

Jorma Design USB Reference and Ethernet



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Review sample supplied by [HVP Audio](#)

Retail prices in the Netherlands:

USB Reference:

1 meter 3.120 euro

extra 0,5m 190 euro

Available lengths: 1-3 meters

Ethernet:

1 meter 1.700 euro

extra 0.5m 150 euro

Available lengths: 1-80 meters

My experience with Jorma started with the [no.3, Origo interlink](#), and [Origo speaker cables](#) as part of a review of the [Marten Mingus Quintet](#) speakers. After having later reviewed the Jorma [Trinity and Duality](#)

speaker cables, I first made acquaintance with Jorma's Digital segment when reviewing the AES/EBU cables. Consequently, I loved them so much that they became HFA Favorites and are used for all digital sources that are so equipped. Shortly thereafter, I started hearing rave reports about the other Jorma Digital cables, especially the USB Reference cable. With this dual product review, I am excited to investigate what all the fuss is about.



Jorma USB Reference

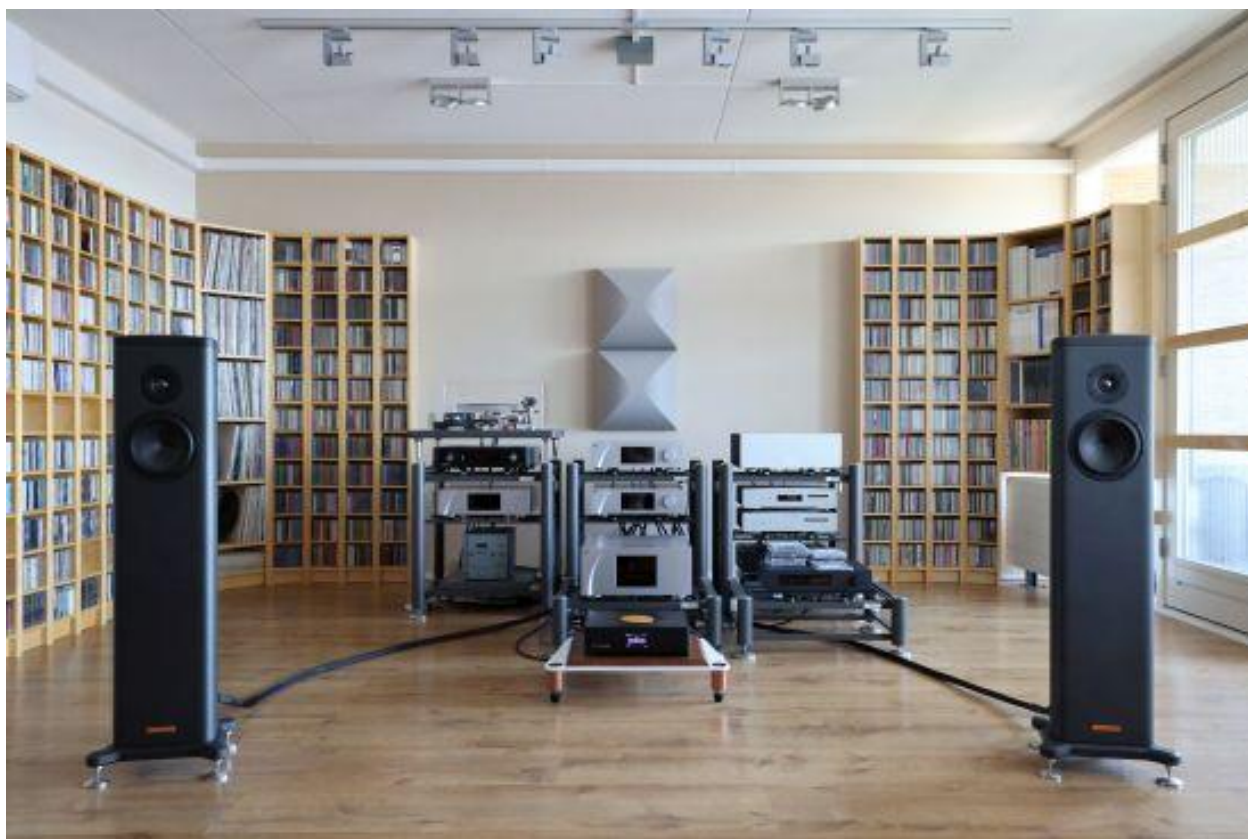
The Jorma USB Reference cable features multi-threaded heavily silver-plated 99.999999 pure copper conductors for data and multi-threaded tin-plated 99.999999 pure copper conductors for power, both pairs with Aluminium / PET foil shielding. Cotton is used as a filler and a tightly-fitted PET braided outer sheath completes the product.



Jorma Ethernet

The high-speed (2,000 MHz) Jorma ethernet cable features extensive shielding of both pairs and total assembly, reportedly yielding extremely good crosstalk values to defeat interference between the internal cables or with any of the system's other cables. The Jorma Ethernet cable is indicated to have low dampening, even at long cable lengths, with no signal degradation or voltage drops for PoE (Power over Ethernet). The cables are terminated with what Jorma calls "market-leading" RJ45 connectors with 360° shielded Zinc diecast casings that look and feel extremely solid.

Other features include 99.999999 pure oxygen-free copper, cellular PE insulation, aluminum-bonded polyester shielding, tinned copper wire braid shielding, and Halogen-free, flame retardant PET braided outer sheath.



Review Context

The core of the [main system](#) consists of the [CH Precision C1](#) DAC and [L1](#) preamp, and the [CH Precision A1.5](#) power amp with [Grimm MU1](#), [Antipodes K50](#), and Taiko Audio Extreme Music Servers, with Magico S1 MkII speakers. For speaker cables, I use the [Mad Scientist Black Magic](#) and the [Jorma Trinity](#). More details can be found on the [Main System](#) page.

AES/EBU or USB

My default music server is the Grimm Audio MU1 which works exclusively with Roon and only offers AES/EBU and coaxial digital outputs. I use it with a Jorma AES/EBU cable and standard (but carefully selected) OEM Cat6 Ethernet cables. For the time being, I also have access to the Taiko Audio Extreme, a music server that also only offers one output, but one that happens to be a proprietary USB interface.

I have spent quite some time being convinced that AES/EBU is a more predictable and more reliable format than USB and, to be fair, the servers that I have tested so far have only further solidified that impression. With the Antipodes K50 music server, for example, the USB output sounds significantly more stilted and mechanical than any of its reclocked traditional outputs.

Its AES/EBU and coax outputs provide the organic and free-flowing sound for which this server is famous, and as I found, it also pairs sublimely well with the Jorma AES/EBU cable review.

The Taiko Extreme is a rare exception because its USB output actually produces an acoustic that is more free-flowing, 3-dimensional, and organic than the MU1 manages via the by me hitherto idealized AES/EBU interface. This has made me realize that, when implemented with great care, USB can indeed deliver on its promise of a theoretically more perfect asynchronous interface whilst avoiding the format's pitfalls. This, of course, makes it ideal for assessing the Jorma USB cable.

Since my recent review of the Final Touch Audio Sinope, it has become my favorite USB cable and as such, it is what the Jorma will primarily be compared with.



Unlike some other cables, for instance, the Final Touch Audio USB and Ethernet cables, both Jorma cables are very supple and easy to use in any position.

Listening – Jorma USB Reference

Where the Taiko Extreme server is concerned, one can choose between TAS (Taiko Audio System) and Roon for music playback. It's beyond the scope of this review, but suffice to say there are sonic differences between the two solutions. This is why I used both TAS and Roon during my assessments. Fortunately, irrespective of the playback method, I heard precisely the same differences between the cables. For my USB cable assessments, I used both local and streaming Qobuz content, predominantly confined to 16/44. It's not that I reject the perks of hi-res, it's just that there is so much badly upsampled or remastered content out there that I prefer to keep things straightforward, especially during reviews, by using only the Redbook format and preferably WAV.

When a server manufacturer devotes extreme attention to the USB interface (as Taiko does), one might assume that the USB cable itself becomes less of a factor but as I found, that is just

not the case. After having listened to a range of tracks via the Taiko Extreme with the standard Cat6 Ethernet cable and FTA Sinope USB cable, I switched to the Jorma USB Reference cable and this made a rather large difference!

My first impression is that the Jorma provides less incisiveness in the bass, which makes fast bass drum ghost notes *appear* less distinct. It has a more relaxed sound, less chunky and impactful, and less direct. While that may come across as a detracting factor, longer listening reveals that no detail is glossed over, it is just presented differently. And sure enough, after having listened to the Jorma for a while and switching back to the FTA Sinope, the latter sounds comparatively “square” and staccato and a little matter-of-fact.

In return, the Jorma is airier and considerably more fluid, and like the FTA Sinope, the Jorma is incredibly neutral, yet also very *natural*, arguably more so than the admittedly quite strict Sinope. In addition, and this is something that you really start appreciating after listening for longer, while the Jorma is not strictly presenting the maximum in terms of chiseled-rock-kind of incisiveness, there is a decidedly “human” and organic quality to its presentation. The cable has a way of instilling the desire to sink into the music and just keep on listening whilst the music flows entirely naturally. I’d be tempted to use the term “analog” if that wouldn’t conjure associations with overt lushness or rich creaminess.

Many USB cables that sound “pleasant” actually *add* smoothness and in doing so reduce PRaT and the overall excitement. But the Jorma is far from mellow and there is no added warmth or smoothness, just a higher degree of fluidity while the presentation remains fast-paced and my tapping foot is evidence of great rhythm. In fact, while the FTA is more incisive which is great for predominantly transient-driven music, the Jorma is more agile, which also works very favorably for the overall propulsion. It’s really two rather different yet both rather fascinating presentations.

Although its presentation is very different from the FTA Sinope, I regard the Jorma USB cable just as highly. Ultimately, I think it may be more widely applicable across all kinds of systems, and its well-balanced virtues are likely to appeal to a very wide audience.

Since my system was historically lacking in upper-bass transparency and control, I tend to prefer a high degree of tightness and articulation which is also why I use Jorma AES/EBU cables for my sources that can use them. Although a direct A-B comparison between the Jorma AES and USB cables could be made using the K50, the server’s rather different-sounding outputs would still make that something of an apples-to-oranges comparison. No matter the cables that are used, this would make the USB output sound more technical than the AES output, even if the cables inherently do not have that quality.

Admittedly, adding the Grimm MU1 and using two different servers with two different cables is just as much an apples-to-oranges comparison. But after having used the Jorma AES/EBU cable with countless sources, I think it is fair to say that I am intimately familiar with it. Its sonic signature leans to the tight, fast, and arguably slightly lean side. It’s not thin, let alone threadbare, but very far from being voluptuous. This brief description does not do the cable justice so please do also read the [Jorma AES/EBU cable review](#) for more in-depth descriptions. Whilst the Jorma USB Reference cable is certainly well-paced and tight enough, I would definitely not judge it to be lean by any stretch of the imagination. This presents us with two characters that appear different, but are also similar. Like the AES/EBU cable, the USB cable leaves no detail behind and it is very transparent and neutral, yet also delicate and natural.

Since we’re making apples-to-oranges comparisons anyway, let me just add that the Jorma Trinity speaker cables also have similar qualities. Like the USB cable, the speaker cables present the music in a coherent yet free-flowing organic manner with very high resolution but never in a

harsh or piercing manner. While the Trinity is only an entry-level speaker cable, it's still always good when a company manages to implement their core qualities throughout all their products.



If by now there is still a lingering fear that the Jorma USB Reference cable may be somewhat laidback, sweet, or rounded, let me quickly reset that thought by adding that the cable sounds significantly faster and tighter, as well as more incisive and more impactful than the Final Touch Audio Callisto or the Pink Faun Digital Interlink USB. The former has long been an HFA Favorite for its uniquely organic, ultra-refined, and utterly free-flowing presentation, even if it was not the last word in terms of bass solidity and slam. The latter is remarkable for sounding smoother, lusher, and richer than the Callisto whilst having a similarly organic and free-flowing presentation. But just as with the Callisto, you pay the price in the bass department.

With the Jorma USB Reference, there is never the impression of trading one quality for another and that is really the best compliment that I can give a cable.

Listening – Jorma Ethernet

For the Ethernet cable tests, I made sure to start with a Qobuz streaming source so that we actually have music flowing through the cable... although, with the Extreme, do we really listen to the stream directly? Certainly, with TAS, the server first buffers the stream and then plays from memory. This is another reason why I made sure to not only use TAS but also Roon.

Along with the Final Touch Audio Sinope, I also reviewed the Final Touch Audio Metis Ethernet cable, and like the USB cable, I liked it so much that it became my favorite Ethernet cable which is why I will primarily be comparing the Jorma to this cable.

Retaining the Jorma USB Reference cable and adding the Jorma Ethernet cable to the Taiko server in place of the OEM CAT6 cable makes for an absolutely dramatic increase in soundstage width and depth as well as a further increase in fluidity and flow. In addition, the singers and



instruments gain deeper tonal saturation, leading to a meatier sound and more body within the soundstage, which further helps develop deeper 3D imaging.



Just like the Jorma USB cable, but slightly more so, the Ethernet cable provides a presentation that is focused on the natural musical flow, rather than going out of its way to provide the utmost in terms of solidity and chiseled-rock-like bass. This is again fully in line with what one



expects from a Jorma cable: natural musicality with high resolution and a high level of refinement. While I would say that the Jorma USB cable is perfectly centered between relaxed and free-flowing on the one hand and fast and incisive on the other, the Jorma Ethernet cable does lean more toward the relaxed side.



So far, I have been playing only from Qobuz. I know I'm going to be called out for this, but indeed, I hear the same differences between the cables when playing music that is stored locally on the server. Moreover, I hear this with TAS as well as with Roon. This supports the growing suspicion that it's not so much the data stream itself but rather superimposed factors that are messing with what we hear as the end result. How, why, I don't know. All I can do is report what I hear.

Swapping from the Jorma Ethernet cable to the FTA Metis Ethernet cable, the sound becomes more solid and impactful, as well as less organic, stricter, and more direct, in fact quite similar to the FTA Sinope USB cable. It's interesting how these two brands offer very different perspectives that are upheld through the different connections.

During the review, I contemplated also including a test with the Jorma Ethernet cable connected directly between the server and the DAC but I know from earlier experience that the Taiko server sounds better via USB, so that would not have yielded helpful insights. In retrospect, I do wonder how the Antipodes K50 would have responded when streaming directly to the C1 via the Jorma Ethernet cable. It's too late now as the cables have returned, but I have yielded very interesting results in the past using various Ethernet cables between the Antipodes CX and EX server and player, as well as from either the CX or EX directly to the C1 DAC.

Swapping to the [Pink Faun Digital Link LAN](#) introduces yet another perspective, even richer, more liquid, and more free-flowing than the Jorma. In another setup than mine, one that verges on clinical or over-controlled, this cable may well prove an absolute blessing but in the context of my system, this cable pulls the sound too much toward mellow and relaxed. Like the Pink Faun USB cable, the LAN cable's lushness comes at the expense of a measure of propulsion, momentum, and rhythmic expression.

If also taking the OEM Cat6 cable into account then that cable would be positioned all the way over on the other end of the spectrum with lots of control but a bleak tonality and a flat and kind of forward soundstage. So here's the million-dollar question. Is the OEM Cat6 cable leaving out harmonics and fullness or allowing lots of malicious noise to come through, or is it simply relaying the truth, warts and all? In other words, are the high-end Ethernet cables beautifying the signal or do they provide a more truthful rendition? Honestly, I have no way of knowing but would argue that it comes down primarily to personal taste and system synergy. What cannot be denied, however, is that Ethernet cables really do matter, a lot, actually, and largely irrespective of the server/streamer hardware.

So, where does this leave the Jorma Ethernet cable on the sonic landscape? Well, if the Pink Faun is relaxed and mellow and the Final Touch Audio is strict and upfront, the Jorma falls in between but is positioned more toward the Pink Faun than the Final Touch Audio. In terms of tonality, I'd consider all three to be neutral, in spite of their large other differences. So far, it seems that an Ethernet cable is not capable of truly changing the tonality of a system. It can, however, strongly affect the balance between tension and flow, and with it, the emotional involvement.

Conclusion

I started this review by stating that the Jorma USB Reference cable is getting rave reviews and that I was interested to find out what all the fuss is about. So, is it something special? Well, yes indeed! This is a costly cable but it offers a unique proposition with its presentation that is fluid, natural, smooth, and unforced yet clean and neutral as well as articulate, lively, and well-paced. The longer I listened with this cable, the less I was thinking of the cable and instead relaxing into the music. Importantly, it handles all styles well, whether seductive soul or upbeat R&B. With

the Jorma USB Reference cable, there is never the impression of trading one quality for another and that is really the best compliment that I can give a cable. The Jorma Ethernet cable offers many of the same traits as the USB cable but is positioned more toward the smooth and relaxed end of the scale. However, it is an ideal choice if you want to maximize the brand's core qualities such as fluidity, refinement, and unforced natural flow.

[Associated Equipment](#)

External Links

Manufacturer: Jormadesign.com

Distributor for the Benelux: HVP Audio