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High Fidelity Cables CT-1E Phono & Interconnect Cables Review

Enhanced Interconnect and Phono Cables from High Fidelity

By: Jack Roberts | February 2013



[M]y favorite TV shows of all time are *Doctor Who?* and *Northern Exposure*. Why? They are both nearly as weird and likable as me; ha, ha. Honestly though, I used to wish I could move to Cicely, Alaska; the fictional town where the people of *Northern Exposure* lived –not because I had any desire to live in Alaska – but because I wanted to live with all those weird and likable people.

In one episode of *Northern Exposure*, Marilyn Whirlwind is looking for a new dance partner for the contest coming up at the next big Pow Wow. She keeps looking for someone who has good stillness; you know, what you don't see in a dance. I've always



Specification:

Price: \$2,800 per meter, each additional half meter is \$350

www.highfidelitycables.com

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known how important quietness was in a stereo system, but until the addition of the [AMG “V12”](#) turntable and the [High Fidelity CT-1](#) cables into my system I never realized that there was so much noise in my system, or any other system for that matter.

This is a review of Rich Schultz’s CT-1E Enhanced Phono and Interconnect cables, but it would probably be a good idea to read my October review of his ground breaking “High Fidelity CT-1” interconnects as well as this review.

According to the High Fidelity Cable website the technical difference in the cables are as follows.

- The CT-1E has all the features of the normal CT-1 along with the following:
- A new conductor alloy is used in the enhanced version which has a greatly increased ferromagnetic permeability for increased levels of Magnetic Conduction and performance.
- The conductor is treated with a proprietary material that lowers dielectric absorption so signals are not held back by the changes in electrical charges in the teflon dielectric.
- The PinLok connector has been redesigned for increased ferromagnetic permeability in the pin itself. This allows low level signals to move more easily into the conductor.
- Precision 24K gold plate is applied at 300 microns which is double the industries thickest plating recommendations. The ground ring is also plated to help ensure a optimal low level signal performance.

The Enhanced version of the CT-1 began as a design for a phono cable. I was lucky enough to receive the first CT-1E phono cable. At that time I had two great phono cables: the top of the line from Cardas and Sablon. Both of these cables were very good and the Sablon was incredible for the money, but the CT-1E was a whole different ball game. So how did these cable come to be?

Rick said that low level signals created by phono cartridges are very fragile, or put another way, are very easily distorted. If not very careful, information is even lost. These signals have almost no current and are driven by voltages that may have maximum output of as little as 0.2 volts, or lower. He says, “*a testing facility in Canada contracted by Magnetic Innovations LLC tried testing these signals as low as -59 dB. They discovered that long after conventional audio cables significantly obscured test signals, our CT-1E phono cable using Magnetic Conduction technology were still at work clearly transferring this low level information.*”

I know the technical info is a little vague. Let me tell you though, that when added to my AMG V12 turntable using the [Benz Ebony TR S Class](#) cartridge with Micro-Ridge stylus, my source became capable of sonic recovering more low-level detail than I ever dreamed was on LPs.

After making the phono cable, Rick decided to make interconnects from the same cable and found them to be a major step up from the CT-1. Let me remind you, the CT-1s were by a wide margin the best interconnects I had ever used. So let’s talk about how my system sounds with CT-1E running from the AMG V12 to the [Auditorium 23 Homage T1 SUT](#), to the [Shindo Giscours](#), and then to the [Wavac EC-300B](#).

Overall Sound

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It's one thing to talk about the way components or cables affect the sound of the top end, midrange, bass, etcetera, but what really matter is the overall sound. To put it in another, and sadly, a less talked about way, how does the music sound?

I promise this will be the only quote from the other review, but it is so important that I must remind you what I said about the overall sound of the CT-1s. "What I wasn't expecting was to hear such a significant, immediate difference. They create a solidity and musically satisfying sound I had not heard before. They seem to get rid of noises or sounds that I thought were just part of reproduced music, regardless of how good the system was."

The enhanced version has the same overall sound, but reveal even more information. The system sounded more alive than ever before. Instruments and vocals just seemed to be there in the room with me.

Dynamics

This great sense of solidity and control might lead one to question the cable's dynamics; such fears would be groundless as these cables allow my system to have honest real to life, live-performance dynamics.

Not only do they allow such macro-dynamics in my system, they also improve my system's micro-dynamics. As the CT-1 breaks-in, their total lack of splashy-sounding transients is so much more like what a live musical performance really sounds like. The transient responses are lightening quick, but not bright. Drums, tympani instruments, plucked strings, and pianos are the best I've heard in my system.

Both micro and macro dynamics explode out of a solid soundstage. This creates a sense of naturalness and speed that I have not experienced before. I have to admit I am struggling to explain this sound, because as I said before these cables remove noise, sibilants, and splashy sounding strings and female vocals that I just thought were part of listening to recorded music.

I'm not going to go through the same things I said about the CT-1 again, just read it and know the E does all this just way better. I do need to comment on one more aspect, though.

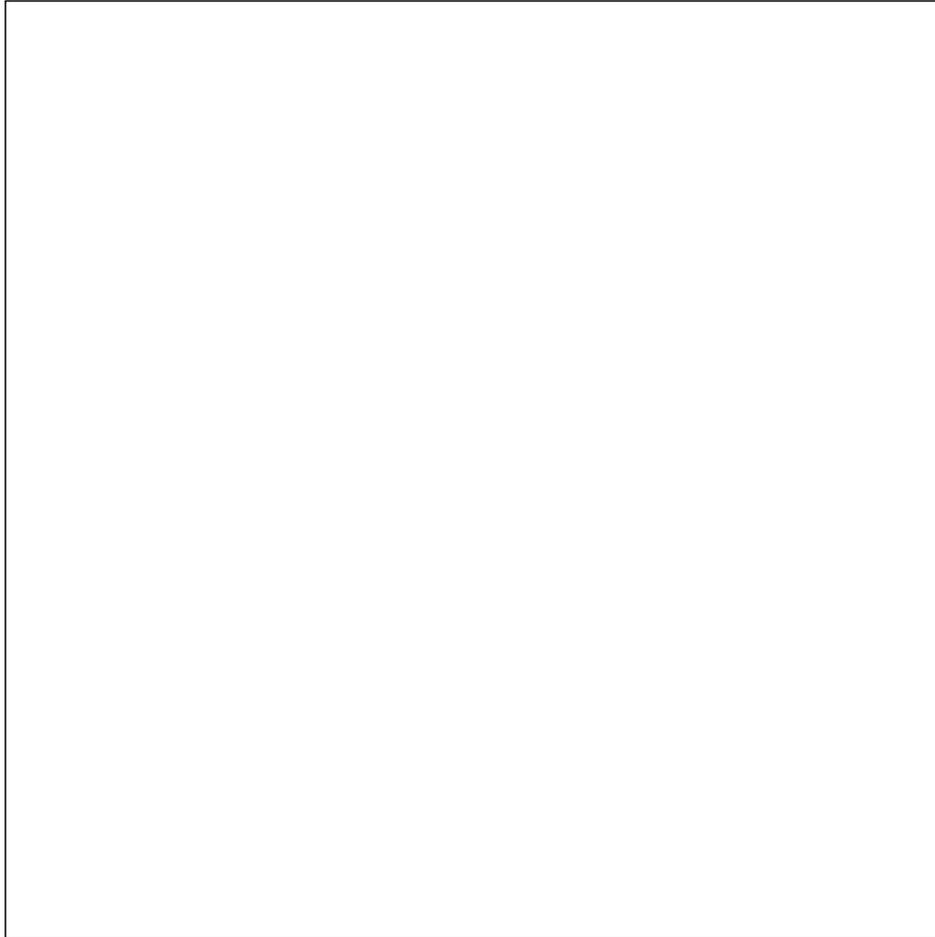
Soundstage, Imaging, and Scale

It's always been my opinion that a system's ability to produce a soundstage is directly related to its ability to let you hear fine detail, especially in the midrange and top end. The CT-1Es produce the most believable soundstage, or maybe it would be better to call it a sound space. There is a solidity in the soundstage that is just so realistic. They allow my system to produce a scale that can be big to huge, and at other times tight and small. To talk about width and depth would not come close to letting you know how solid this soundstage is.

In closing, let's talk about some specific example of what these cables do with music. Let's start with Rickie Lee Jone's album *Pop, Pop*. This album rates 10 on music and 10 on sound, but the CT-1Es let her voice get loud and more dynamic without ever sounding stressed or sibilant.

Next, there is the *Harry Belafonte Live at Carnegie Hall* of HP fame. It really is a great LP but on some songs, his voice is sometimes a little shrill. I always thought this was just his voice, but with the CT-1Es I could hear his breath and vocal inclinations without ever hearing his voice without any shrillness.

Let's end by talking about one of my very favorite LPs, Ray Brown and L' Almeida playing the most amazing bass and guitar you would ever want to hear. With the CT-1Es, Ray's bass simply growled at times and was fast and nimble at other times. L' Almeida's guitar was fast, tuneful, and the decay inside the instrument was simply lifelike.



Conclusion

I guess the only area I can imagine anyone faulting these cable would be the cost: \$2,800 per meter. Still, when you consider the cost of some other cables such as Audio Note Sogon, or Crystal Cable's CrystalConnect Absolute Dream at \$13,500 per meter, or Jean Labs Awakening at \$11,000, or MIT's Oracle MA-X Proline at \$8495, or even Siltech Signature Empress Crown RCA at \$21,000, \$2,800 seems like a bargain for the best interconnects I have ever heard, by a large margin. One last thing I have to admit, it was easier to hear the difference in this wire from conventional wire in my reference system than it was in my upstairs digital/video system. Still, in either system it was apparent what a big step forward the CT-1Es are.

Addendum

I need to let you know that after listening to the High Fidelity Cables for over three months, I need to revise what I said about break in. In my review of the CT-1, I said, "the High Fidelity Cable CT-1 sounded shockingly good when I first installed them in my

system. Don't get me wrong — they do continue to improve, specifically open up and sound airier for what I would guess would be about a couple of hundred hours. Truth they sound about 90% of their best after about 10 hours of play.”

I didn't even mention break-in in the second review. Truth is, with just a few hours on them they sound so much better than any cables I have used that I may have over looked how important break-in is. Both the CT-1 and the CT-1E need a lot of break-in to sound their very best. They begin to sound smoother, bigger, and more transparent with time. So, while you will enjoy them from the very beginning, you will enjoy them much more when they have a few hundred hours on them. By the way, Rick has also made this discovery and is working on a way of breaking them in significantly more before shipping them.

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6 Responses to *High Fidelity Cables CT-1E Phono & Interconnect Cables Review*

alan trahern

February 4, 2013 at 2:04 pm PST

Sure would be sweet if they offered a single ended to balanced phono cable so i could try one between my Walker and my balanced phono stage. Silver Audio put me together a nice little custom cable a few years ago but this sounds really intriguing.

Reply

Dave Smith

February 5, 2013 at 10:45 am PST

Mr. Roberts....Dave Smith here in Danville, VA.

I have been reading your reviews of the High Fidelity cables with interest as I, too, have found these cables to be outstanding. I have graduated from the CT-1s to the CT-1Es and agree with your entire assessment of the cables. I am somewhat of a cable junky and have had many cables in my system, some much more expensive than the HF cables, but none of them have accomplished what these cables have in my system.....(Tidal Contriva Diacera-SE...Chalice Audio 'Grail' monoblock SETs and a PS Audio PWD MKII.)..I have the CT-1E speaker cables coming this week , replacing Echole 'Obsession' cables and it will be fun to see how they compare and to see if they are synergistic with the i/cs...thanks for your review.

Dave Smith

Reply

Jack Roberts

February 5, 2013 at 10:50 am PST

Dear David,

Thanks for reading Dagogo.com. It appears that you are XXXXX (moniker withheld) on Audio Asylum, if so I have always enjoyed your post. Thanks again for the kind words. I agree these cables are really special.

Jack Roberts

Reply

charles wasson

February 27, 2013 at 10:00 am PST

After reading your enthusiastic Sablon cable review I was tempted to try their digital cable. You seem to clearly prefer the High Fidelity cable. I`m looking for a premium quality SPDIF cable to complete my system. Have you heard the digital cable? Can I assume what you wrote of the IC holds true for their digital as well?

Charles

Reply

JACK ROBERTS February 27, 2013 at 4:52 pm PST

The Sablon cables are just as good as my review says they are and are considerably less expensive than the High Fidelity Cables. That being said, I didn't listen to digital cables from either company.

Reply

Brion

April 19, 2013 at 3:32 pm PST

I am always pleased by the emergence of a new cable that is "reasonably" priced, compared to the \$5k, \$10k, \$15k cables.

HOWEVER, it would be nice, during replies/testimonials and the like, if the people WITH the cable would mention – by name – the other manufacturers' cable that cost 3x, 5x the price of the cable they currently love. It would give perspective to what is achievable. For example, if the CT-1E is superior to Nordost, Synergistic, Crystal Cables (in your opinion), I don't think the manufacturers will tear their garments and wail and lament that they are "lost- lost forever" by such uttering.

I find it useless if I cannot know what previous cables others have had. I, for example, have Valhalla, and it would please me greatly to know that a \$1600 CT-1 is superior to – or at the very least – EQUAL in all ways – to the Valhalla. Believe me, I would own one in a flash. People seem so mysterious about what they've owned. HP, in contrast, has NO problem saying in one issue, that the Furutech cables were as good as the Nordost Tyr – "maybe better." Why are the posters so delicate about names, names, names??? I find the same thing in audio magazines (and I once wrote for tas – briefly). It is not a slam to say that this new cable leaves, oh, say, Nordost, in the dust. This would be cause for rejoicing, that we get Nordost quality (better than Nordost quality) at 1/3 the price!

SPEAK UP, GENTLEMAN (AND LADIES)!!!

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