



Audience AU24e interconnects and speaker cables

By Alan Sircom

Many of the best-loved wires can deliver revelatory changes to the system sound but this can also tend toward highly distinctive cables with a strong character that can influence the overall sound of the system. As a consequence, they are loved by some and hated by others. The flipside to this is cables that are designed to have almost no intrinsic character of their own. These don't get as strong a set of reactions from listeners, and don't get shouted about as much. The Audience AU24e interconnects and speaker cables are this second kind of cable, the neutral kind that gets under your skin over time.

The cables – both interconnect and speaker cable – are thin and flexible and worthy alternatives to the 'thick as a baby's arm' type wires. They are constructed from high-purity OHNO copper monocrystal conductors with simple polypropylene

insulation, a cross-linked polyethylene jacket and a braided outer sheath. The cables are supplied ready terminated and boxed... no off the reel cable layouts. There is a standard AU24 as well as the special 'e' edition, which adds about 20% to the basic AU24 price. Trouble is, not having tried the AU24 and Audience being tight-lipped about what goes on in the 'e'ification process (the sheath and terminations are very different, apparently), I don't know precisely whether that 20% premium gives 20% better sound. All I know is these AU24e cables are about as honest as cables get.

The Audience cables are not designed to work with the kind of components that rely on cables to enhance the sound of the system. The equipment needs to be of the best quality and extremely well matched to benefit from the Audience effect. At this point, they just let the equipment do its job properly, unimpeded by the cable itself. It's only when you hear this happening do you realise how genuinely rare such a scenario really is. There's a sense of level-headedness to the sound, which demands level-headed system design, but delivers the unvarnished, unimpeded truth. This really isn't easy to express without experiencing the effect directly, which is why the old 'lifting a veil' cliché existed. Perhaps the best way is to liken it to the way LS3/5a, Quad ESL-57s or DNM cable perform... you get that jaw-dropping midrange clarity that makes speech and instruments so much more intelligible, but sooner or later you start wishing for frequency extremes. The Audience cable 'sound' is that jaw-dropping midrange, but with the frequency extremes.

Well, almost – the construction of the AU24e cables can undermine the performance in our RF-polluted world. Living in the big city, where I can find at least 15 wi-fi networks and dozens of mobiles polling their nearest cell mast, the sound can be foreshortened, almost shut in (especially at higher listening levels) and not as nuanced during the busy evening hours. Granted, I discovered this by putting the cable through the worst-case scenario (powered up iPad resting on the cables, which were connected to the wireless Arcam rDAC), and in many systems all you'll get is the natural sense of balance these cables bring. Better shielding would help, but possibly the cure is worse than the disease.

The AU24e cables more than stand their ground in a hugely contended market. In a system where balance is key, you could easily prefer these over any other cable out there, whatever the cost. If you want a cable system that strips away the artifice, Audience deserves an, er, audience. +

AS TESTED:

3m pair AU24e loudspeaker cables £1,595
1m pair AU24e interconnect cables £772

Manufactured by: Audience
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