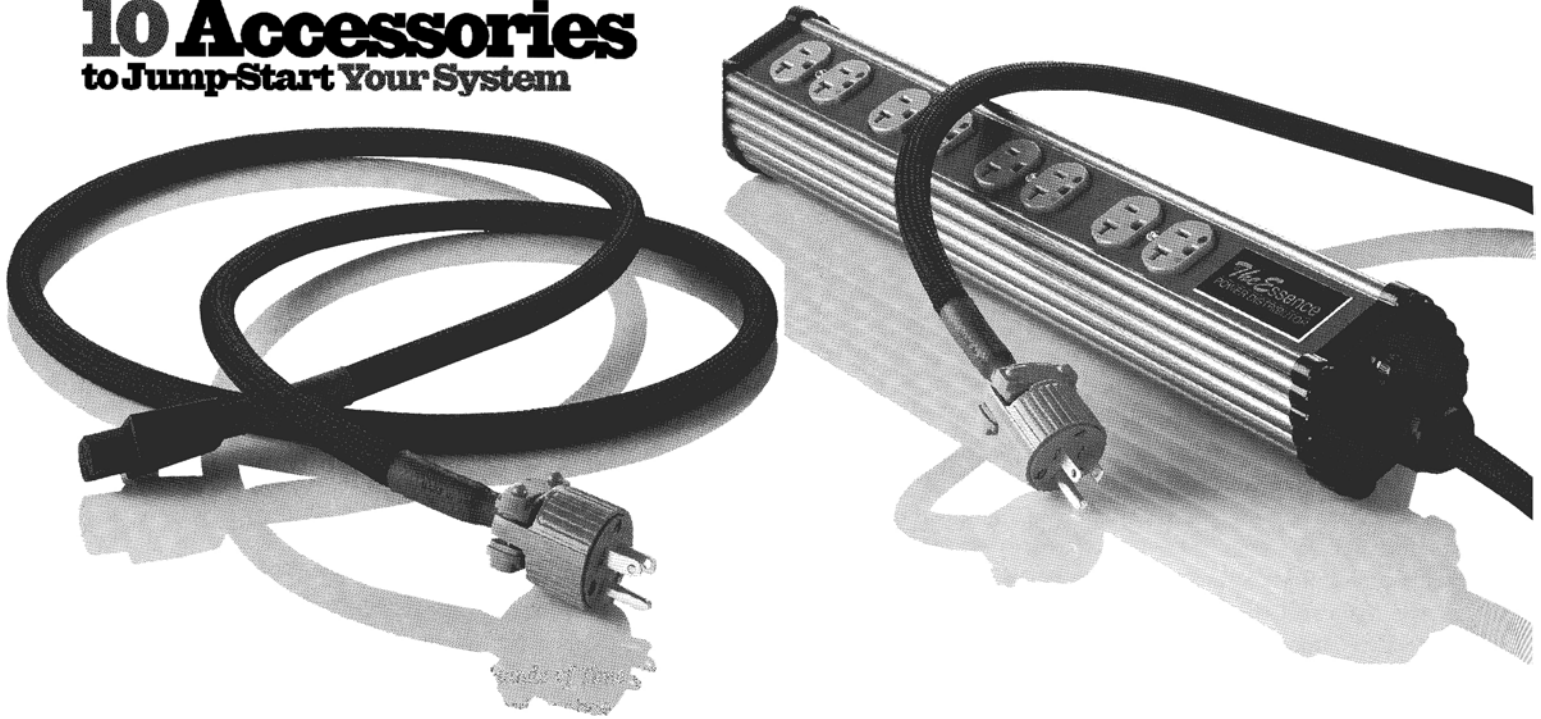


Ultimate Audio

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DEFINING EXCELLENCE

10 Accessories to Jump-Start Your System



The Essence Power System from Essential Sound Products

High-end audio has unfortunately become identified with overpriced gizmos, shrouded in pseudo-scientific mumbo jumbo, that promise audio nirvana. This ruins the scene for legitimate products such as the ESP power system (AC cords and Power strip) that deliver exactly what their literature promises: improved dynamics, extended frequency extremes, greater image focus and improved resolution.

The first quality that struck me (after 40 to 60 hours of burn-in) when using the ESP products was the system's lowered noise floor—the foundation from which other improvements spring forth. Connected to my Krell FPB600 amplifier and Krell KPS 20i CD player, discs such as Willie Nelson's *Healing Hands of Time* (EMI K2-30420) took on new life. Violins and accompanying oboe that open the first cut, "Crazy," sounded more open and detailed. Nelson's voice lost some of the electronic edge I have always attributed to the recording, revealing timbres buried in the electric haze. On "Dedicated To You," from Johnny Hartman and John Coltrane (Impulse GRD-157), Coltrane's sax took on a airy, breathy and dynamically nuanced quality which was missing prior to the Essence system.

However, I was caught completely off-guard by the magnitude of improvement when the Essence power cord was connected to the Jeff Rowland Design Group Model 8Ti amplifier (see upcoming review). A very good amplifier was transformed into the best solid-state amplifier I have ever heard, in many ways. A wholesale reduction of upper midrange and treble edge (there was little to begin with), an opening up of the soundstage and a dramatic increase of mid-bass transparency landed the Rowland 8Ti on the amplifier throne in my system. No single accessory has had a more profound effect upon the sound of one component than The Essence Power System did with the 8Ti.

If your system's fundamentals are right, then these ESP products will help unlock its true potential. At \$499 per cord and \$995 for the power strip, you get what is promised, a rarity in the realm of accessories. And did I mention they are just as beautifully designed and finished? Do yourself a favor. Audition the Essential Sound Products in your system, and hear what you've been missing. *by Greg Petan*

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UNLEASHING THE POTENTIAL OF YOUR DIGITAL FRONT-END

AC CORDS Are you still using the manufacturer supplied AC power cord? If so, you haven't really heard your digital front-end. Of the three cables around, ESP's Essence AC power cord emerged on top. The ESP was extraordinarily quiet, transparent and silky sounding with not a hint of grain.