AUDIOPHILIA

Equipment Review:

Soundstring Cable Technologies
The 3rd in the series Cables 'R Us

Roy Harris November 2004

Soundstring cable products were introduced at the 2003 Home Entertainment Show.

Soundstring Cable Technologies is an amalgam of the efforts of Jed Hacker, a veteran producer and director in the broadcast industry, Superior Insulated Wire Corporation and Lion Cords Division of Astrophonic Corporation of America.

Jed Hacker is responsible for the design, research and development phase of the cables.

Superior Wire manufactures insulated wire and cable products with emphasis on consumer electronics, and has provided high quality products for 59 years to OEM's, audio and car distributors, etc. Its product line includes a variety of applications such as TV antenna wire, telephone wire, coaxial cable and assemblies for CATV/MATV/SATV, CB ham and marine and automotive hi-fi stereo installations.

Lion Cords Division of Astrophonic Corporation of America, founded in 1946, is a supplier of custom made cord sets and power supply cords for major consumer electronics manufacturers such as Sony Corp of America, Mitsubishi Consumer Electronics, Sanyo, Conair Inc and Rival Manufacturing, and many others.

The subjects of this review include the following products, reviewed as a whole:

1) 1 meter Octaphase "Alpha Series" interconnect $430
2) 20 foot Octaphase 95% shielded "Omega Pro Line" interconnect $856
3) 6 foot Tricormaxial Speaker cable $678
4) 4 -6 foot Tricormaxial Power Supply Cords $2184

Total Retail $4148

Design and Technology

The Octaphase interconnect consists of 8 conductors, 4 for the center conductor and 4 for the ground. Each conductor is multi-stranded, 99.99% OF electrolytic copper and is insulated with a flame retardant PVC jacket. Each conductor varies in gauge and the overall gauge of the 4 conductors is 22 gauge. The company holds a patent on the aforementioned construction which is called "Progressive Geometric Multi-Gauge" design.

The ground connection is achieved by crimping and the center conductor is attached with a drop of solder. The pin is gold plated copper. It is slightly elongated and the tip is wider than the shaft. The connector is fitted with a 24Kt gold plated, beryllium copper element, and a finely cured wood housing screws into the back of the connector to minimize resonance.

The Tricormaxial Power Supply Cord consists of 7 conductors -- 3 for neutral, 3 for the hot and 1 ground. Each conductor is insulated with PVC and contains many very fine strands of OFC in a ropelay configuration. The three conductors taken together are equivalent to 10 gauge. The ground is 14 gauge. Each conductor varies in gauge in accordance with the "Progressive Geometric Multi-Gauge" design. There is no soldering. Conductors are crimped and shrink wrapped. The hot and neutral conductors wrap around the ground conductor in a helical pattern. The Tricormaxial speaker cable is almost identical to the power cord. There is no ground. Instead, there is a center core, an oriented solid polyethylene mono filament. The two pair of 3 conductors are wrapped around the center core in a helical structure. Each group of three conductors is 10.5 gauge. Terminations are made using the crimping method and heat shrinking.

The Sound

The manufacturer suggested that cables did not require much break-in as a consequence of the cable design. While I did not audition them extensively in their unbroken state, I did listen to them briefly. Based upon my brief exposure to the cables in their "raw" state, I surmised that the break-in period did not significantly alter tonality. I did notice an increase in clarity after 336 hours of a continuous signal being passed through the interconnect, 168 hours of current passed through the power cords and 168 hours of a continuous signal passed through the speaker cable. *Note*: I interface speaker cable in reverse phase, i.e., at the speakers, the red connector is connected to the black terminal and the black connector is connected to the red terminal. I prefer the sound in this configuration.

The CDs used for this review are those which I used when I reviewed the Synergistic Research cable. Here are my observations:

The first selection, *Sweet Georgia Brown* from *Test Record #4*, Opus 3 CD 9200, was used as a test of tonality and timbre. The vibraphone sounded rounded and realistic. The Cymbal sounded more like brass than steel and was not elevated in pitch. When the wooden drum stick struck the steel cymbal support, it was easy to discern the difference between the two materials. There was no harshness and the overall sound was non-fatiguing.

The next CD was Bob James and Earl Klugh, *Two of a Kind*, manufactured by The Jazz Heritage Society, number 5162443, under license from Capitol Records. I focused on the acoustic guitar and selected track #3, *Sandstorm*. On many occasions I have observed a lack of lower midrange energy and a sharpness in pitch which disproportionately emphasizes the strings and reduces the presence of the body of the guitar. It was obvious that the strings were composed of nylon, indicative of accuracy of timbre. When the strings were plucked one could clearly recognize the sound of wood vibrating and the body of the guitar was neither exaggerated nor understated.

Steely Dan's *Aja*, MCAD 37214, is a good test of the midrange. I used cut 3, *Deacon Blues*, as it features male voice and a sax solo. I have heard this CD many times. Donald Fagen's lisp at times has sounded exaggerated. In this instance, the lisp was not exaggerated because of an absence of sibilance. In addition, I heard an inflection of laughter in the phrase "laughing chance", which I had not noticed in any of my previous auditions of this track. After 4 minutes have elapsed, there is a tenor solo. The tenor can sound thin if there are any imbalances in one's stereo system. Instead of a lean sound, the tenor was full-bodied and there was no evidence of brightness when the upper register of the instrument was articulated.

The audiophile mainstay, *Don't Smoke in Bed*, Alert Z28102, featuring Holly Cole, was my fourth selection. Of interest was the acoustic bass and female voice. Although a close-miked recording, sibilance was not exaggerated, in contrast to what I have heard on other stereo systems. The bass notes were easy to follow, and as the strings were plucked, the wood body of the acoustic bass came into focus. However, I did notice a slight attenuation in frequency response.

Mapleshade provided the next disc, *Sound Roots*, number 04432. My attention was directed to the timbre of the

trumpet and saxophone as well as the decay of the cymbal. This CD features a quintet of guitar, bass and drums in addition to the trumpet and saxophone. The quality of sound of the tenor and trumpet was consistent with what I heard on other recordings, namely a rounded and pleasant presentation, with a slight attenuation of upper harmonics, i.e., treble frequencies. One could hear the saxophonist moving away from and toward the microphone during his solo. Following the saxophone solo, the drummer tapped a cymbal. The resulting decay was very natural, i.e., gradually fading away rather than ceasing abruptly.

For my last selection, I decided to change the genre. I selected a JVC XRCD2 release, number 0224, *Gaite Parisienne*". Dynamics, soundstage, low level detail, spatiality and timbre are on display on this CD -- an excellent test disc. At the very beginning of track 1, the pulse and dynamics of a symphony orchestra, in this case the Boston Pops, were immediately apparent. There was neither compression nor exaggeration in the dynamic range. After 50 seconds, musicians were heard turning the pages of sheet music. This low level detail is not always noticeable unless a stereo system is sufficiently resolving of source material. Shortly thereafter, one could hear a wood block and a triangle. The sound of the wood block seemed to be timbrally accurate. The upper harmonics of the triangle were slightly attenuated. The spacing between the two percussion instruments created the impression of depth and positioned the wood block behind the triangle and at the edge of the right speaker.

Conclusions

This is one of very few cables that does not exhibit any phase distortion. The slight loss of treble information may be caused by the link between preamp and amp where the length of cable used was 20 feet. No component is perfect. The slight loss of bass which I observed was not objectionable in the context of my stereo system. Although the spectral balance was on the warm side of neutral, I experienced a natural musicality, a timbral and tonal rightness, a relaxed, non-fatiguing and non-digital presentation of musical detail. As in the case of any component, one should audition the cable to determine if its performance in your stereo system satisfies your sonic needs.

Associated Equipment

Speakers: Quad 63
Amplifier: VTL Deluxe 120 Monoblocks
Preamp: Nobis Proteus
Transport: Audio Note CD2 tube cd player
DAC: Channel Islands Audio VDA-1 (stock analog stage op amp was replaced with TI A2227R)
Interconnects: Acoustic Zen Matrix II and MIT Shotgun SG3
Speaker Cable: Acoustic Zen Satori
AC Cords: Absolute Power, Acrotec, ART, Clarity Audio, PS Audio Lab
Accessories: PS Audio P 300, PS Audio Ultimate Outlet and Room Tunes

Octaphase "Alpha Series" interconnect
Octaphase "Omega Pro Line" interconnect
Tricormaxial speaker cable
Tricormaxial Power Supply Cords

Soundstring Cable Technologies, P.O. Box 658 Stony Point, NY 10980-0658
Phone: 845.942.1433 Fax: 845.942.2007 E-mail: sales@soundstringcable.com
web: http://www.soundstringcable.com e mail: sales@soundstringcable.com
Price: 1 meter Octaphase "Alpha Series" interconnect US$430.00; 20 foot Octaphase 95% shielded "Omega Pro Line" interconnect US$856.00; 6 foot Tricormaxial Speaker cable US$678.00; 4 -6 foot Tricormaxial Power Supply Cords US$2184.00

Source of review sample: Manufacturer Loan

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