

# High Fidelity Cables CT-1 Interconnects and Speaker Cables (/reviews/2016/5/28/high- fidelity-cables-ct-1- interconnects-and-speaker- cables)

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AUDIOPHILIA STAFF (/REVIEWS/?

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*Roy Harris* -- I noticed a thread on a popular audio forum whose subject was the High Fidelity Cables CT-1. The thread generated over 200 responses. As I read the posts, I noticed unanimous praise for the aforementioned cable products. At the time, Audiophilia had no plans for me to review another cable. However, the comments I read, piqued my interest.

I called the designer, Ricky Schultz, who also designed the Virtual Dynamics cable. When I was told that the cable had a unique design and principle of operation, which is different from all other cables, I was keenly motivated to audition and review the cable, as I considered the possibility that the introduction of the CT-1 might improve the sound of

possibility that the introduction of the CT-1 might improve the sound of my stereo system.

The cables under review include the following:

1 X 1 metre pair interconnects (\$1600)

1 X 6 metre pair of interconnects (\$3600)

1 x 2 metre pair speaker cables (\$3200)

### **Design Facts**

The interconnect is a coaxial design, using an 18 gauge solid core magnetic proprietary alloy. It has a Teflon dielectric and a silver plated copper braided shield. The outer jacket is Teflon. The alloy wire is mechanically connected to the connector barrel, while the shield and outer jacket are mechanically connected to the ground and both are also connected to the connector barrel. The connector barrel contains 52 individual parts, including several magnetic plates. The center pin is called a pin lock, which is also magnetic. At the end of the male connector is a collapsible circular center pin which helps to create a tight fit between the cable and an RCA female connector on the back of a component.

The speaker cable is essentially the same as the interconnect, with two exceptions:

- 1) The connector is either a banana plug or spade—both magnetic alloys, but different in content from the wire used in the interconnect.
- 2) The shield is floated and is connected to the outer jacket mechanically.

Thus, the speaker cable is, essentially, 4 interconnects, subject to the conditions mentioned above. It should be noted that the designer has several patents on all of his cable products.

### **Principle(s) of Operation**

Magnetism is present throughout a stereo system. The cable affects the magnetic fields of all components in a beneficial way, reducing intermodulation and harmonic distortion. The consequence of the reduction in distortion is a purer signal passed to the speakers.

### **Break In**

The cables were placed on a cable cooker, before I received them. The designer recommended placing the cables in my stereo system and passing a musical signal for 300 hours. During the break in period, I listened casually. However, at the outset, I noticed several changes in the sound of my stereo system, namely, greater bass extension, greater bass impact in the midbass, affecting the sound of tympani and bass drums, greater presence of the double bass when listening to orchestral material, and greater dynamic contrasts. The aforementioned effects can be heard when listening to the music of Stravinsky, especially 'Petrouchka' and 'Le Sacre du Printemps'. I was startled upon experiencing the power of the timpani and was almost bowled over (figuratively speaking) by the force of its loudness. I noticed that the break in affected mainly lateral sound stage and treble frequencies.

### **Listening Results**

My standard operating procedure is to first check for possible frequency

response errors and then note other facets of performance. I use two CDs to detect possible frequency response errors. The first disc I selected is a test of the upper midrange and lower treble regions. It is a Holly Cole CD, DON'T SMOKE IN BED, track 1, Alert Zz 81020. The sound of the acoustic bass evinced a balance between the sound of the wood body and the plucking of the strings. Its size and impact was quite realistic. Cole's voice, although closely miked exhibited no sibilance. I have auditioned this disc many times, both in my own system, at CES, and other audio shows. What I heard was very different from my previous listening experience. Her voice sounded like she was singing without a microphone.

The second disc is a test of bass response, namely Bela Fleck, FLIGHT OF THE COSMIC HIPPO, track 4, Warner Brothers 9 26562. As Victor Wooten probed the lower register of the electric bass, I could hear the sounds of his fingers, the vibration of the instrument and the notes played. I don't own a spectral analyzer, but I would conjecture he reached somewhere between 40 and 50 Hz. The instrument sounded full-bodied and natural. It was a credible representation of an electric bass one might hear at a jazz club.

At this point I listened to a variety of small ensemble and orchestral musical selections. I employ about 25 CDs as reference. I selected one, TEST RECORT 1-DEPTH OF IMAGE, track 12, OPUS 3, CD 7900. I noticed several changes in the way the stereo system portrayed the sound of the Peoria Jazz Band-featured on this track. First, there was more space between instruments. I could precisely locate the placement of each instrument in the jazz quintet. All instruments were full-bodied, but the trombone had the most realistic timbre. It sounded almost like a live trombone, rather than a recorded trombone.

Last month, I received CDs from Naxos and Reference Recordings. From the former, I obtained a recent recording of Handel's 'Concerti Grossi, Opus 6', Naxos 8.557358-60. The spirit of the Baroque is alive and well in the hands of Kevin Mallon, conducting the Toronto-based Aradia Ensemble, augmented with members of Tafelmusik. The interpretation is spritely and concise, with occasional flourishes of ornamentation and improvisation from Kevin Mallon, who plays baroque violin. I checked the liner notes and called Naxos, and could not determine if there were any other period instruments. Then, I called the Aradia Ensemble in Toronto. At the time of this writing, I have not received a reply.

Based upon what I heard, I would feel confident that there are other baroque violins on the recording. I could not attest to the nature of the oboes- modern or baroque [*The Aradia Ensemble plays exclusively on Baroque instruments - Ed*]. The sound overall was clear and unforced, definitely non-digital, in the pejorative sense. While the strings and oboes were playing, one could still observe the harpsichord in the background. There was detail that sounded natural, rather than contrived or mechanical. There was an ease and a continuous flow, just as one would hear if one were at a concert. There was never a feeling of over focus or excess treble harmonics. I could listen for hours without any fatigue. I can't recall ever auditioning a CD recording of period instruments that was so smooth and non-grating on my ears. I guess one should credit the recording engineer for the excellence in sound quality.

From Reference Recordings, I received two recently-released CDs. One contained the music of Elgar and Sir Ralph Vaughan-Williams, RR129, and the other featured the Music of Bizet, RR 131. The Elgar and

Vaughan-Williams disc was conducted by Michael Stern leading the Kansas City Symphony, while the Bizet works were conducted by Martin West, leading the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra.

I selected the 14th variation from 'Enigma Variations. The instruments were full-bodied, and the orchestra as a whole, had tremendous weight, a consequence of the presence of the upright basses and the occasional presence of the tympani. The ambient noise level was so quiet, one could hear a pin drop. The very low noise level enabled me to discern the presence of two percussion instruments, recorded at a low level, which could be heard while the full orchestra was playing.

At different times during this section of Enigma, several instruments had a brief solo. On each occasion, if one suspended the critical listening mode, e.g., when analyzing the sound of a stereo system, the instrument provided timbral cues which made it sound like a real instrument, rather than one, whose source was that of a recording. At the end of this variation, the orchestra became very loud. My Radio Shack meter registered a deflection of more than 20 db.

Regarding the Bizet disc, I selected the 'Galop', from 'Jeux d'Enfants'. There were similarities between the sound of the orchestra from both Reference Recording CDs. Both were full bodied and both were characterized by a significant presence of upright basses. I mention this, as prior to installing the CT-1, the double basses were less audible when auditioning a digital recording of an orchestra. Of course, I must give credit to Keith Johnson for his expertise as a recording engineer.

One noticed the space between solo instruments positioned behind the front of the orchestra, and the orchestra itself. One could also appreciate the depth exhibited by the aforementioned phenomenon. At the risk of repeating myself, solo instruments exhibited very realistic timbre. It would seem that the CT-1 had the facility to elicit natural timbre, provided a recording was sufficiently well recorded. At the end of the Galop, my Radio Shack meter registered a deflection of about 15 db.

At this point in the review, I had a hunch that this cable had other qualities. I conjectured that it might be possible to improve the sound of mediocre recordings. I brought out another performance of the 'Jeux d'Enfants', conducted by Ernest Amsermet, leading L'Orchestra de la Suisse Romande, a reissue of the original London disc, remastered by the Australian (London) Eloquence label — Lon 480-0457. When I first listened to this disc, I was disappointed with its sound quality. String tone was edgy. The orchestra was constricted and I found myself not wanting to listen, although I enjoyed the performance *I can assure you, this quality is not evident on the original LP. Those Australians! – Ed*.

I was surprised at the transformation using the CT-1 cables. While hardly a paragon of recording quality, I nevertheless observed a more realistic sound of an orchestra. First, I noticed that the flutes had more body and natural timbre. The orchestra opened up and occupied the entire rear wall behind my speakers. String tone improved. The frequency response was balanced. While I still may have issue with this recording, namely poorly recorded cymbals, I was able to enjoy the music and appreciate the excellence of this conductor. He is certainly a fine interpreter of French music.

As I write this section of the review, I am listening to 'The Fair Maid of Perth Suite'. I just heard a bassoon solo. I was very surprised and impressed. Its timbre was dead-on. The cymbals, again, sounded

terrible.

I have been touting the virtues of the CT-1, with regard to its handling of tympani. I will end this review with an example of a solo tympani, whose sound is phenomenal. I am referring to Britten's 'The Young Persons's Guide to the Orchestra', conducted by the composer — Lon 417 509. At the beginning of the composition, the orchestra plays in unison.

Thereafter, one hears the wind section, the brass section and the strings. While the winds and brasses are full bodied, the string section sounds congested. One can observe the winds playing in front of the brass section. Then the percussion instruments — timps, cymbal and triangle each have a brief solo. The placement of each percussion instrument is readily apparent. The timpani is left of center behind the speakers, the cymbal and triangle are behind the right speaker, and the triangle is in front of the cymbal. Each instrument has a brief solo. The sound of the timp is fleshed out. One hears the mallet striking its taut surface and the effect is an uncanny resemblance of the sound one might hear if one were attending a concert sitting close to the stage.

Towards the end of the review, I experienced a minor problem with the PS Audio DAC, which did not present an impediment to completing the review. After auditioning all musical selections, I decided to replace the PS Audio Dac with a \$100.00 DAC I received several years ago. I remember at the time that I was underwhelmed by its performance. Since it is the only other DAC I have, I decided to listen to it again. I selected one CD, Respighi's 'Pines of Rome', conducted by Jesus Lopez-Corbos — Telarc CD 80505. The sound of the inexpensive DAC improved greatly and approached the performance of the Vincent CDs 6 player.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout my audition of the CDs during the break-in period as well as the review itself, I did not detect a sonic signature. I did experience greater bass extension, and more impact in the midbass, especially noted in the sound of bass drums and timpani. I observed greater realism of timbre, greater scale (size of instruments), and, with some

CDs, a sense that I was listening to an instrument rather than a recording of it. There was a perception of more space and greater separation of instruments, making it easier to locate them in the sound field, behind the speakers. The sense of space also added a modicum of realism to the sound of a recording. The sound of mediocre recordings was improved. This was noticed during break-in and during the review, itself. This accomplishment occurred without euphonic coloration.

Given the premise, supported by the designer, that the CT-1 can improve the performance of a component, by reducing distortion artifacts, I propose the following:

- 1) A consonance between musicality and accuracy. This dichotomy has been a source of contention among audiophiles for years.

The above mentioned state is a consequence of a purer signal reaching the speaker and a reduction in errors of tone, timbre and harmonics, brought about by the magnetic properties of the CT-1, without a loss of musical detail. Thus musicality and accuracy can coexist, provided a recording is of sufficient sound quality.

- 2) Reduction in component distortion can improve the sound of 'problem' recordings. I noticed this during break-in as well as during the review.

- 3) Reducing distortion from components could bring about a

3) Removing distortion from components could bring about a convergence in their sound. Thus, using the CT-1 may cause components to sound more alike. For example, significantly reducing odd order harmonics from solid state amps and even order harmonic distortion from tube amps may cause tube and solid state amps to sound more alike.

While I acknowledge the above is speculative, it merits further study.

### High Fidelity Cables CT-1 Interconnects and Speaker Cables

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Source: Manufacturer loan

Price: Interconnects \$1600 for one metre; speaker cable \$3200 for a six foot pair.

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**anthony kershaw** 6 months ago

Not strange at all. Just our writer's personal opinion.

Cheers, a



**clive williams** 6 months ago

Really strange, no Star for this product.

