

RICK SCHULTZ INTERVIEW

Industry Spotlight

In: [June 2012](#)

Patrick Dillon

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Rick Schultz made a name for himself in audio manufacturing with Virtual Dynamics, a company known for highly unusual power cords and interconnects that caught the eyes and ears of many reviewers and customers a decade ago. He was also among the first cable designers to seek outside lab tests of his products in order to convince people that cables did, in fact, make an audible difference. When Virtual Dynamics closed in 2009, Rick took a break before coming back with a new venture this year, High Fidelity Cables, whose recently released wires are the antithesis of the heavy, difficult to manipulate Virtual Dynamics line. In this interview with Patrick Dillon for HiFiZine, Rick gives us the lowdown on his work, the industry and his views of the music scene.



Rick Shultz of High Fidelity Cables

PD: Tell me a little bit about your background and how you got started in the audio business?

RS: I started like most audiophiles with a love of music and an appreciation of what a good system can do for music reproduction. Even as a kid, I was interested in quality audio gear. I eventually took that interest into audio retail and later into the distribution of audio equipment. Along the way, I became friends with a talented inventor. He shared with me secrets regarding the complex relationship between audio circuits and vibration. This led me to experiment with vibration control, and I eventually made a power cable for myself which used vibration-reducing technology. The cable was simple, inexpensive and very effective. The impact which the vibration control had on the sound surprised even me. Then, audiophile friends became interested in buying them from me, and

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within about 3 months of making that first cable, I was selling literally hundreds of what ended up being the \$49 Basic Power cable and \$99 Power Three cable. That was the birth of Virtual Dynamics.

PD: The cable business tends to draw the ire of cynics more than any other part of the audio industry. What do you say to people who think all wires sound the same?

RS: Well, my start-up was in 2001, and at that time most of the people I did business with had never tried an after-market power cable. But as people develop enough trust to listen for themselves instead of reacting out of skepticism, they become believers. That said, most people do not start out believing that cables make such a big difference. Of course, test results have now also confirmed the improvements which cables can make.

PD: Let's talk about Virtual Dynamics in particular — what were you most proud of with those cables? Is there anything unique about these now that you don't see in other cables?

RS: Virtual Dynamics conducted third-party tests to show that cables can make measurable differences. I was proud to be part of that era of more definitive proof for our industry and was also proud the Canadian government supported this research to help us learn. I believe we need to continue the testing of audio components with and without high-end cables attached. This will help us to prove that cables can offer measurable benefits. In doing this, we as producers learn more and can potentially build better products for the future. This approach has certainly helped me.

Virtual Dynamics cables offered a unique approach to cleaner sound. The cable design involved varying material for vibration control, starting with simple steel bearings on the basic power cable. As the cables became more complex we introduced stainless and even bronze dampening material and interlocking brass powdered materials, each of which was unique to Virtual Dynamics. We introduced 'Speed of Light' magnet technology and used in-house cryogenics. We developed specialized cryogenic cable cooking and used very effective multi layer shielding. The list goes on to fluid dampening, complex compression systems for vibration control, cryogenically-treated specialized solders and connectors. These were each original aspects, but offered something truly unique when combined into a single product as we did at Virtual Dynamics.

PD: Ah, cryogenics.....many audiophiles raise their eyebrows at this particular cable treatment. What's your take?

RS: Cryo treatment has become pretty well established and is used in many professional environments from race cars to fire arms. With ten years or more of use in high-end audio, the benefits of cryogenic treatment for audio equipment has been well proven as well. In my experience, cryogenics provides a relaxed clarity you usually cannot get without it. This does not mean you have to cryogenically treat something in order to get great sound. But I have found that it will benefit almost anything in the audio reproduction chain. I would recommend it to anyone.

PD: Virtual Dynamic cables were famous for their size and inflexibility, not to mention some pretty outrageous prices but over the years they garnered tremendous reviews and no small army of loyal customers. Those cables still do good business in the used market such as Audiogon so presumably there are still interested purchasers.

RS: Well, the VD cables are still original. In all these years they have not been replicated so they continue to be sought after for the unique function they deliver to high-end gear.

PD: What caused the demise of Virtual Dynamics as a company?

RS: Many things, but the economy was the main contributor as anyone would suspect. The loss of sales due to the poor economy led to lowering production. Cutting back was not easy as we were starting to build in significant quantities in order to reduce costs for our customers and to make higher end product more affordable. It ended up being the wrong time for that plan as sales slowed down considerably. Volume in cable sales is very important because there is so much front-end cost related to purchasing equipment, designing and building the cables. Volume helps to distribute these costs and make the product more viable for market. Most people would be very surprised to find out how expensive it really is to build high-end products. At Virtual Dynamics, it took a substantial amount of revenue each month to simply break even due to the many fixed monthly costs. The collapse of the US economy in 2008 required us to change our business model regarding sales and distribution and it was the opposite of the growth we were preparing for. Our suppliers were also hit hard I suspect, and getting things built consistently in a timely fashion became a real problem. After awhile, it just became unworkable.

But there is always a bright spot. Here, it was the fact that the bad economy and the end of the company gave me time to focus directly on innovation. My goal was to build products that would have more to offer in all areas, including cost vs performance, but to achieve this required innovation. During this period, I began conceptualizing a new technology that would change the game in high-end audio cables. I truly believe that after hearing this new technology, very few audiophiles will want to go back to conventional high-end cables.

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PD: What can you tell us about the new products?

RS: The new cable is simply different. In all of my days at Virtual Dynamics I did not expect to be involved with a product like this; light and flexible were not in my vocabulary. The CT-1 and High Fidelity Cables are based on a new patent-pending technology called "Magnetic Conduction". The patent has been recently "allowed" by the US Patent office; we expect a patent in about 6 months. The technology is based on a magnetic related discoveries; this fact is likely not really surprising, considering my background.

I guess, what I would have to say about the technology is that the effect is significant and so powerfully musical that I am back here in the audio industry. I am once again compelled to share what I have found. It deserves to be heard. It is not like other conductor technology. It calls to the true audiophile in all of us. It reminds us of why we love what we do in this hobby. It is breakthrough ideas and technologies like this that convince me that this industry will grow and will continue to be forefront in developing innovation for all electronics.

PD: What's your take on the current high-end audio scene?

Music is unquestionably one of the greatest things life has to offer. Music is universal and almost everyone enjoys it. And the value of high quality reproduction of that music is a fantastic selling point. But we have to remember that people experience music in different ways. And when it comes to audio reproduction, there are all sorts of people looking for all sorts of things. In the end, it is the years and the ears that determine what is great audio to each of us. So now, I try to remove myself from the equation as much as possible and simply let the best technology work its own magic. While one piece of gear will not work the best in every system with every other piece of gear, we are trying hard to make products that consistently work well with a very high percentage of other equipment. I think that is one way of giving value.

I also think that companies like Best Buy carrying better entry-level gear is important to communicating value to the consumer. Once a consumer experiences even entry-level high quality audio reproduction, they will find us.

Finally, at least for me, a good system will play well pretty much any disc you throw into it, not just the audiophile stuff. Poor recordings of great music do exist and audio systems for music lovers need to be able to reproduce the emotions of that music and not make the listener run for the door as some "high end" systems do.

PD: Favorite music and recordings that you think everyone should hear?

RS: I am a fan of newer music I am over the audiophile stuff most of if it can't bear to hear again 😊 I have worked hard to get a system that will play most anything well. I listen to a lot of new musicians which I often find on free-trade and internet music sites that offer free downloads. If one catches me, I will buy the CD to support the artist. And the downloads are not usually high quality anyway. But Damien Rice's "O" and essentially any album by Ray LaMontagne are my staples right now. I just love them. And Damien Rice is a good challenge for a system. If his recordings sound crystal clear and not cloudy or congested, then you have a great system and should be able to play any music. I am also listening to Joshua James' album "Sun is Always Brighter" and Sayde Price's "Wilt all Rosy." I found these last two on free trade and I think they are just awesome.

Readers' comments

[jim goulding](#)
August 27, 2012
[Reply](#)

Any man listening with Reference 3A Grand Veena's must know a thing or two. I even like the image I get from the Virtual Dynamics' name. Plus, think I'll buy "O". Enjoyed this one. Best.

[jim goulding](#)
September 5, 2012
[Reply](#)

Eeeuu, a completely unnecessary comment but that Damien Rice CD with the exception of the cello and some guitar sounds way over processed to me. Sometimes Rice even sounds like he's singing thru a megaphone. Hannigan is a sweetie, tho. Can't say that I relate much to his lyrics, either. Tit for tat, ok? I got one for you that is similar in concept in that it is original music and lyrics with acoustic instruments but better in content and production . . . Laura Viers' Carbon Glacier (Nonesuch). I suppose the former could be a matter of taste but I don't think you can argue with the latter. Hard to believe that this was produced by her drummer. Ya'll be cool.

[keeponrockin](#)
November 19, 2012
[Reply](#)

I have some very good Virtual Dynamics cables and was saddened when I heard VD had closed. I will now buy his new products and hope he goes on Youtube again sharing his good will with everyone.

He's a winner. I love people like that. 😊

Gary Proksch
April 22, 2015
[Reply](#)

Do you have idea how I can get hold of Rick Schultz in regards to Virtual Dynamic Cables?
Thanks Gary (520) 308-4343

Gary proksch
April 22, 2015
[Reply](#)

Thank you for your quick response however we have already purchase these cables and we have add it all questions about them that's why we asked if he c old call b us.
a
Again many thanks
Gary (520) 308-4343. (317) 514-3587

Danny jacobson
March 18, 2016
[Reply](#)

Hello Rick. Long time since I've seen ya. Good to see your still making sound better and better every day. How's things been going with you and your family

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