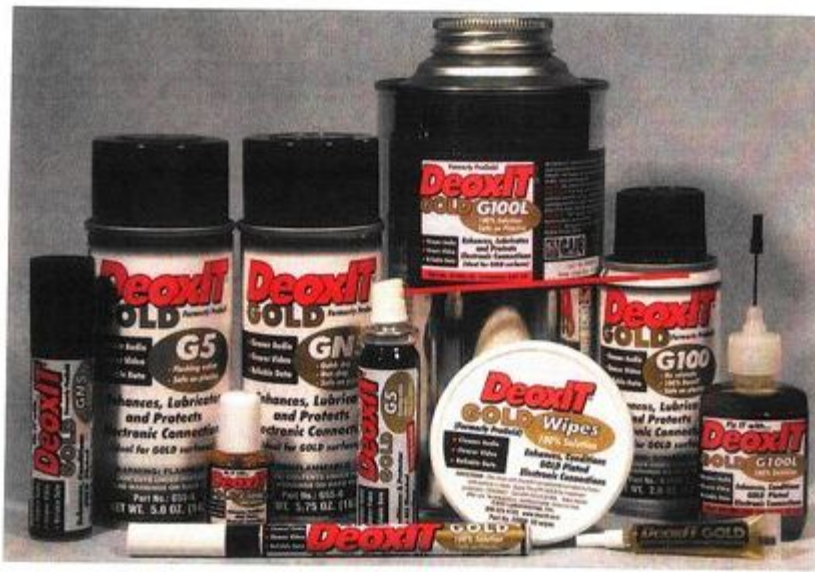
CAIG DeoxIT and Axe Wipes



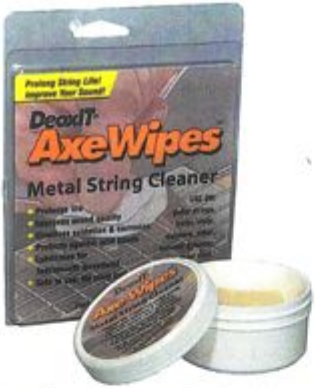
Hari Arisetty

MOST TWEAKS are supposed to change sound. Whether they do so at all — or do so in a good way — is up to the individual listener. Or perhaps how one measures the tweak.

DeoxIT, for its part, claims to reduce oxidation on electrical connections. This can only be to the benefit of the music. Oxidation is simply rust. Rust does not conduct electricity. When oxidation is in the way of an electrical signal, the signal will be reduced. Anyone with an older car knows that once in a while they will need a wire brush to scrape away the oxidation from the battery terminals. DeoxIT is the "kinder, gentler" version of the wire brush for interconnects, speaker cables, and terminals.

DeoxIT comes in two types. The "Regular" is a cleaner that dissolves oxidation. The "Gold" formula similarly cleans the electrical connections, improving conductivity, and also protects against further oxidation by bonding to the base metal, most usually copper. Both are available in presoaked wipes as well as spray and liquid form that you apply and then wipe off. I used Regular and Gold DeoxIT in presoaked wipe form. "Presoaked" is an exaggeration, as the wipes are only the slightest bit damp to the touch.

The packaging on the DeoxIT wipes shows a picture of a dim flashlight that shines much brighter after treatment with DeoxIT. I decided to try the same test. I wiped the batteries and springs in a two C-cell Maglight with a regular DeoxIT wipe. The wipe picked up a lot of oxidation, especially from the positive battery tips; this was seen as black smudges on the wipe itself, as well as noticeably brighter tips. However, to my eye, there was only a slight increase in brightness. I turned the flash-



light on with my back to one wall of my darkened listening room and attempted to read the spine lettering on LPs on the opposite wall. I did that before and after applying DeoxIT. After application, I was able to read slightly more. After using the Regular DeoxIT, I tried the same test with DeoxIT Gold. There was no change. Not surprising, as DeoxIT Gold basically acts to prevent further oxidation.

Applying DeoxIT to the interconnects in my system took a fair amount of time, as I needed to move each piece of equipment. I first tested DeoxIT in my system by wiping the interconnects and the input/output jacks on my phono preamp. These have had about one year of use. I did not see any signs of oxidation on the wipe after usage, as I had with the flashlight batteries, so I assumed there would be no sonic difference.

To my surprise, when I played Louis Armstrong's *That Old Feeling* (Metro MS-510), the music was slightly louder. The difference was fairly small with no marked improvement (or detriment) in the music itself. This makes sense because the phono preamp is connected directly to my amplifier, thus a larger input signal results in a bigger drive voltage. The oxidation hadn't created a "rusty" or "dirty" sound, it simply reduced the overall signal level a bit. It would be nice to say that the DeoxIT resulted in a "cleaner" sound, but it simply resulted in a slightly stronger signal at all frequencies.

I did not see a similar improvement when I applied DeoxIT to the amplifier connections and speaker cables. It seems likely that the small signals and high amplification involved in the tiny signals from a phono cartridge and preamp are more likely to be affected by the minimal amounts of oxidation. This level of oxidation isn't an issue with the much higher signals between amp and speakers.

So, if you have a situation where small signals are being moved across connections, as in a vinyl setup (especially in a moving-coil setup, where the signal voltages are ultra-low), or a low-wattage, single-ended tube/horn combination, you will find DeoxIT to make a difference. But even then it will be a small difference. However at around $0.50 a wipe, the benefit/cost ratio is highly skewed towards the benefit side.

Even the cost of having to move your equipment to get to your equipment terminals and cables has the benefit of making you access all the dusty areas. And I'm happy to report that the DeoxIT excels at picking up dust as well.

James T. Frane

I APPRECIATED RECEIVING the box of new CAIG items from the editor, almost as a Christmas present. Over the last couple of decades, I've found their products to be effective. Many of these are new to me, and I've enjoyed trying them out.

I first read about, and started using, CAIG contact cleaner and conductivity enhancer in the '80s and still make use of it today. It was featured in one of the audio

Our five experts give us the inside scoop on this unique chemical cleaner!

magazines that I read. (Editor's Note: Geez, Jimmy, that was me who ran that review back when, at Audio Magazine. – *Gene Pitts*) The article was quite thorough about the product use and results. Included was good test information about effects of cleaning, improved conductivity and associated long-lasting sonic improvements with the product.

Performance of any hi-fi system can be degraded by poor electrical supply or poor electrical contacts. If all the plugs and sockets were silver, there might never be much of a problem, as silver oxide is still a good conductor. However, using other metals or alloys is more cost effective, but when they oxidize or get dirty, conductivity is reduced. CAIG products have long been an effective way to improve electrical performance between pieces of equipment. I find DeoxIT is an effective and inexpensive way to return your system to top performance.

Bernard R. Kingsley

DeoxIT is one of a variety of products from CAIG that are designed to get better sound out of audio gear. I applied some of their cleaners and contact solutions to the connections of my audio system, but did not detect any improvement of the sonics. I suspect part of my "problem" is that the connections on my audio and audio/video system were basically fairly clean to begin with. Thus applying DeoxIT to the connections didn't help a problem that wasn't there.

Included in the kit I received was a package of "AxeWipes" which are designed to make guitars sound better. Essentially, it is a substance you can wipe on the strings of the guitar and is said to help strings last longer, lubricate them for easier movement during playing, and make the sound better. Andrew, our 11-year-old guitarist, did try the "Axe Wipes" and reports an improvement. He thought the sound was slightly better and the strings were a bit easier to handle.

Bascom H. King

A short while ago I received a rather complete assortment of the products of CAIG Laboratories, Inc. Probably best known among audiophiles for their DeoxiT Gold (formerly ProGold), they make an amazing series of related products. These are mostly various formats of the DeoxiT cleaners such as wipes, bottles, tubes and sprays. I have applied the DeoxiT Gold G100L in the form of a small squeeze tube on many of my audio system interconnects, and while I didn't notice any immediate change, things have been sounding extremely good ever since. One interesting new products was a container of something called Axe Wipes, a metal string cleaner for instruments. I tried this on one of my classical guitars with no real visible change in the string color or playability.

Don Scott

I had a chance to evaluate two CAIG products, their DeoxIT Connector Cleaner, Enhancer and Protector and their DeoxIT AxeWipes for metal guitar strings.

I recently purchased a 20-year-old Magnum Dynalab FT-101 tuner via the net. The low-grade gold-colored RCA connectors were black with corrosion. The DeoxIT Cleaner returned the connectors to shiny with minimum abrasion, verifying its intent.

I went to the local music store where I found a large number of discarded metal strings. The AxeWipes objective in life is to help you clean your metal guitar strings and preserve them against atmospheric and hand-inflicted corrosion – all which it proved to do very well. I tested AxeWipes on nickel-plated and stainless strings for a bass, and on bronze strings for an acoustic, and last on both flat and conventionally wound brass strings.

Initially, I did not think AxeWipe had cleaned the brass-plated strings particularly well; however, I looked at them 24 hours later and was surprised to find that the oxidation had mostly dissolved, as the strings were quite shiny.