



A Melting Wire, A Body, and Two End-Caps

‘on the subject of fuses’

Over the years there has been a lot of debate on the subject of fuses. Opinions ranging from ‘The Holy Grail of Upgrades’ to ‘Next Level Snake Oil’ and more often than not leading to fierce ‘discussions’ between audiophiles. From an technical/objective point of view we understand why we see such strong opposition against the so-called ‘audiophile’ fuses - it’s only a melting wire, a body and two end-caps. From a more subjective point of view - that would be actual listening - we do hear fuses have a significant impact on the performance of an audio component.

Since the start of Farad Power Supplies we have offered different fuses as an upgrade. Some were taken from the market or replaced by newer types, some are nowadays impossible to get. This effectively leaves us with the SR Purple as the sole upgrade we can offer this moment. Feeling restricted, we started looking for alternatives. This led us to Quantum Science Audio (QSA). With their wide range of fuses, from ‘budget’ to ‘cost is no object’, they offer a level of flexibility we are looking for. And so it begins...

Possible pro’s and con’s

We spend many hours listening to a choice of different QSA fuses and found some very worthy candidates to expand the possibilities of fuse upgrades. In short, Synergetic Research will be joined by Quantum Science Audio on the subject of fuses. Before we dig a bit deeper on the actual performance of both brands let’s have a look at their Possible pro’s and con’s.

Synergetic Research

We think many saw the pictures of a naked SR Orange. With the sticker removed, at least the body showed it being an industry standard fuse. Initially worried by these pictures made us moving back and forth between an Orange and a standard fuse. It was clear a huge difference exists between the two. Next was a gossip the effect of a SR fuse only lasts for about a year. Again we moved back and forth with a Purple right of the box and a Purple with over 2500 hours of actual operation (component turned ‘on’ as opposed to ‘stand-by’). Differences were clear, but to our ears well within the limits of ‘burning-in’. We all know SR can be quite wonky for the first few 100 hours of operation. It left us considering this gossip for what it is: a gossip. Whatever SR has found to have a fuse perform the way it does is unknown to us, but they deliver. No matter the marketing sweet talk and sugar coating statements, we have a soft spot for the performance of the SR fuses, offering great value for money.

Quantum Science Audio

Despite a development path lasting for over 22 years, QSA is a relative newcomer to the fuse market. With some very expansive models one cannot deny ‘bravoure’ or at least a ‘bang’ introducing themselves to our world. Do we wonder how SR ‘gets there’, this is even more the case with QSA. Some information dealing with the applied technologies is available, but even then... some parts we get, some other parts... a kind of mystery. It’s best to keep a pragmatic stance on

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these fuses as trying to demystify 'why' these fuses perform the way they do, distracts from what really counts: their auditive results. To loosely quote Nelson Pass: "now that we don't understand the applied techniques, how do they sound?"

We think they perform really well. And despite the high costs involved with the more upper level series, they bring value for money. We understand a fuse costing way over 1.000 Euro's is beyond many, but we take a side road in this one. Moving from an entry level QSA fuse to a mid-level QSA fuse brings a difference in performance we feel is according to the difference in price between the two. The same counts from mid to high level (please note we keep the Extreme Level Series out of this quotation, we did not audit them). Knowing this you will understand the initial purchase of your Farad Power Supply gains massively on its shelf live. Got somewhat bored with the sound of the initial purchase, or have new budget to make a nice improvement? Change the fuse to a higher level and hear a change that is well worth the expense. So there, some levels of QSA fuses are costly but there's a solid economical twist to it: everytime you upgrade, you extend the effective lifespan of your supply for a couple of years. Reassuring is the warranty QSA is offering (you can read about this at the bottom of this page).

Listening results

All our supplies in basic configuration are good as they are, and will bring musical joy no matter what. But if you want to make that extra upgrade, we hope this information helps you to choose the right fuse and cables to tune the Farad supplies more to your taste and to match them in your audio system.

For the Super3 we offer the QSA Blue as entry level upgrade, the SR Purple and QSA Violet as follow up levels. For the Super10 the SR Purple is standard supplied and the QSA Violet, QSA Red and QSA Red-Black as follow up levels. Below are some listening impressions from the selected fuses:

Impressions in use with the Super3

QSA Blue (59 Euro)

The entry level upgrade for the Super3. This fuse is very good in letting you experience what a better than standard fuse is capable of. It brings a clean, lively and crisp sound, a stable sound stage with adequate width and depth. With the lowered noise floor the background becomes very dark. In comparisson to the standard fuse the Blue offers oxygene to the sound. The blue has a tendency of being bright and therefore it's recommended to use it in combination with a copper dc cable. Expect around 50 hours of burning in.

SR Purple (165 Euro)

The next step up and our favorite all-rounder. The Purple offers a wide and deep sound stage, lively heighs and good as well as fun dynamics. Most important - for us - is the fact the Purple will bring you a first glimpse of what we like to call 'emotional exchange' in muscial reproduction. Combined with a copper dc cable the Purple is more 'musical', combined with a silver dc cable the Purple focusses on space, pinpointing and dynamics. Expect around 300 hours of burning in.

QSA Violet (589 Euro)

The upper level we offer for the Super3. Things get serious now. Sound stage is wide and deep, pinpointing comes very easy. Added is a impressive view on noise shaping and distribution of dynamics. Details are rich and many, but the sound never becomes exhausting due to a very natural 'diffuse' edge around them. Sound is really becomming easy flowing and natural in its appearance. When physical space is at a premium and a bigger chassis is out of the question, The QSA Violet would be the choice fuse to get the best performance from your Super3. Combined with a copper dc cable the Violet offers rich textures and dynamics in jazz and chamber music.

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In combination with a silver dc cable it offers immense space, precise dynamics and transparency. Expect around 150 hours of burning in.

Impressions in use with the Super10

SR Purple (standard supplied)

The Purple is a great all-rounder. The Purple offers a wide and deep sound stage, lively heights and good as well as fun dynamics. Most important - for us - is the fact the Purple will bring you a first glimpse of what we like to call 'emotional exchange' in musical reproduction. The Purple perfectly shows what the Super10 is capable of. In combination with a copper dc cable expect more emotional exchange, textures and intimacy. In combination with a silver dc cable expect wide views, speed and dynamics. Expect around 300 hours of burning in.

QSA Violet (589 Euro or 424 Euro in combination with the purchase of a Super10)

Perhaps a greater leap forwards than we experienced with the Super3. Dynamics are tightly knit to the instruments, noise floor is really low, details and textures rich yet completely natural and logical. Emotional exchange is on the level we think we're dealing with what we call 'high-end'.

This might come over as very subjective, but we cannot deny the feeling the Super10 in combination with the QSA Violet wants to 'touch' the listener. Combined with a copper dc cable the sound becomes more physical and dense. Great for jazz, vocals and chamber music. Combined with a silver dc cable it offers immense space, natural details, and natural speed. The lower mids are rich, but this fuse will teach you 'rich' and 'smearing' are totally different subjects. Expect around 150 hours of burning in.

QSA Red (1249 Euro or 984 Euro in combination with the purchase of a Super10)

Top dog in QSA's 'high-end'-series. And what fuse this is. The sound stage is holistic, emotional exchange aplenty, rich, detailed, and very natural indeed. Sound comes so easy, the flow seductive, one easily forgets about the fuse. During the sessions we ultimately fully understood its impact when we changed back to a 'lesser' fuse. These are the kind of components we are really interested in. As with the Violet, the Red can be considered 'more on the warm side' in the upper bass and lower mids. Again, we're dealing with 'rich' and certainly not 'smearing'. All stays in balance and coherent. One of the qualities we really liked was the ability to get dynamics in a 3d shape - its noise shaping abilities are to be heard. As is the pitch black background, highs, articulated lows, presence, transients and decays. We agree it's a steep price for a fuse, however we think the gains are worth every penny. Combined with a copper dc cable sound is dense and physical (you feel your fingertips when listening to a plucked contra-bass), voices well shaped with a coherent chest and true 'singers'-pressure, whilst a soundstage seems no longer relevant to be named - sound is 'there' where it's happening. With a silver dc cable the sound becomes full of insight, be it less physical, perhaps a bit more intellectual. Space seems endless, as is the background. Overall transparent, coherent and very well balanced. Expect around 300 hours of wonky burning in, well worth the wait!

QSA Red-Black (2349 Euro or 2170 Euro in combination with the purchase of a Super10)

Under impression the Red would cut the cake in terms of monetary units in comparison to its performance and the price of the Super10, we received requests if it was possible to supply the Super10 with a QSA Red-Black. No problem, however these requests pulled our non-commercial strings in the sense of convincing ourselves this fuse would bring the improvements that justifies its hefty price. We went for the big question: 'Is there life after Red?' Quick answer: 'Yes there is!' The Red-Black opens doors and draws curtains you didn't realize they were there. But does that in

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a subtle way. It takes some time to fully grasp what this is capable of. Where the Red shows itself instantly within the first second of hearing, the Red-Black puts you on a path of discovery. Voices that 'just' sounded great before suddenly creep under your skin, you come to understand why 'that' cymbal is played, you come to realize playing a double-bass can turn into some kind of advanced gymnastics. The Red-Black is all about extreme detailing in a most natural way. This goes for details itself, but also for dynamics, soundstage, transparency, transients, decays and emotional transmission. The sound signature is certainly on the warmer side, as is with the Violet and the Red. The Red-Black's upper-bass tends to be somewhat 'euphoric' and highs can be somewhat 'dark'. This brings us to a possible downside. If the Violet and Red are of the 'Plug-and-Play' type, the Red-Black might need some management in positioning your speakers in terms of distance from the backwall and/or toe-in. Keep in mind the rewards of this labor are extreme.

In combination with a silver dc cable the stage seems infinite and filled with pure energy, in combination with a copper dc cable matters become intimate and close to the heart.

The true challenge of the Red-Black is its burn-in phase. After a wonderful first few hours it drops way back and will be there for quite some time. We truly did question this fuse during this period. If you choose this fuse for your Super10 it is important to disconnect the Super10 from the AC power a few times over a period of two weeks as this will help the Red-Black making considerable leaps towards showing its full potential. Expect at least 300 hours of actual operation before things settle down a bit.

QSA Warranty

Quantum Science Audio offers a warranty period of one year on fuses below 1250 euro. During this period a fuse may be replaced to a maximum of two times. For fuses above 1250 euro the warranty period is two years. During this period a fuse may be replaced to a maximum of three times. When a fuse breaks down after the warranty period it can always be repaired at QSA headquarters. The price for this service is 50% of the catalogue price of the fuse in question.