

DIY vs. COMMERCIAL POWER CORDS: WHITE LIGHTNING MOONSHINE | FURUTECH

Reviewer: Jeff Day

Review components retail: Furutech FI-25 & FI-25M Rhodium-plated IEC connectors \$88/ea., Furutech FI-11 & FI-11M Gold plated IEC connectors \$40/ea., Furutech G-320Ag-18 IEC and G-320Ag-18F8 power cables \$99, Woods Yard Master Patio Cord (sold by Wal-Mart) \$7.44.

If you read my White Lightning Moonshine DIY interconnect & speaker cable article on the preceding page, you know that it's possible to get unexpectedly good results from very humble starting materials like the Woods Yard Master Patio Cord sold by Wal-Mart for the low low price of \$7.44. With a little slicing, dicing and soldering of the patio cord conductors, I ended up with surprisingly good speaker cables and interconnects. Given the good results, the next logical extension (I know, bad pun) would be to build a DIY power cable and thus this DIY White Lightning Power Cable project was born.



Building A DIY White Lightning Moonshine Power Cord

First I cut the plug ends off the patio cord and tossed them. Then I cut a 6-foot length off the patio cord to use as a power cable but how long you want yours to be is up to you. Next was to strip about 1¼-inch of the white outer covering off each end. Inside you'll see white, green and black 16 gauge wires. Now strip about a ¼-inch of insulation off the end of each wire.

Then it's time to install some plug ends. I wasn't sure what to use for connectors but as I looked around on the web, I thought the Furutech IEC connectors would be the hot setup. They are a bit pricey but beautifully made. I contacted Furutech and Graeme Coley was nice enough to send along a couple of different Furutech connectors: the Rhodium-plated FI-25 (component) and FI-25M (wall) and the gold-plated FI-11 (component) & FI-11M (wall). Graeme also sent along a few examples of Furutech's new silver-plated power cords to serve as reference for comparison: the G-320Ag-18 (standard IEC end to plug into an amp or source) and G-320Ag-18F8 (figure 8 connect as used on Sony PlayStation SCPH-1001 and some DVD players). Furutech uses OCC single-crystal oxygen-free copper in its cables and all of the metal components are "treated with Furutech's proprietary 2-Stage Alpha cryogenic and ring demagnetization process during manufacture to ensure the lowest achievable levels of distortion and noise".



The Furutech connectors are built to a very high level of quality and come with step-by-step instructions for connecting cables to them. The FI-25 & FI-25M are particularly cool-looking with their clear plastic housings that allow you to see everything inside. I connected the IEC connectors by following the straight-forward Furutech instructions. No need to be intimidated here - attaching the connectors is as easy as can be.

Listening Impressions

For listening comparisons, I used my Sony PS1 SCPH-1001 as a RedBook source, my Leben CS600 integrated amp for amplification duties and my Harbeth Super HL5 to fill my living room with music. The Leben CS600 integrated amp can be used in power-amp-only mode with the flip of a switch so for part of my listening, I also inserted the Leben RS-28CX preamp review loaner into the system. I used my DIY White Lightning Moonshine speaker cables and alternated between my WLM interconnects and SilverFi interconnects as the mood struck me (the SilverFi interconnects are really nice by the way, both musically and sonically).

While listening to Benny Carter's Jazz Giant CD (an exceptionally excellent remaster by Acoustic Sounds), I substituted the DIY WLM cable for the Leben RS-28CX preamplifier's stock power cord. The DIY WLM had less sense of space than the stocker, was leaner and more 2-dimensional, edgier and significantly less musical overall. The WLM made listening to music a bit unpleasant and I wouldn't recommend it for use on the Leben RS-28CX preamplifier. I then substituted the Furutech G-320Ag-18 power cable for the stocker as a second comparison. The Furutech cable improved things quite a lot over the stock cable both musically and sonically. Sonically the overall character became a bit darker, smoother and more detailed. Musically the instrumental timbres became more realistic, with the natural textures of the instruments coming to life and the interplay between musicians more obvious and tangible. The sense of recorded space opened up by a significant amount while also sounding more like a natural acoustic as opposed to the usual fake and exaggerated sense of reverberant space that many audiophiles mistakenly think of as 'better' and which you never hear in real performances. The bass with the Furutech also became tighter and punchier, bringing the beat and tempo to life in a much more realistic way. I'm impressed with the Furutech G-320Ag-18 power cable on the Leben RS-28CX preamplifier. It takes an already superbly musical preamplifier and makes it even better.



The excellent results with the Furutech G-320Ag-18 power cable prompted me to substitute the Furutech G-320Ag-18F8 (figure 8 connector) for the stock power cable on my Sony PlayStation SCPH-1001. The improvements I heard with the Furutech G-320Ag-18 power cable on the Leben RS-28CS were duplicated.

Everything was better both sonically and musically. Whether I was listening to Dire Straits Brothers In Arms, Bill Evans Trio At Shelly's Manne-Hole or The New Miles Davis Quintet CDs, there was uniform improvement across the board. The Furutech brought a sense of life to the music while making it sound more like real musicians were having fun playing music together. The same scene was repeated when I substituted the Furutech silver-plated G-320Ag-18 power cable for the stock power cable on the Leben CS600 integrated amplifier. On all fronts, the Furutech power cables made for an altogether more pleasant and musically realistic listening experience.

Summing Up

There's no sense beating around the bush, the DIY White Lightning Moonshine power cable article didn't at all turn out as expected. The Furutech silver-plated G-320Ag-18 power cable kicked the crap out of my DIY White Lightning power cables. It wasn't even close. The Woods patio cord makes darn good speaker cables and fine interconnects but it sucks as a power cord even with the superb Furutech connectors helping out. I guess two out of three ain't too bad for the patio cord. The news here is that at \$99, the Furutech G-320Ag-18 and G-320Ag-18F8 power cables are so ridiculously good and fairly priced that there's no reason to tackle a DIY power cable project. I recommend you just buy the Furutech power cables and enjoy the heck out of them. Well done, Furutech!

Jeff Day



FOR:

MUSICAL PROWESS & FAIR PRICING

• IN THE AFFORDABLE POWER CORD CATEGORY •

Quality of packing: Shipping containers and packing materials for these products were superb.

Reusability of packing: Can be reused at least once.

Ease of unpacking/repacking: Very easy.

Condition of components received: Perfect.

Completeness of delivery: Complete.

Quality of owner's manual: The instructions for the connectors are detailed and easy to follow.

Website comments: Furutech has an excellent website.

Warranty: Full life-time for Furutech plugs

Human interactions: Very good.