

Fidelity Audio No Noise Ultra SE mains filter

This is one of a number of quality mains filters, purifiers and spike clamps from Fidelity Audio. It is designed to solve two major problems. Firstly, it protects your equipment from the performance-degrading effects of mains-born surges and spikes and secondly, it filters out mains noise that is generated by household electrical equipment, such as refrigerators and washing machines.

The No Noise Ultra SE is fitted with the same technology as the Surge Clamp, which is the part of the circuit that reduces the spike activity that can saturate the mains transformers in your equipment. This latest version features larger-value filtering capacitors (10uF) than FA's previous model. In addition, these are higher specification audio-grade Mundorf capacitors to further improve the performance.

Technically, the filters feature both common and differential-mode filtering and three-pole, rapid-response clamping. The high-frequency filter circuit is at 2.4GHz, which is great for eliminating the noise from microwave ovens! The manufacturer recommends running the filter in for four hundred hours in order to realise the full benefits. This simply means leaving it plugged into a mains socket for two and a half weeks, or so! As with all audiophile components, this allows the capacitors to settle-in.

Sound quality

Plugging the filter into a spare mains socket next to my audio system completely eliminated the occasional click I hear when my refrigerator switches on and off. Background noise was also reduced and this results in a noticeable improvement in detail when listening to music. Vocals, especially sibilants, were appreciably smoother, so this comes very much recommended. **NR**



► DETAILS

PRICE: £165
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OUR VERDICT



Hi-Fi Racks X220 stand

Hi-Fi racks has been making strong inroads with its range of solid wood stands and supports. This year it launched the X220 stand, so called because its main support structure consists of a cross section of wooden panels. It's a strong and attractive stand with 38mm thick top and bottom plates on a column that can be supplied in any height. It comes with a 185mm wide by 240mm deep top plate as standard, or for a £30 premium you can have a bespoke top plate to suit your preferred speaker. Our sample was 58cm high without spikes, the latter being custom made cone shape types that don't add a great deal of height to the stand. Hi-Fi Racks supplies discs to stop the spikes damaging wooden floors and small rubber feet that can be used top or bottom.

In use

Placed under a pair of PMC twenty.22 speakers with Blu-Tack on the corners the X220 had a slightly softening effect on the presentation compared to a slightly taller damped metal stand from Custom Design (FS104). Imaging is less precise, but it had a lovely relaxed warmth that is attractive with a precise speaker like this. A system that sounds a bit too etched would undoubtedly benefit from the smooth fluidity that it brings to the sound as well as the degree to which the soundstage is allowed to expand. This, combined with the undoubted appeal of hardwood make it an attractive option for those in search of domesticated audio furniture. **JK**



► DETAILS

PRICE: £250
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OUR VERDICT

