



**Essential Sound Products MusicCord PRO
Power Cord, 10/01/2008**

Review by Jake Wolf



Most of us read gear reviews because we're either interested in our tone and how to improve it, or because we're the kind of people who are fascinated by all the cool new ideas and products that have emerged from the minds and hands of talented builders/designers/engineers. Over time, some of my favorite types of gear have been the pieces that sacrifice and compromise as little as possible in order to stay true to the desired end result. If a product has a relatively high price tag because it uses uber high quality components in order to sound as good as physically possible, I may not be able to afford it, but I can respect the ethic involved in such a concept. If a cab builder faces a smaller market because their cabs have to be heavier or more expensive than their competitors in order to really achieve their true vision, I can respect the dedication to that goal.

Essential Sound Products Inc. is a company that seems to spare no expense, and compromises nothing in an attempt to provide the best quality products to its customers. I wasn't sure what to expect from a high-end power cable, since I haven't ever experienced one before. High-end ¼" cables sure, but power cords? This is where my cynical, wary consumer brain switches into skeptical mode. "\$179 for a power cable? What are they smokin'?" But as soon as I opened the box containing the MusicCord pro, I knew it was a serious piece, worthy of the same scrutiny and appreciation a high-end bass or a boutique amp deserves. Just holding it in my hands, I got the immediate impression that this thing could withstand a nuclear blast. It is obviously extremely well made, and well appointed, if such a characteristic exists for a power cord. From the rock solid molded connectors with solid brass pins, to the exceptional braided cable sheath, this baby looks and feels the part of a boutique accessory to a T.

I won't delve into the technical aspects because A: I don't know enough about electrical engineering to expound on the benefits of all the technology that goes into one of these cables,

and B: because its all on E.S.P.'s nicely laid out, info-packed, website. What I will go into is my impressions after having had a chance to check it out and compare it to standard power cords. That's what it comes down to after all. All the engineering details and specifications in the world don't mean much if it sounds like your run of the mill radio shack power cord. Luckily, and as expected, this does NOT sound like that power cord.

Describing tone is never an easy chore, especially when you're dealing with subtlety and nuance. In my testing of the E.S.P., subtlety and nuance were the buzzwords. Compared to the stock power cord that came with my Markbass heads, the E.S.P. sounded notably but subtly quicker, tighter, clearer and generally more transparent. I noticed the biggest difference in playing wide voiced chords on my six string. The E.S.P. delivered the same general tone that I love without any murk or blurriness to it. The chord notes rang smoothly and evenly and didn't smooch together as much as they seemed to with the other cord. Playing burpy back pickup 16th notes on the lowest register of the B string also seemed to really highlight the E.S.P.'s characteristics. It seemed to deliver the leading edge of the note attack quicker and more precisely, and in general sounded more focused. Again let me stress, that this is not a night and day difference compared to my standard cord, but the effect was undeniably present to myself and to band mates. Everyone agreed that the sound was more refined and somehow more controlled, while being slightly more airy and crisp with a sharper attack.

In my testing, I found that on a gig there was not a hugely perceptible benefit. All that ambient noise and the stage monitor volume detracted from my ability to hear the E.S.P.'s sonic rewards. To its credit, on a small jazz trio gig with no FOH support or monitors, I was able to perceive and appreciate the difference. Where I see this product able to shine the most is in a recording environment, where these types of gear upgrades really offer the most mileage. E.S.P. claims that the MusicCord pro is quieter, more dynamic, and has a wider, more natural frequency range than standard power cords. I did find this to be true, and in the studio is where I place the most value on these qualities. The other reason envision this living in a studio is because of the logistical reality of the ESP. It is a

large, heavy, stiff cable, and I found myself concerned for the cord socket on the back of my amp. The cords physical weight pulled on the receptacle and I was afraid that over time it would get loose. This is the kind of thing I would prefer to rig up so that it wasn't stressing the jack, and leave it be. Not a huge deal, but I figured I'd point it out.

This is the point in the article where you, the reader, say "yeah man, but is it worth \$179? I mean really?" I obviously can't answer this question for you, since this comes down to a personal judgment about monetary value. What I can say is that for the price, the MusicCord Pro offers a noticeable improvement in terms of clarity and attack. For the \$179 that some people would consider excessive, I feel that the MusicCord pro offers at least that much in terms of how it improves my tone. Is it worth it? It allows the rest of my gear to sound its best, and considering what I spent on all that stuff, it seems a small price to pay for the subtle yet poignantly noticeable benefits it offers.

Test gear:

Fbass BN6, Lakland Skyline Daryl Jones 4, Roscoe fretless 6, Markbass Little Mark II & F1, Accugroove el whappo & Tri112, Euphonic Audio NL210

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