus wall plate covers are forthcoming.