


# Essential Sound Products

## MusicCord Power Cords

**THE TERM “POWER CORD” MEANS EITHER THE** barre grips used when rocking out on AC/DC tunes, or the ubiquitous black cable that connects your amp to the wall socket. And, in the latter case, it’s most likely the item in your gig bag that gets zero attention. And why should it? As long as your AC cord works, that’s good enough, right? Not so, according to ESP founder Michael Griffin, who points out that typical power cords choke the flow of current to the amplifier’s power supply, thus compromising performance. He also states that simply using a heavier gauge power cord doesn’t solve the problem either, as thicker wires can cause high-frequency roll-off, blurred imaging, and sluggish bass response. Griffin’s solution for unlocking the true performance of your amplifier—be it in a guitar or bass rig, or a P.A., home-theater, or recording system—is the MusicCord Power Cord. Featuring patented, multi-conductor cord geometry, the 16-gauge MusicCord (\$129 direct) and 14-gauge MusicCord-Pro (\$179 direct) both utilize oxygen-free copper conductors, braided copper shielding, over-sized ground conductors, a woven polyester cable jacket, and hospital-grade plugs and connectors with solid brass pins. MusicCords are put together with solder *and* crimp connections, and have reinforced strain relief for the plug-to-conductor interface.

Getting someone to pay \$129 or—yikes!—\$179 to replace their standard AC cord is a stretch unless they can be convinced that there’s a sonic benefit. To find out just how much benefit we’re getting, we tested the MusicCord and MusicCord-Pro six-foot cords with a Dr. Z EZG 50 head and 4x10 cabinet, an Engl Drive 50 combo, and a Mesa/Boogie Tigress stereo

tube hi-fi amplifier powering a pair of Bag End M-6 studio monitors. The results were interesting. On my initial test powering the gorgeous sounding Tigress with a standard MusicCord, the sense of dimension and stereo imaging was slightly enhanced compared to the generic AC cord I’d been using. The setup still sounded great with the cheapie cord, but the MusicCord made it sound a touch better.

With our mono guitar amps, the results were more subtle. Both the Dr. Z and Engl amps sounded slightly fuller in the mids and a bit louder when using the MusicCord-Pro. It was not a big difference, however, and we heard the enhancement most clearly when playing clean parts through the very clean-sounding Dr. Z amp. The enhancement was also harder to detect with the less expensive MusicCord. As unlikely as it seems that the last six feet of power cord can improve a high-voltage AC signal that has already been “conditioned” by many miles of utility company wire, the MusicCord-Pro cable has a positive effect on the sound of your amp. That said, the price for this performance increase is steep to say the least. It’s worth noting that the MusicCord manual says to “allow 4-8 hours for initial break-in.” Griffin explains that both the MusicCord and the equipment’s power supply undergo an initial adjustment period, where the sound is relatively tight and then begins to open up. More detail is available on the ESP website. A final nitpicky point is that MusicCord cables are thick and do not like to coil very tightly, which makes them inconvenient to carry (ESP includes a zippered bag and a cord wrap with each cable). Consider a MusicCord or MusicCord-Pro as the final touch on a rig—be it for music making, recording, or music reproduction—that will be primarily used in an environment that’s intended for critical listening. Connected to a guitar amp that’s blazing in a rowdy bar is definitely not the best way to hear what MusicCord cables have to offer. —*Art Thompson* 

**KUDOS** Indestructable quality. Offers a slight enhancement to the sound of your amp.

**CONCERNS** May have more utility with clean amp tones and hi-fi and other music playback systems.

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