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Clean power thanks to
Oehlbach® XXL® Powerstation 909

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Clean power – thanks to Oehlbach's Powerstation 909

According to Oehlbach, its Powerstation 909 is a 19 inch high-end multiple plug socket, which also functions as a filter and ensures the ideal conditions for an optimum sound. We wanted to see this for ourselves so we put the 909 to the test. You may find yourself asking why you would need the power to be „clean“? Electricity isn't really dirty of course, but it can cause a variety of malfunctions and result in unwanted signals being fed into your amplifier, CD player or other source device. And there are also other „power problems“, which are not conducive to modern audio and video systems. The best example of this, and something that will be familiar to almost all hi-fi and home cinema enthusiasts, is probably the 50 or 100 hertz „hum“ generated via the wall socket. These so-called „ground loops“, which predominantly occur in larger home cinema setups, often become apparent in the form of an annoying buzzing sound being emitted by the subwoofer. As previously mentioned, however, there are clever solutions to this problem; one such solution is our test unit.

Oehlbach's solution: the Powerstation 909

The first thing that catches our eye is the unit's neat, cleanly processed housing, whose precisely coordinated dimensions and beautifully crafted front panel generate an extremely impressive visual appearance that is rounded off with a black and brushed aluminium finish. The Powerstation is 443 millimetres or 19 inches wide. This is extremely practical, as it means Oehlbach's unit can be positioned conveniently in almost any hi-fi rack. A small, circular display that resembles a bullseye is centrally located in the front panel and provides information about the unit's current operating status. The actual voltage that is applied to the eight sockets at the rear, for example, can be displayed here. These sockets are divided into two switching groups, which can be individually activated via a silver button on the front panel. Both switching circuits exhibit different properties that enable them to be used separately from each other. The grey „pure analogue sockets“ do not have a filter and are solely intended for connecting analogue devices such as a record player. While these devices need full protection and high voltage stability, they do not require a digital mains filter. The white „digital filter“ sockets are, as the name suggests, intended for digital devices, such as CD players, Blu-ray players, network players and, of course, modern AV receivers. Oehlbach has equipped these sockets with special voltage filters to filter out interfering signals, thereby ensuring uninterrupted enjoyment when watching films and listening to music. Another highlight is the mouse port that can be found at the rear. This can be used to earth a turntable. All of the materials used inside the unit have been optimised to channel the incoming current in the best possible way. The internal wiring, for example, consists of high-purity, oxygen-free copper with a 3.3 square millimetre diameter. In addition, all plug contacts have been plated with 24 carat gold. What's more, the 909 also features a delay function, which ensures all of the sockets are supplied with power a second after the unit has been switched on. This is a clever feature, as it prevents additional voltage spikes from occurring during the switch-on phase. Furthermore, the power consumption of the connected devices is also conveniently displayed on the front panel.

Pressing the Mode button next to the display allows you to alternate between the power consumption and voltage information. In order to ensure the correct polarity of all connected devices, Oehlbach has provided each socket with a red indicator. The phase should be present here. The correct phase connection ensures so-called potential equalization currents, which could have a negative impact on the image and sound signals, are avoided. If the plug has been inserted correctly, the word „Polarity“ will illuminate red at the bottom of the display.

In practice

Before purchasing a high quality Powerstation you may well ask yourself: what are the advantages of such a component for my hi-fi or home cinema setup? The first thing that strikes us when installing the unit is the fact that we are almost able to completely dispense with power strips behind the rack. This looks neat and provides our system with a more elegant appearance right off the bat. And the 909 also makes a very good impression when it comes to practicality: any type of plug, for example, can be inserted cleanly and firmly into the socket, where it is seated in a „bombproof“ manner. When all of the components have been connected the display, which is centrally embedded in the brushed aluminium front panel, provides a very good overview of the currently applied voltage and the actual power consumption. If the word „PROTECTED“ illuminates in blue at the top of the display, it indicates that the voltage protection function is active. The previously described „Phase“ indicator is located directly below the LED panel and informs the user if a device has been connected correctly in terms of its phase. This is a point which can make a noticeable difference in terms of sound and is not just of importance to high-end enthusiasts. At this juncture it is suffice to say our model passed the technical part of the test with flying colours. But now let's have a look at what the Powerstation 909 brings in terms of sound. We start our test by watching 10 minute scenes from various films that are played on a sophisticated 5.1 setup. What is striking after a relatively short time is that the pure audio performance only seems to alter slightly. But when we crank up the volume on our 5.1 system, however, the use of the 909 quickly becomes noticeable in terms of overall agility. This is particularly evident when watching an action-packed blockbuster – such as „Transformers“ - a film simply teeming with action that begs to be played at high volume. When using the Powerstation here it clearly provides the film with a pinch of extra power. It gives us the impression of the amplifier awakening and being unshackled to produce a performance that is somewhat more dynamic than before.

Conclusion

Oehlbach's Powerstation 909, which costs €599, is an elegantly designed and exquisitely processed high-end multiple socket outlet with a 44.3 cm housing. The unit features an excellent surge protection function and an elaborate configuration to ensure a clean power supply for eight hi-fi or home cinema components. This system provides a stable and secure power supply for amplifiers and other source devices and it helps them to realise their full potential. In turn, this can result in a better sound and improved picture quality in the majority of cases.