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Audio Ramblings - AC Cords from Locus Design, Kaplan Audio, Dynamic Design, and the Bybee Wire AC Power Purifier v 2

by Dave Clark



The idea that the quality of the AC one feeds one's equipment has, for the audiophile community, its distracters and converts—a differing of opinions that could easily represent the differing of opinions on, well... just about anything that people have differing opinions on. For some, AC cords work and can be the icing on the cake, and yet for others they are a waste of money. Same for AC conditioners. Any decent filter or whatever works fine—the simpler the better... and the cheaper better still. All a bunch of hoey and all a delusion being pilfered on us unsuspecting gullible fools.

Which is all good and dandy, though hardly the case. Too many people hear a difference to make it a scam, and too many who do know enough to be scammed. The problem is not that people have differing of opinions but how people who have different opinions or beliefs react to those that differ from theirs. See I toss and turn at night wondering why it is that those who claim differences cannot exist, will not exist, should not exist, and do not exist... all of which is based on 1) that they do not hear it so no one else can, and 2) there is no reason or scientific explanation why they should be able to anyhow... worry so much about those of us who do hear a difference and yet don't give a rat's ass why we do? In simpler terms, my real beef is why is it that those who do not hear the 'things' like we do get so worked up about

it? Is this all you have going for you in life? Is this your calling? Why is it such an issue? Give it a rest ... your panties have to be getting mighty uncomfortable being all bunched up like that. Besides, the idea that you spend so much time arguing and attacking those who hear whatever that disagrees with your beliefs and experiences suggests that deep down you actually hear it too... you're just a closet audio-guy and won't admit it. People tend to fight what they fear to be true because they can't handle the possibility that they are members of that tribe...

So putting the naysayers aside... back to the use of an AC conditioner and aftermarket AC cords in one's audio system. Yeah, they do change things here... sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse, sometimes not really at all, and sometimes it is just a lateral change. Like the AC conditioner from Bybee and AC cords from Kaplan, Locus Design, and Dynamic Design. All work and all make a difference that tickles the joy bone while never rankling the annoy bone.

Case in point the AC cords from Dynamic Design Spirit Digital cord (the new and improved Mk2 - \$1200/6 feet <http://www.dynamicdesignnav.com>) and Locus Design Keynote (\$1199 up to 3FT, \$60FT thereafter <http://www.locus-design.com>).



Think of a wonderfully sunny summer morning; refreshed and invigorated from a great night's sleep, anxious to start the day full of energy with a joyous anticipation of what lies ahead... yeah that is the Dynamic Design Spirit Digital. Lots of energy and presence where swing and timing take the forefront with exciting anticipation, the Dynamic Design Spirit Digital is a definite improvement over the older version. Slam, bam, punch... this is the AC cord for speed and openness. While the original Dynamic Design Spirit Digital was stellar, man with this cord music is considerably more open and 'alive'... and all in a good way. Not over the top, nor in your face, the use of this cord on the Playback MPS-5 just gets the music out into the room in a way that gets the joy bone happy. Happy, happy, joy, joy. Space, clarity, air, light... the excitement and anticipation... the 'newness' of what is to come, combined with a wonderful sense of youthful exuberance... man this cord rocks!

On the other hand, think of a late summer afternoon; the sky glows an amazingly vivid dark blue with a hint of red, yellow, and *orange-ish* hues. The day is coming to an end with a satisfying sense of accomplishment and relaxation, everything just seems so right and at ease... yeah that is the Locus Design Keynote. With this cable the music is presented with a strong sense of accomplishment—everything is just right and never forced... all in a perfect balance of sonic virtues. The music has solidity

and maturity, ease and refinement - nothing is missing. Music with this cord has it all, though perhaps it is less 'vivid' in the sense of 'here are all the little bits and pieces' than when the music is presented by the Dynamic Design Spirit Digital.



Which is neither a bad nor good thing... just a different thing. Both let the music through, it is just presented in a slightly different way. While music with the Dynamic Design Spirit Digital is more about the excitement and anticipation of what will come, music with the Locus Design Keynote is more about the reflection or 'looking within' at what has been accomplished—an introspection of not only what has passed but what the future will offer based on one's past experiences resulting in a true sense of maturity and sophistication. "Duuuuude that is some deep shit."

Here is something even deeper. There are those special times when Carol and I have spent a relaxing evening sitting out in the garden with an exceptional wine taking in the evening glow while reliving the events of our lives together and think to ourselves, "Hey, life is good..." the Locus Design Keynote reminds me of those times. An exceptional AC cord that represents the culmination of a fulfilling life—one of comfort and stability. Which is not to be construed as being boring, stately, or conservative... nah, it just has it all together in a very cool way. Of course if your music is boring, stately, or conservative than that is what you get... so if you don't want that then maybe *you* need to undo a button or two and loosen up with some of my music!

Of course different components, different systems, different AC grids... and you get different results. Different tastes and preferences... ditto. Music with either one is as good as I have heard here and both sound more alike than different in that key area of musical enjoyment. Damn, let me digress here by saying that I do not find that these cords, or other cords or cables for that matter, have a sound of their own. No, for me, cables do not possess a sound... but they do impart something into or onto the system to change the sound we hear... in some way. That is their use on whatever component changes the sound being presented by the system. So what I am reporting is what I heard when I used these cords in my system, not what the cords sounded like... sort of like when Carol and I are asked by some waitress or waiter, "How is the food tasting?" or "How does the food taste?" "But we are really enjoying our meal!" Gee, not sure the food can 'taste'... nor can cables 'sound'.

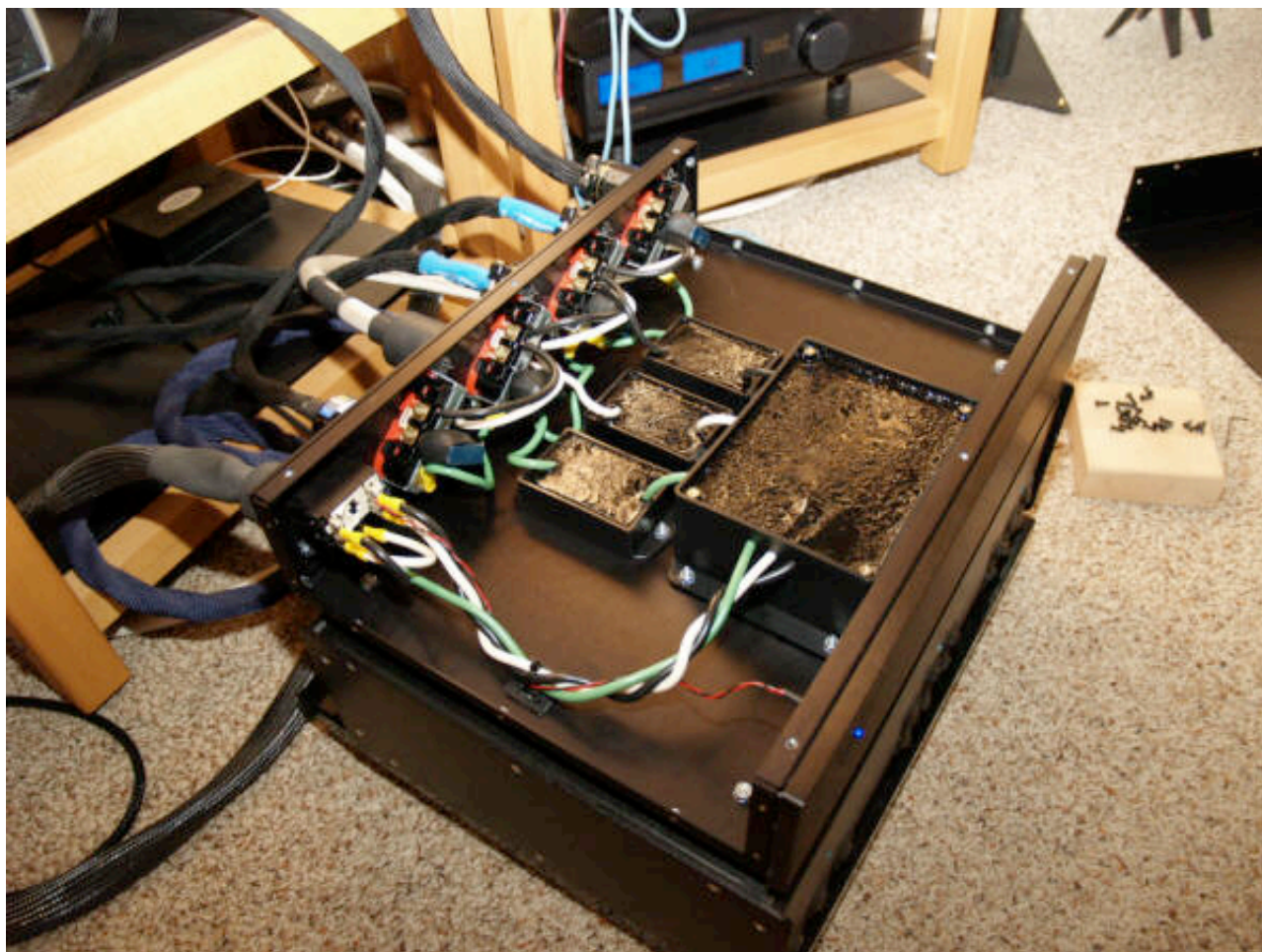
Which leads me to the Bybee Wire AC Power Purifier v 2 (offered by Michael Garner over at <http://www.tweekgeek.com>). The Bybee Wire AC Power Purifier v 2 (\$4995) conditioner has 4 isolated duplex receptacles, Bybee SE Ultra Purifiers inside, plus a John Curl designed filtering circuit. I was sent the "Stealth" package (\$6995) which is offered in black only and features four (\$95 each) Teslaplexes from Synergistic Research and four (\$100 each) Bybee slipstreams on the outlet capacitor banks. This is the full-blown versions and is as good as they offer.



I have been using the Audio Magic Transcendence for many years now simply because nothing that had come into the system offered as much for as little. What I mean is that the Transcendence lowered the noise floor to a level that was amazingly good while doing so little else in terms of introducing whatever it could in revealing its own sound or presence that it was the reference for me to judge all comers. Yeah, I have had other conditioners there that worked wonderfully as well, but they all tended to present a shift in the sound—a characteristic of 'this' or 'that'. Meaning that the music took on a different perspective in the sense of tonality or presence: warmer, darker, smoother, richer, laidback, upfront, and even that of the proverbial 'house sound'; none simply went far enough in the direction I really wanted to venture towards. Now none of these are bad things, just different things; for me, I wanted (and still do) an AC conditioner that simply cleans things up without imparting itself into or onto the music. I want hear more of what my music sounds like (well at least what I think or want it to sound like – the whole idea of there being an absolute sound is crap) and the Transcendence always did that for me.

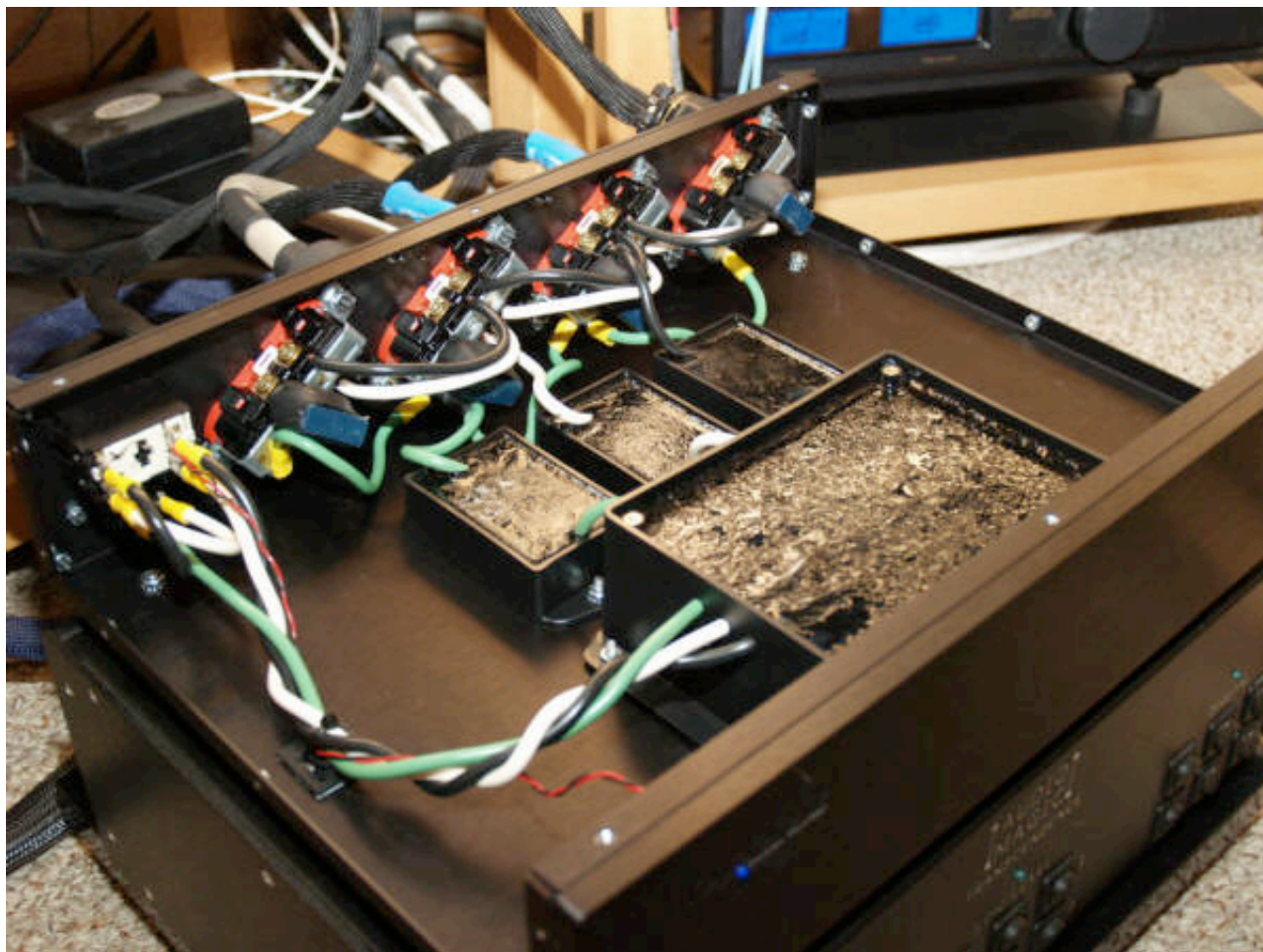
That is til the Bybee Wire AC Power Purifier v 2 came into town. Not sure what to say... don't really want to put any one off or offend anyone, but phucking shit... you got to be kidding me?! What the hell just happened? This unit is so far down the road in going deeper into the music with more color, life, energy, presence, separation, imaging, resolution, air, light, slam, dynamics, ambiance, extension, palpability,

naturalness, involvement, neutrality... gee anything else left to add... I mean really, what the hell?! This is a done deal. Forget it, here is the check. It took all of a few minutes (I was sent a fully broken in unit so after a day or two of seeing a draw, it was listening time) I heard no tradeoffs, no sonic degradation, no signature, no whatever... nadda. Except of course I heard more of the music the way I wanted. The way that made me sit and listen and listen to CD after CD, to LP after LP, to file after file.... The music is just better in every sense of the word because my system is now way better. Sweet!



Tossing the Bybee Wire AC Power Purifier v 2 into the system reminded me when I first tried the Luminous Audio Mega Lynx AC cords on the Claytons. Yikers... what a wonderful change. More musical energy and color, more fun! Same with the Bybee Wire AC Power Purifier v 2. I am simply hearing way more of what I want to hear from my music. In many cases I find myself being re-acquainted to the music I thought I knew so well... way better, way more engaging and visceral; which is what I want. No somniferous sludge or sugary slime... no, with the Bybee Wire AC Power Purifier v 2 the music *is* speed, clarity, presence, dynamics... and bass! Crap... I am now really hearing how low, fast, and articulate my speakers truly are. Heck, they are like new a component... they have never sounded this good before and I always thought they were the best ever! Well, at least the best I have had a chance to have here for an audition.

But then again, what applies to the AC cords above applies here to the Bybee Wire AC Power Purifier v 2. Does it really have a sound or is really all about what it makes your system, and then ultimately your music, sound like? I am with the latter... the Bybee Wire AC Power Purifier v 2 really allows the system and my music to sing. No grit, glare, noise... and no sonic artifacts or character-trait that I can put a finger on. Flow... the music really flows with no restraint.



Yeah, it ain't all that inexpensive (though there are AC conditioners that will take considerably more of your cash than it will), but then sometimes the best does not come cheaply. In looking at what is inside, one can certainly ask, "Exactly what am I buying here?" Being potted and all, one is really at a loss to tell what exactly they are doing. But then again knowing the guys behind this, you are getting some pretty advanced and tweaky shit to use when filtering your AC. Jack Bybee and John Curl know their stuff, so I am confident that this is the real deal with respect to what they can do to mitigate AC noise and crap. Fit and finish are excellent and overall construction appears to be rock-solid.

Now if you really want to hear what the Bybee Wire AC Power Purifier v 2 can do, then spring for the Kaplan GS II AC cord (www.kaplancable.com). Kaplan wire is used throughout the Bybee Wire AC Power Purifier v 2, so it makes sense to feed it with more of the same. I was sent the Kaplan GS II Level 8 AC cord (\$1700/6 feet) along with several more reflecting different levels of Kaplan's treatment (Levels 2, 4, 6, and 8). I found that the Level 8 brought out more of what I wanted in the Bybee musically (that is it built on the Bybee's strengths) whereas the lower Levels 2, 4, and 6 made the music darker and less captivating (with 6 being less so and 2 being most so). The 8 might be seen as being a bit more forward and out into the room; a bit more energy from the upper mids on up and definitely from the lower treble on up. The Level 8 is neither bright nor edgy... just more alive than the other Kaplan levels. That is, the 2, 4, and 6 presented music with less articulation and presence, less of what I like. On the right component(s) or system, I would think that either of the lower level cords would be just fine, but here in my system... wrong turn, wrong direction. Cords are more about 'seasoning' one's system... this cord here, that cord there... ah, just right. Here the 8 works, whereas the lower levels simply do not. They all have the Kaplan sound, but changes are more in the sense of perspective or distance: the best I can come up with is front hall (the 8) to rear hall (the 2).



The Kaplan GS II Level 8 AC is a bit stiff and bulky (meaning heavy), but one can work with it if you have the room. I did not, so I asked for a shorter 4 footer to fit in my space. As it stands this is a stellar product and sits rather in the middle of what I realized musically with the Dynamic Design Spirit Digital and that of the Locus Design Keynote; the music is pretty much a nice mixture of the two. Actually, it reminds me a lot of the Kubala-Sosna Emotion AC cord. Yeah, there ya' go.... big, robust, gobs of power and control, all that with an ever-so-slight mid-range presence.

Anyhow, I will say though that this is only based on the Level 8, K-S Emotion, Spirit, and Keynote when used on the Bybee. I did not compare the other Kaplan cords to the other cords nor did I try them elsewhere in my system. Based on what I heard with the Bybee and how they were not a good match system/music-wise and the fact that I know how the Level 8 compares to the other AC cords and how the Spirit-C and Keynote work on whatever... well, no need to go there to predict what I would hear. They simply would not be a good match. The different treatments do make a difference, but only you can decide which one will work best and where.

Even so, the Kaplan GS II Level 8 AC cord is staying put as it has a magical synergy with the Bybee, my system, my music, and my room. I like this cord quite a bit and can recommend it without hesitation... but then I can say that about the Spirit and Keynote. AC cords are a funny lot. At one time I thought I had found a universal AC cord in the old Sahuaros, but then with time they showed not be the real deal. I am now of the mind that there is no one 'right' AC cord for everything nor for everyone. You got to try and see what works for you.



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