



vh audio

AirSine AC cords

as reviewed by Fown-Ming Tien



A while ago, I declared the VenHaus Flavor series power cords some of the most delicious I had sampled to date. Now, with his new AirSine power cord, Chris VenHaus has completely redefined my notion of how a power cord can transform a system. The first product of VH Audio's Gold Label series, the AirSine is an ultimate-performance cord utilizing state-of-the-art technologies and processes, yet it does not have an stratospheric price tag—it costs \$800 for a 6-foot length. Its features include:

- All conductors—hot, neutral, and ground—use 10 AWG conductors for unrestricted current delivery.

FOWN-MING TIEN'S SYSTEM

LOUDSPEAKERS

VonSchweikert VR-4Jrs (on loan for review), Hyperion HPS-938 (on loan for review), Thiel CS 2.2

ELECTRONICS

Aesthetix Callisto Signature line stage, Scott Endler Passive Stepped Nude Attenuators, Jeff Rowland Model 10 amplifier, Onix H34 tube integrated, Eastern Electric MiniMax phono stage (on loan for review), Eastern Electric MiniMax M520 Integrated (on loan for review), NuForce Ref 8 (on loan for review).

SOURCES

Digital: McCormack Audio UDP-1. Analog: Oracle Delphi MkII, SME 3009 tonearm w/ Cardas cabling, Denon 103 cartridge.

CABLES

Paul Speltz Anti-Cables speaker cables, CryoTweaks Trinity speaker cables, CryoTweaks Silver Reference MkII interconnect, Aural Thrills WBT Gold digital S/PDIF coax interconnect, custom Dodson "secret skunkworks" digital S/PDIF coax interconnect, Audience powerChords, Revelation Audio Labs Precept power cord, Eichmann eXpress6 AC power cable, Electraglide Reference Tri-Glide power cord, Silversmith Silver interconnects and speaker cables (on loan for review).

ACCESSORIES

Audience adeptResponse power conditioner (on loan for review), Tice Power Block power conditioner with Hubbell 20A hospital grade outlets, Hubbell 20A hospital grade outlets in wall, Bedini Ultra Clarifier, Auric Illuminator Optical Playback Resolution Enhancement, Quantum Symphony Pro, Black Diamond Racing cones Mk3, Polycrystal amp stands (2), and Verastarr Granite Vibro-Slabs.

An optimized strand count and lay of oxygen-free, high-purity copper wire is utilized for both the hot and neutral conductors. This provides greater resonance control and higher conductivity, resulting in a dead-quiet noise floor and a grain-free presentation.

- The hot and neutral conductors are uniformly insulated with VH Audio's new Airlok™ dielectric for extremely low dielectric absorption and a dielectric constant of less than 1.5. (By comparison, the dielectric constant of a perfect vacuum is 1.0, while Teflon is between 2.0 and 2.1.) The result is better transient response, coherence, and resolution.
- Cotton filler material is utilized inside the core to damp vibrations and augment mechanical stability.
- A symmetrical, noise-canceling, self-shielding geometry is utilized to further reduce background noise and minimize interactions with externally induced fields and other cabling.
- Teflon™ film is wound around the cable core at precise tension, to restrict micro-movements of the conductors that may smear the sound.
- A state-of-the-art vibration-damping compound is applied at high pressure around the internal conductor bundle. This further restricts conductor movement and dissipates both internal and external resonances, lessening the feedback of vibration into components.
- Cryostage™ deep cryogenic treatment process is performed at various phases of cable construction. The result is wider dynamic range, better phase coherency, and an even lower noise floor.
- VH Audio's Spaced Counter Spiraled Ground™ topology minimizes the capacitive coupling of hot/neutral conductors to safety ground, preventing yet another method by which noise may enter the system.
- The safety ground wire has been optimized by employing a tremendously thick, yet very flexible vibration-damping dielectric. The internal strand count and configuration have also been designed for resonance control and maximum performance.

Like the Flavor cords, the AirSine is completely handmade. The stiffness of the Flavor cords was my only major beef with them, but the AirSine is ultra-flexible. It is terminated with a choice of premium WattGate gold-plated 330i and 350i series connectors or Furutech FI-25 series gold connectors. Rhodium-plated Furutech FI-25 connectors and 20-amp IECs are available at additional cost. I received two 6-foot AirSines, one terminated with a 15-amp WattGate 350i IEC for my line stage and digital source, and the other with a 20-amp IEC for my amplifier. Both came with WattGate 330i AC plugs. Their construction was first rate.

The AirSine does not take a long time to burn in because Chris VenHaus does it for you, hooking it up to an AudioDharma Cable Cooker for four days prior to shipping. It was a matter of days before their performance stabilized. I started by replacing the Electraglide power cord to my McCormack UDP-1 player with a 15-amp AirSine. I liked what I heard, but the AirSine did not make enough sonic difference to justify its higher price in this application, so I unplugged the Flavor 4 powering my Aesthetix Callisto Signature line stage and replaced it with an AirSine. Upon depressing the play button on the UDP-1, I did a double take. The brushwork in the introduction to the first track of the John Hicks Trio's *Sunshower* (BluePort CD BP-J014) had a more natural shimmer. After careful listening, I realized that the player had better resolution, transparency, and air. A subtle veil had been removed.

Excited by what I was hearing, I replaced the Flavor 4 feeding my power amplifier with the 20-amp AirSine, and replayed the track. Although the cord was completely cold, it was easy to hear the improvements. The higher level of resolution gave me the ability to hear and feel variations in the pressure of the brush. The only time I could recall brushes sounding and feeling more realistic was when I was listening to a live jazz band.

I left the AirSine power cables in my system for a week before doing some more critical listening. Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* (RCA/BMG SACD 82876-66377-2) opens with a blast of horns. Their leading-edge attacks hit with surgical precision—fast, clean, and sharp—and had a more realistic bite, while the trailing edges had more air and sustain. Approximately 4'30" into the piece is a dialog between trumpets. Having heard a performance of this piece by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, I can say that I have never heard any audio system reproduce this exchange with as much clarity and speed. Cymbal clashes were explosive, with the right amount of bite and shimmer, and nothing added nor removed to spike or tone down the sound. My system, powered by the AirSines, sounded the closest I have ever heard it sound in comparison to a live performance. This power cord is in a class of its own.

Some cables add warmth and body to strings, but do so by attenuating the higher frequencies, thereby muting the sound and altering the intonation of stringed instruments. With the AirSines, however, the beautiful violin solo in *Scheherazade* had an incredibly natural sweetness and accurate timbre. I then played Paganini's *Violin Concerto No.1* (Deutsche Grammophon D201550), with its complex and demanding solos. The transient response was lightning fast, with unrivaled articulation, texture, and nuance. Because the violin does not address the lower frequencies, I turned to Chris Colangelo's *2 Trios + 1 Live!* (BluePort BP-J008). The clarity, separation, and articulation of Colangelo's upright bass lines were vastly superior to those I have heard with any other power cord—never smeared or one-note.

For male voice, I pulled out Coldplay's *Parachutes* (Capitol Records 0 6700 30162 23), and for female voice, Alison Krauss and Union Station's *Lonely Runs Both Ways*. I heard the same improvements I have already described—increased detail, expressiveness, and clarity, in spades. The last thing I noticed was the lowering of the noise floor, resulting in darker backgrounds and better imaging and soundstage depth.

The best way to characterize the sonic signature of the AirSine power cable is not to describe what it does, but what it does not do. In my experience with power cords—which includes models from the minibuck Volex to the megabuck Elrod—the AirSine is the only power cord under \$2500 which does not compromise the sound in any way. For the price, the VH Audio AirSine power cord is simply unbeatable. Fown Ming-Tien

AirSine AC cords
Retail: \$699 4 foot cord

VH Audio
web address: www.vhaudio.com