

Just when you thought that mighty packages come in mighty packaging, along comes British company Computer Audio Design (CAD) with a piece of tiny wonderment that defies current thinking and opens up an opportunity to extract more from a HiFi system without kicking out your loved kit and spending a lot of money.



CAD of course are no strangers in the HiFi world, their well-established range of passive ground control kit as well as cables, DAC and CD players are well established worldwide.

The subject of this review is the new CAD USB Control. The design results from CAD's research and development of the CAD Ground Controls, 1543 MkII DAC and the many cables they have produced over the last 10 years.

In CAD's experience reducing unwanted high frequency noise in audio systems significantly improves sound quality. This is what they have to say:

The frequency of noise varies in every audio system and in each domestic environment – and even the time of day – on mains power. The USB Control reduces this unwanted high frequency energy across an extremely broad frequency spectrum, from high KHz up into the GHz range.

The CAD USB Control is optimized specifically to reduce high frequency noise in USB connections.

The USB Control is a small thumb-sized device that can be inserted into any available USB socket – including software update ports – on components in your audio system.



Music servers, routers, network switches, digital interfaces, etc. can all benefit from a reduction in high frequency noise. Typically, the USB control will deliver enhanced clarity, larger soundstage, and improved timing/rhythm in any music system.

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The CAD USB Control on first listen provided a similar enhancement, but with something else added. It was an added sense of involvement with the music. On the track *Keith Don't Go* from the Nils Lofgren live album *Acoustic Live* (Tidal 16/44.1) it was immediately obvious that Nils was more in my room than I had ever heard before. My friend Paul who was listening with me said "that's more tangible, his voice, the audience and of course his guitar has more presence than without the CAD in". Listening again without the CAD confirmed our findings, the presentation by my HiFi Rose RS520 was superb, the CAD provided more involvement in the performance, by opening up the system because the noise floor reduction revealed more of the emotion, pace, timing and rhythm within the recording.

We listened to many more tracks via both Tidal and Qobuz and, for the most part, our experience was the same, more foot tapping on tracks with plenty of rhythm and on recordings where there was a

broad and deep soundstage, instruments, vocalists and recording venue artifacts/acoustics were more easily and clearly heard, even at low levels.

On complex mixes popular with modern dance and house genres, in particular tracks by Nick Warren (*La Fabrica Club Mix* from his EP *La Fabrica* – Tidal 16/44.1) the build up and complex mixture of sounds was thrilling. This track highlighted the effect that enhanced timing has on rhythm and how the bass line (although using the CAD did not provide lower bass) can be followed more clearly due to better low-end articulation and pace that ultimately underpins the track.

When Paul Clark asked me to try the CAD in my system, I will admit to being sceptical. My friend Paul who has a CAD CG3 ground control system himself was of a similar view. He needs the CG3 as he has far more kit to ground and needs the 6 available connections in his system. For me, this little CAD USB Control is perfect. I have one piece of kit, the HiFi Rose RS520.

I cannot now listen to my RS520, as good as it is, without the CAD USB Control so I have bought it.

Details of my review system are as follows:

Review Equipment –

Sky full fibre Broadband (replaced fibre/copper hybrid)
HiFi Rose RS520 streaming amplifier
PS Audio Stellar P3 power regenerator
Usher Mini Dancer 2 loudspeakers
Townshend Audio Seismic Podiums
Three tier Atacama Vogue bamboo equipment stand
ADOT MC02 Fibre Network Kit

Cables –

| Route | Manufacturer/Model | Termination |
|--|---|---|
| Incoming fibre to Sky hub (replaced copper/hybrid/ADSL cable) | 3m Audioquest Cinnamon (directional) | RJ45 |
| Sky Hub to ADOT MC02 | 1m Audioquest Vodka (directional) | RJ45 |
| ADOT media converter to media converter (black box to black box) | ADOT Fibre Optic (non-directional) | Single Mode Duplex Fibre Optic Adapter |
| ADOT media converter to HiFi Rose RS520 | 0.8m Curious Ethernet Cable (directional) | RJ45 |
| Speaker cables – main single wire | Black Rhodium Proto 3200 complete with ferrite RF reduction | Locking bananas |
| Speaker cables – jumpers | Black Rhodium Proto 3200 | Locking bananas/spade |
| Power cables | Nanotec Strada 309 (custom made) | Furutech gold plated both ends with gold plated fuses |