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Reviewed by
[Randall Smith](#)



PS Audio Power Plant Premier Power Conditioner



FEATURES SNAPSHOT!

Description

Model: Power Plant Premier

Dimensions: 17"W x 4"H x 16.5"D

Weight: 35 pounds

Warranty: Three years parts and labor.

Features

- Regenerated AC power
- Low-distortion sinewave
- MultiWave and CleanWave
- Regulated AC
- 1500W output power
- Harmonic distortion analyzer
- Remote control
- Nanocrystalline filters
- 10 PS Audio Power Port AC receptacles
- Solid-copper delivery system

Each month, I'm treated to an informative e-mail newsletter from Paul McGowan, founder of and chief designer for PS Audio, a manufacturer of audio equipment based in Boulder, Colorado. One great thing about the newsletter is that McGowan not only shares information concerning PS Audio products, he also mentions any product -- such as the Apple TV -- he thinks might benefit an audiophile's listening experience. Such sharing of successful experiences is a refreshing gesture that encourages in me a great respect for



McGowan and his company.

AC regeneration

The Power Plant Premier (\$2195), or PPP, regenerates alternating current (AC). It receives the incoming wall current, cleans it by converting it to direct current (DC), then reconverts it to AC. (McGowan provides the analogy of water purification: To clean dirty water, you must first boil it, which turns the water into steam and leaves behind any particles of dirt. Then, through condensation, the steam is reconverted to water, minus the impurities.) From there, the PPP amplifies the clean AC so that it can deliver even more energy than the wall outlet can provide.

My review sample of the Power Plant Premier was the all-black Limited Edition. The chassis is basically 17" square and 4" tall; under a vented section of the top panel 4.5" wide by 10" deep is the regenerator itself. Much like a class-A amplifier, the PPP runs hot, so placing it in a well-ventilated area is a must. The front panel's LED display provides useful information about the current coming out of the wall socket and the cleaned power leaving the PPP. For example, the default reading on the display is the voltage coming from the socket: 122V. By pressing the Mode button on the front panel or the supplied remote, you can change the display to reflect the amount of voltage being supplied to the system -- say, 120V. Press the button again to display the *difference* between the current coming in and the current going to the system. (In the example above, that would be a difference of -2V.) This information is offered to prove that the PPP is regulating the power so that your A/V equipment is operating with a steady rate of current. Also displayed is a measurement of total harmonic distortion (THD), which shows the amount of THD coming into the PPP from the wall, and the THD being sent to the equipment from the PPP. All of this information is useful at first, but after I grew to accept that the PPP was doing its job, I disabled the display, and the PPP more or less disappeared in my rack.

On the rear of the PPP are the connections and settings needed to tailor its operation to your needs. The regenerator has five separate pairs of PS Audio's own, proprietary Power Port outlets: four labeled IsoZones 1 through 4, and a fifth pair, labeled Power Amp. Each pair uses a common-mode filter of nanocrystalline, a substance that filters noise without interrupting the flow of power. According to PS Audio, if the power flow is interrupted due to a filtering process, then the power conditioner won't allow your equipment to operate optimally during dynamic passages. Also on the rear panel are two pairs of coaxial jacks, as well as two telephone jacks by which the PPP can be used to protect a phone line from power surges. (Late one night during a tropical storm, I had cause to appreciate the PPP's surge protection: A couple of surges were strong enough to cause the PPP to reset itself. I was glad it was there to protect my gear.) Rounding out the rear panel are two 12V triggers that can sequence the powering up of up to four of the outlet pairs. The three choices are, Always On, Switched, and Delayed.



As soon as it arrived, I placed the PPP in a spare room and plugged a floor fan into it to allow the conditioner to break in a bit. After a few days, I lugged the PPP's 35 pounds into the listening room and plugged in my components: 57" Mitsubishi RPTV, Sony PlayStation 3, Toshiba HD DVD player, cable box, Anthem MCA 50 multichannel amplifier, Coda Amplifier 11 stereo amp, Apple MacBook laptop computer, and, finally, an Anthem Statement D2 surround-sound processor. (The system also

included JL Audio Fathom f112 and Paradigm Seismic 12 subwoofers, and other gear *not* plugged into the PPP.)

When I played Rosanna Cash's "Western Wall," from her *Rules of Travel* (CD, Capitol 37757), the PPP's conditioned power allowed me to experience the cleanest and the most transparent I have ever heard that song in my room. There was a "blackness" to the background that hadn't been present just moments before. This allowed the plucked strings of the guitar to sound quicker, and be reproduced with more zip. Each guitar note trailed off in the most natural way, leading to levels of resolution and transparency that I have chased for many years. The image of Cash's voice also improved, seeming now a bit larger, with a warmer tone. This recording is very clean and perhaps a bit bright at times, but with the PPP in the mix, that hint of harshness disappeared, making this track very pleasing to the ear.

The Power Plant Premier also allowed my Rockport Technologies Miras to produce a slightly larger, much sharper soundstage than before, with cleaner separation of the images of each instrument. Brian Bromberg's "Shining Star," from his album *Woods II* (CD, Artistry 757008), challenges the Miras to reproduce the sounds of three different acoustic basses, one recorded in each of the two channels and the third dead center. The Miras are more than capable of reproducing this three-bass performance, but in order to do this faithfully, a speaker must demonstrate the ability to play extremely quickly while remaining ever so nimble. The power amplifier, too, is challenged to provide continuous power to give these 4-ohm speakers the chance to do their thing. With the PPP providing the AC, the three bassists plucked their strings with great power and intensity. Each note snapped with authority, and with a naturalness that was astonishing. The soloist in the middle is a bit subdued in comparison to the other two, which can cause the reproduction of his individual notes to be lost. This time, each note was a little sharper and easier to focus on, making me appreciate his work more.

To test the Power Plant Premier's ability to deliver adequate juice to an entire system during demanding movie scenes, I grabbed my old standby, *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*, and skipped to the first battle. In the past, the cannon fire in this scene has almost crippled my home's electrical service. On several occasions I've demoed this scene with the lights in the listening room

More PS Audio Products: Noise Harvester, Duet Power Center, xStream Premier SC Power Cable

Of all PS Audio products, perhaps the most interesting is the Noise Harvester (\$99.95). This little gizmo plugs into any outlet in the house and removes power-line noise -- not only the noise at that outlet, but any electrical noise present inside your house. How it does this is rather simple. Reportedly, it converts the noise into light. On the front of the Harvester is a little blue LED that flashes once enough noise has been stored up to be converted to light. This makes it easy to literally see how good or bad your electricity is: If the Harvester blinks quickly and constantly, you've got lots of noise. I also found that I had more noise at the kitchen outlets than in other parts of the house. Power flows through refrigerators and microwave ovens and then back into the wall, which means that such household appliances in fact *add* to the noise.

Because of the layout of my room, I wasn't able to constantly use the Power Plant Premier with my subwoofers. PS Audio was kind enough to include a couple of Duet Power Centers (\$299.95 each) to help filter noise and protect the subs from surges. The Duet uses the same nanocrystalline filters as the PPP, but it isn't a power regenerator. The PS Audio website suggests using a Duet to bridge the wall power to the Power Plant. I guess that every little bit helps, but in my system, the effects of the Duets with my subs were subtle at best.

Finally, after reviewing the Power Plant Premier with its stock power cable, I switched to PS Audio's xStream Statement SC power cable (\$499 for 1m cord). The result: everything sounded a little bit better. The low end was a little more forceful, and the soundstage had greater bloom and greater space while retaining that dead-silent background.

When you get to a certain level of performance in your system, little tweaks like the Noise Harvester and the xStream power cable can help punch things up even further.

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left on, to observe the visual effects of how much juice is needed to properly reproduce its sound. With the Shunyata Research Hydra Model-6 power conditioner providing the AC to the system -- two power amps, a surround processor, and two JL Audio f112 subs -- the lights almost cut off entirely. While the Hydra Model-6 isn't a power regenerator, it also isn't supposed to *limit* power -- the fluctuation in the brightness of the lights was the power company not being able to keep up with demand. I then moved the PPP to the center of the room, plugged the JL subs into its rear panel, and ran the scene again. This time, at the height of the battle and with the volume at a reference level, the lights didn't dim nearly as much. While 1500W of continuous power was truly needed, I felt that the PPP was able to provide just enough to keep the system operating at this louder-than-normal volume setting. When my system needed it most, the PPP delivered gobs of power.

Over the last few years I've reviewed two other power conditioners, but neither could hold a candle to the Power Plant Premier. My current conditioner, the Shunyata Research Hydra Model-6, retails for around \$1200, or about half the price of the PPP. The Hydra Model-6 is a power distributor as well as a filtering device. It does this passively via its Venom filter array and by the use of high-quality wiring and cryogenically treated outlets. The PPP, on the other hand, is an active power conditioner. In my system, the PPP sounded better than the Hydra Model-6: My system was now more transparent and dynamic, with no negative consequences.

Conclusion

Sometimes, it's hard to understand all the technical jargon attached to products like the PS Audio Power Plant Premier. When I'm overwhelmed with information, I revert to what really matters: how does it sound? In my time with the PPP, I felt as if I was hearing my audio/video system at its best. The improved transparency and quieter backgrounds permitted a level of musical realism that I have come to deeply appreciate. While I had high expectations for this power conditioner, I wasn't prepared for this much improvement. If you're in the market for a power conditioner, put the truly outstanding PS Audio Power Plant Premier at the top of your list.

Review System

Speakers - Rockport Technologies Mira (mains), Energy Veritas 2.0Ri (surrounds), JL Audio Fathom f112 (subwoofers); Paradigm Studio 100 v.4 (mains), Paradigm Studio CC-690 v.4 (center), Paradigm Studio ADP-590 v.4 (surrounds), Seismic 12 (subwoofer)

Processor - Anthem Statement D2

Amplifiers - Anthem MCA 50, Krell KSA-50s, Coda Amplifier 11, Classé CA-2200

Sources - Toshiba HD-XA2 HD DVD player, Sony PlayStation 3 Blu-ray player, Slim Devices/Logitech Squeezebox music server, Apple MacBook

Display device - Mitsubishi WD-Y57 57" RPTV

Cables - Nordost, Monster Cable, DH Labs

Remote - Universal Remote Control MX-850

Power conditioner - Shunyata Research Hydra Model-6 with Copperhead power cord

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