



# ANTIGONE

## DR Acoustics: Antigone

### Aiming for Excellence

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Every detail matters in high-fidelity audio. Building a quality audio system and then gradually improving its sonic and musical performance are the audiophile's passion and quest. Providing the best power quality possible to audio system components is the proven way of extracting optimal performance from their increasingly complex and rapidly changing analogue and digital technologies. Many designers and manufacturers clearly understand this

market need, adding more and more sophisticated power bar technologies to their portfolio.

Among the new products shown at this year's Montreal Audio Show, **DR Acoustics Antigone** power supply and distribution device stands out as a full assault on producing the ultimate power bar. This top-end model is the third in the company's portfolio, positioned above the upper-end Silver model and the entry-level White model. To better



understand this new model, we requested a review sample.

As one of our team wrote a while back about power distribution systems: *“Recent years have seen the emergence of a new market for products that provide electrical protection while improving the performance of our audio systems. We have all seen the alarming publicity about the poor quality of the power supplied to our homes and the problems it can cause. The products available today range from the power bar, with or without integrated protection, to solutions that regenerate voltage, regardless of the initial quality of the source electricity”.*

### REINVENTING THE POSSIBLE

In the select group of manufacturers producing high-end power distribution systems, competition inevitably focuses on pushing the limits of this type of audio

component. Some use technology to regulate, recondition, filter, treat and purify electrical current, including protection from over- and under-voltage situations and possible interferences. Others choose a simpler approach, eschewing any electronic circuitry in favour of audio grade components such as audiophile power outlets, high-purity copper for internal wiring, and damping material with well-understood properties. DR Acoustics subscribe to the latter approach, with a heavy focus on elimination of the mechanical vibration inherent in the flow of alternating electrical current, non-limitation of current transfer and the reduction of electromechanical and electromagnetic noise. All of this is achieved without limiting the dynamic ability of the equipment connected to the power bar. With that preamble - and expectations high - let’s look at what DR Acoustics’Antigone can bring to a high-fidelity system.

### THE BASIC CONCEPT

The underlying technology for the Antigone is one that DR Acoustics has been perfecting from the company’s inception, with its Titan, Cassandra, Vulcan and Pegasus cables, based on the elimination of vibration using quartz’s qualities of vibration absorption and polarization. In this case, passing electrical current through quartz polarizes it, creating an electromagnetic field that counteracts contamination. In the Antigone system, three OCC (Ohno Continuous Cast) copper conductors (4 gauge AWG, as compared to 10 AWG for the other two models) are embedded in three ultra-rigid carbon cylinders that serve as separate anti-vibration chambers, completely insulated from one another and filled with quartz and vibration-absorbing polymers. This Micro Quartz Chamber Isolation System (MQCIS) process is unique to DR Acoustics. The first cylinder contains the line conductor, the second the neutral wire, and the third the ground. An acrylic and quartz composite resembling asphalt acts as an absorbent. The idea, according to DR Acoustics’ Daniel Robidoux was to *“treat and counter mechanical vibration while simultaneously creating a coherent electromagnetic field between phases”.*

Assembled by hand using point to point wiring, the unit contains no printed circuit nor any type of electronic component (inductor, capacitor, voltage regulators or indicator light). Similarly, there is no switch or circuit breaker. Essentially, the device consists of three quartz filters free of any electronic component, having no current-limiting and whose anti-vibration function eliminates electromechanical noise and electromagnetic interference (EMI/RFI) from 450 Hz up, while improving the signal-to-noise ratio of components connected to the **Antigone** system. It is therefore not a line or current conditioner, but rather a device exclusively dedicated to power management and electrical distribution of an audio system. *“In fact”*, states Daniel Robidoux, *“Antigone is an extension of the product research done with our cables and assembled with the same quality of components”.* The Antigone features five electrical duplex outlets in pure copper with rhodium plating, providing ten Furutech GTX-D-NCF Cryo-Alpha 20 amp outlets, in our opinion the best

performing units currently on the market. All internal wiring is cryogenically treated. DR Acoustics recommends its Red Fire Ultra model power cable as the best means of connecting the Antigone system to a power outlet.

### CHARACTERISTICS

Built like an audio component, the Antigone power and distribution system can be installed in an audio cabinet or sited directly on the floor. Measuring 431 mm by 406 mm by 152 mm (W, H, D) the unit weighs in at 11 kg. The chassis is CNC machined aluminium while a solid anodized aluminium 10 mm plate forms the front panel. Available in a choice of black or silver finishes, and with its insides reinforced by metal rods, the Antigone does not lack in panache. The back panel, as already mentioned, holds ten AC Furutech GTX-D-NCF cryo-Alpha sockets along with the main AC socket of the same brand and amperage rating. The unit sits on anti-resonant feet. One of the advantages of this type of design conceived along the lines of an audio device similar to the chassis of a power amplifier, is that it provides for very solid connection of AC power cable plugs, regardless of their dimensions. Note that other brands such as Shunyata, IsoTek, Panamax and AudioQuest have also adopted this type of configuration.

According to DR Acoustics, best results are obtained when all of an audio system's devices including the power amplifier are plugged into the unit, provided that total amperage stays below 20 amps, which will be the case for 98% of systems. For powering monoblock amplifiers or home-cinema installations, DR Acoustics recommends its Créon model (in Greek tragedies Antigone is Créon's niece) which uses the same technology as the Antigone, but with a single duplex outlet per unit.

### SET UP

The test system comprised an Acoustic Signature turntable equipped with the brand's TA-1000 tonearm and the Charisma Audio Reference One cartridge. Phono amplification duties were handled by the Trigon Vanguard III preamplifier with its external Volcano III power supply.

Alternating between two integrated amplifiers, the Jadis DA88S and the Brinkmann, the evaluation consisted of two stages. Listening tests were carried out first with the components connected to standard residential electrical sockets, then again after connecting the audio system to the Antigone, with the latter connected to the main power outlet using DR Acoustics' Ultra Fire power cable.

### APPRECIATION

The transition from one mode to another is conclusive with the difference immediately noticeable, the Antigone removing the veiled sound resulting from the standard residential electrical sockets. Using standard sockets, the Blue Note Records album *Into Something!*, featuring among others Larry Young on Hammond organ and Grant Green on guitar, all the usual details, micro-information, dynamics, low-frequency impact, clarity of sound – in short, the sonic and musical content – seem less well served, as do the cymbal work and the moments of silence between notes. With all components connected to the Antigone power distribution system, this sensation of listlessness gives way to an upbeat reproduction and a more active and engaging listening experience. In fact, this album has never sounded so good as with the system components connected to **Antigone** unit. Bass level increases, while the midrange is softer and more detailed. The sound is truthful and not veiled, with an impressive level of dynamic range preserved.

Turning to the George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* album on Reference Recording Mastercuts, the magnitude of the massed orchestral peaks of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra poses a major challenge in terms of sound dynamics that can tax an amplifier's reserves of current. At an appropriate volume level, the system shows no signs of strain or distortion, with no blurring of spatial positioning. Despite the substantially high volume, everything hangs together and it remains easy to maintain focus on the music, a credit to the system and to the capability of the Antigone unit. We are clearly in the presence of an excellent power supply and distribution system. While other power distribution systems can do a good job, the Antigone raises the bar.





## VERDICT

It is generally accepted that proper management of vibration in high-fidelity audio can significantly improve sound reproduction. In fact, correct management of vibration prevents degradation of the music signal in the first place. **DR Acoustics'** focus on eliminating mechanical vibration, using amongst other techniques the anti-vibration and polarization properties of quartz, has now been adapted to the flow of alternating electric current. The Antigone power supply and distribution system is the result.

While no-one is expected to do the impossible, some succeed! It is "mission accomplished" for DR Acoustics, whose Antigone system represents their most developed product. Of all the power supply and distribution systems we've reviewed, the Antigone stands out as the most

accomplished and effective system evaluated to date. Well designed and built with quality components, its specifications demonstrate technological innovation and set a new standard for audio system power supply management. As substantial gains can be had by first improving power supply and distribution, before even thinking about cables, it makes sense to invest between 15 and 20% of an audio system's total cost in this fundamental step of system building.

Antigone. Power supply and distribution system:  
\$ 6,995  
Manufacturer-distributor: DR Acoustics  
[www.dracoustics.com](http://www.dracoustics.com)