

Yter Loudspeaker Cable

MARTIN COLLOMS TRIES OUT AN INTRIGUING NEW SPEAKER CABLE CREATED BY LEGENDARY SONUS FABER DESIGNER FRANCO SERBLIN

MARTIN COLLOMS

The provenance and technology of this new speaker cable are particularly interesting. It's the creation of Franco Serblin, who founded luxury Italian speaker brand Sonus Faber back in 1980. He developed this unusual single-strand speaker cable with help from his metallurgist son-in-law Massimiliano Favella, at the latter's Laboratorio workshop, which also has a foundry.

I had been very impressed by the almost breathtaking transparency of Franco's loudspeaker masterpiece, the Sonus Faber *Stradivari Homage*, and he had explained that a specially designed internal cable was an important component in the mix. Laboratorio experimented with various metals and alloys, seeking a formula which would provide the desired audio performance, in conjunction with other requirements like the choice of insulator (dielectric), the geometry of the conductor, and construction of the cable.

Many designers favour silver conductors, although the pure metal is fairly soft and develops a sulphide tarnish with time. Laboratorio experimented with various alloys, including a doping of Palladium – not a high proportion, as Palladium is very costly, but a low proportion eutectic of stable molecular structure toughens up the silver, confers high resistance to corrosion, and also sounds good.

A special three-phase melt process was devised to create the eutectic alloy reliably. Dubbed Argentum, the resulting billets are formed ready for tempered cold-drawing down to a slim 2.4 x 0.4mm ribbon conductor, a Gaussian geometry (thickness, surface area, shape) which is said to have a balanced electric and magnetic field, and low skin-effect losses. This optimised ribbon conductor is it; no multiple strands are used. Given a gentle twist in manufacture, the conductor is firmly located in a largely air-spaced PTFE hollow tube insulator, externally decorated by a woven black polyester sleeve. A pair of these wires is lightly twisted together at a low number of turns per meter, just sufficient to hold them firmly and neatly together. The ends are cold-welded to specially made, high force split-barrel 4mm plugs in solid palladium silver. Matching spades are supplied which fit them tightly, resulting in temporary cold-welds to the 4mm plugs of very low resistance. A small tool is provided to bring back the tension for those 4mm plugs should a matching socket be oversized, or if repeated use should loosen them. No solder is used, or any intermediate plating on the hardware, the same conductor alloy being used right through the cable assembly. This makes good sense, as every intermediary does have an effect, and these effects are cumulative.

This cable is relatively light and thin and comes in a stylish leather wallet – pure Italy. On the test bench a 5m length has an average loop resistance of 0.185ohms, and a very low 73pF of capacitance, which won't upset anything. Inductance is a modest 0.45uH, and dielectric loss at 10kHz was very low with a 'D' value of just 0.0032. It was more immune to vibration than most, and mechanically quite well damped. By comparison the resistance of that massive Transparent *XL REF* is 0.035 ohms for 5m, while the rather ethereal new DNM cable is rather greater than Yter at 0.6 ohm per 5m loop when used bi-wired.

A 7m long pair of these improbably lightweight Yter cables was used into Avalon *Eidolon Diamonds* and 15ohm *LS3/5as*. During an initial running in period into the *Eidolons*, some initial mild grain and upper range brightness was obviously burnt off within a few hours of use; I have never heard this effect so clearly before, nor such a clear of restoration of normality.

The exceptional degree of bass slam, dynamic grip, and focus precision of *XL REF* was not wholly replicated, but this Italian cable had nothing missing in the way of detail or bandwidth, and had no trouble at all in creating a massive soundstage with fine power and satisfying dynamics throughout the frequency range. Early on I was aware of explicit clarity and transient definition in the high frequencies, but then recognised that this quality was present in the midrange and bass too; the sound was slightly forward of the soundstage, a little more vivid than usual, married to very good low level detail, and a fine recovery of recorded ambience. Midrange percussion was open and crisp, and voices were articulate with clean well-enunciated sibilants but no hardness, excess sibilance or coloration. The fine quality seemed to be well balanced throughout the audio range, and one quickly became acclimatised to the faintly 'Technicolor' presentation of timbre. The complementary match to the *Stradivari Homage* loudspeaker is clearly seen in our results, as the speaker exhibits much of the same performance elements. This cable seemed more open sounding than most, and was upbeat and entertaining, a David besting a number of other industry Goliaths.

The subsequent *LS3/5a* test was a breeze, the speaker sounding just as it should and clearly not making any significant demands on this cable, though it did seem to sound a little more vibrant than usual. The *HIFICRITIC* sound quality score is 85 – outstanding at the price and ensuring firm recommendation



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