

Mojo Audio

AC Power Cables and Lucent Interconnects

More of a Good Thing



Mojo Audio is a small Pittsburgh PA-based audio manufacturer that strives to provide its customers with excellent products that provide a very high cost-to-performance ratio. In addition to cables they offer a high-quality D to A converter, a media server based on a Mac Mini platform, and effective low-cost upgrades for those customers who already own a Mac Mini.

Mojo Audio understands that it's a buyer's market and they strive for excellence in consumer relations and service. They offer a lifetime warranty on components and manufacturing defects on all their cable products, a 45-day no-risk audition, and some very attractive trade up incentives for those who would like to trade up without taking a big hit on the original purchase price. In fact, Mojo Audio will give you every dime back toward a cable upgrade during the first 90 days of ownership. I think more cable manufacturers should provide this type of sales agreement! It would remove a lot of anxiety from making a high-end cable purchase.

Mojo Owner, Benjamin Zwickel, is a very knowledgeable fellow and is quite confident that the quality of the component parts he uses in his cable designs is first rate and that his cables will perform extremely well in any audio system. And the performance of his cables in my two reference systems support this view. One interesting thing that Benjamin decided to do was to send me three versions of his Enigma AC cords with the only difference being the type of plug sets used to terminate each cable. One Enigma had brass prongs, another had high-purity copper and the third had a rhodium-plated

copper plug set. I can tell you that they each had their own distinct character traits (more on that later).

Products

I evaluated the following Mojo Audio Cables in this review:

1. Lucent Copper Ribbon RCA Interconnects, Price: \$299.95 USD per 1-meter pair
2. Enigma AC Power Cable, Price: \$299.95 to \$474.95 USD for up to 1.5-meters depending on plug options.
3. XPC-7 Ribbon Power Cable, Price: \$499.95 to \$674.99 for up to 1.5-meters depending on plug options.

I was sent the base model (lowest price) of each cable model. The XPC-7 power cord came with the Furutech FI-11Cu copper plug set.

Product Descriptions from Mojo Audio

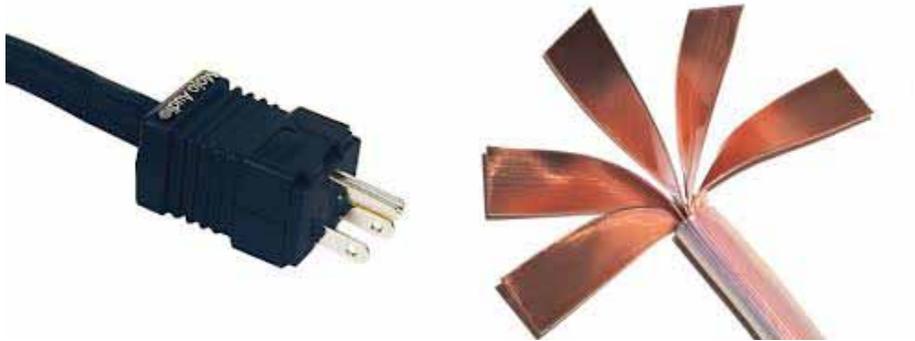
The Lucent Copper Ribbon RCA is constructed from 21AWG high-purity OFC copper ribbons that are covered in a thermo-bonded micro-dielectric to prevent oxidation. Each ribbon is floated inside a laboratory-grade PTFE Teflon tube to ensure minimal surface contact and increase durability. Our near-air dielectric all but eliminates the capacitive effects caused by dielectric absorption, and our edge-oriented parallel ribbon geometry minimizes inductive effects caused by conductor proximity. This design results in an extremely coherent wide-bandwidth musical signal with a minimum of phase and time distortion.

To assure optimal signal transfer, we terminate this interconnect with Furutech high-performance FP-126 or CF-126 rhodium-plated copper RCA plug sets.

The high-purity OFC copper wire used to make our Enigma Power Cables is a custom variation of the Varistrand wire Kimber Kable uses in their popular TCSS and VCSS products. Combining Varistrand technology with our custom dielectric minimizes electrical resonance and dielectric effects that cause harshness and blur coherency. Our proprietary concentric core isolated ground wire and floating shielding technology ensure AC power transfer that is nearly void of all background noise.

What is the difference between the Enigma and the Enigma HC?

The Enigma has a 10AWG equivalent wire size and the Enigma HC has an 8AWG equivalent wire size. Both are available in custom lengths and with several high-performance plug set options. For even higher performance, see our Enigma SE Power Cables .



Mojo Audio's XPC Ribbon Power Cables transfer power effortlessly with incredible detail, transparency, and dynamics. Our sophisticated isolated ground and floating shielding technology ensure AC power that is nearly void of all inductive background noise.

Each conductor is constructed from seven 14AWG high-purity OFC copper ribbons stacked one on top of the other. Each ribbon is coated with a thermo-bonded micro-dielectric, minimizing dielectric absorption. The bundle of stacked ribbons floats in an air dielectric inside of a laboratory-grade PTFE Teflon tube.

The XPC-7 has an incredibly large equivalent 5.6AWG wire size that provides effortless power flow for even the most demanding consumers. While the XPC-7 is ideal for large amplification and power distribution centers, many of our customers find it significantly improves dynamics and musical flow on components with more modest current requirements.

Available in custom lengths and with several high-performance plug set options.

Prelude

I performed my evaluation in my two reference systems. My Large-Room Reference System uses a Lyngdorf DPA-1 digital preamp feeding a Wyred 4 Sound STI-500 amplifier and VMPS RM40 Signature Edition ribbon-hybrid speakers. The speakers use a large ribbon line source and stand 5' 6" tall weighing in at 240 pounds each. They each contain two 10-inch woofers and a down firing 10-inch passive radiator. The RM-40's are very dynamic, revealing, and musical and their rated frequency response is 24 Hz – 25 kHz +0/-3 dB. The W4S amplifier is capable of outputting nearly 600 watts/channel into their 4-ohm load.

I double-checked my results of all but the XPC-7 Ribbon Power Cable in my Small-Room Reference System, which uses a VTL-2.5L preamp feeding a QuickSilver GLA 40Wpc tube amp, and the speakers are the Tekton Design Lore-S floor-standers.

It was actually in the Small-Room Reference that I compared the 3 different versions of the Enigma Power Cable, which was used to feed my Monarchy Audio P100 AC regenerator that supplies power to my digital sources. That said, I later evaluated both the Enigma Audiocrast copper-plug and the Enigma Furutech Rhodium-plated copper plug models on my Lyngdorf DPA-1 in the Large-Room Reference System where the XPC-7 Ribbon AC cord was used on the W4S STI-500 amplifier.

The Lucent Ribbon RCA interconnects were evaluated in my small room between the CD player and the VTL tube preamp and also in the large-room system between a custom 6SN7 tube buffer and my STI-500 amplifier.

The Lucent Ribbon copper interconnects and the Enigma Wattgate brass-plug and Furutech rhodium-plated copper-plug cables were already broken in by Mojo Audio when I received them. The Enigma Audiocrast copper-plug AC cord and the XPC-7 cord with copper-plugs were not broken in when they arrived.

Mojo Audio's Ben Zwickel intimated that in his opinion his cables take a particularly long time to fully break in—perhaps 300 hours or more. My experience seems to support that claim and I would further say that the sound of the cables over that period (especially the XPC-7) changed more than any other cables in my experience. Bottom line: be patient!

The Enigma Party Begins

I began the audition in my Small-Room Reference system installing the Enigma AC cord with the Wattgate brass-plugs on the Monarchy power regenerator, which feeds my Pioneer DVD player. I must say I was quite surprised at the results as it made the system sound much more tube-like. By that I mean it had less bite and focus than with any other cables I've tried in that position. The music did sound smooth, lovely, and never offensive (like some tube amps).

I found the treble a little splashy with the lower treble being a touch forward while the upper treble was a bit reticent and the bass was big and sumptuous. The midrange was smooth and musical but seemed to lack transient speed and the natural bite and incisiveness of many instruments. So I figure this is a good cable for those who like a nice soft sound that never seems to bite or offend the pinna. It made my Tekton speakers sound more like my older (pre-ribbon) Magnepans, if you know what I mean. Moving to the Enigma AC cord with the Furutech rhodium-plated copper plugs gave a totally different presentation. Here the focus of instruments and vocalists became decidedly more precise. While I believe there is a small rise in the lower treble region of this cord, it definitely worked to expose complex lyrics like magic while at the same time percussion instruments like bells and triangles were a tad more prominent in the mix. The bass lines, while not as plump and plodding, had good energy and were very agile and easy to follow. Overall I found this cord to be much more to my liking since it is a lot more precise in its presentation than the brass-plug Enigma.

When I installed the Enigma cords with the Audiocrast CC-126 red copper plugs I didn't know what to expect but I soon found out. For my taste and my system(s) the copper-plug Enigma sounds the most linear, harmonically correct, and extended of the three Enigma cords. It presents with powerful, full bass, a gorgeous and smooth midrange, and a treble range that seems neutral, sweet, and extended. I don't believe the lyric comprehension is quite as "there" as it is with the Enigma/rhodium-copper model, but neither is it as forward in the lower treble region.

So to sum up, even though the wire, dielectric, and jacketing were exactly the same on the 3 Enigma AC cords, the sonic character of each different plug set was readily apparent. The Enigma with the Audiocrast red copper plugs turned out to be my favorite of the three versions for its overall harmonic coherency. This cable was also the favorite among a few industry professionals and Ben Zwickel's beta-test group. That being said Ben intimated that he prefers

the Enigma with the Furutech rhodium-plated copper plugs and believes it sounds more harmonically correct in his particular system. I believe that system synergy is at work here and that systems that could use some extra sparkle in the lower treble region, or those lacking in lyric comprehension/distinction may be very well served by the Enigma/Furutech cord since it tends to accentuate those areas. Ben says that the Enigma/Furutech version has also worked well for owners of Quad electrostatic speaker models who use them on the Quad's panel-biasing interfaces and consider them a significant improvement to the OEM power cords.

Notes: Regarding the Wattgate brass-plug Enigma AC cord, since it is easily the least focused and least accurate of the 3 Enigmas I evaluated, and since Mojo Audio's beta-testers had the same finding, Ben Zwickel has made the decision to stop offering this version. By the time you read this review the brass-plug model may no longer be available.

In addition, Mojo Audio will commence offering Furutech's top-of-the-line FI-50 plug sets on their power cords but since this plug set is expensive you can expect prices to rise quite a bit over the base prices (and the prices listed above). Please check the Audio Mojo website for further details.

The Lucent Interconnects

My first exposure to the Lucent copper interconnects was in my Large-Room Reference System, where I slipped them in between the outputs of my tube line buffer and the Wyred 4 Sound amplifier. The input cables to the line buffer (from the Lyngdorf preamp) are the Speltz Anti-Cables. The cables the Lucent's replaced were the DH Labs Silver-Sonic Revelations.

I'm telling you this because for whatever reason, this combination of gear and cables seemed to give outlier results when used with the Lucent interconnects. While the sound was very clear, dynamic and actually quite satisfying in many ways, the mid-bass level went over the top. This means that every recording I played with strong mid bass sounded as if I took an equalizer and bumped it up at around 60Hz by about 4dB. "How strange," though I, who never expected such an outcome.



Since my system did not really need or benefit from this much extra bass I removed the Lucent's from the large-room system and installed them in the small-room system between the DVD/CD player and the VTL tube preamp (and later on the Ray Samuels F117 phono preamp). In this system they replaced the SignalCable Analog Two interconnects and provided a more reasonable frequency balance than they had in the Large-Room system. Also, in speaking with Ben Zwickel, he had never heard from any purchaser that the Lucent's had "too much bass," so since the cables sounded "normal" in the small-room system I view the results in my other system as an "outlier" which would probably not happen in most systems under most conditions.

To the point, in the small-room system, the Lucent interconnects if anything presented a little less bass than the SignalCable Analog Two's (on both my digital and analog sources) which are prized for their even-tempered nature in my systems. Here the Lucent's provided articulate bass and very good midrange performance. As with the Enigma rhodium-copper AC cord the lower treble (between about 2.5kHz and 5kHz) was a bit forward and the extreme high frequencies at around 10kHz and above were somewhat reticent resulting in a reduction of air and ambiance.

Be that as it may, the midrange presentation is very clear and the lower-treble bump seems to enhance fast transients like the guitar work on Ingrid Michaelson's Everybody CD (Cabin Records CB24-12), which made the guitar licks sound quite crisp. Ingrid's vocals were very nuanced and easily understood, which made this album a pleasure to listen to. One could even hear Ingrid's lips parting as she opened her mouth to sing. All in all my feeling is that the Lucent interconnects are very respectable performers that will provide very good results in many systems.

Copper-plugged XPC-7 and Enigma Combo Rocks the House!

Back in the Large-Room Reference, I had installed installed both preferred versions of the Enigma AC cords (the Audiocrast copper-plug and the Furutech rhodium-plated copper-plug versions) on the Lyngdorf preamp and my results in the small-room system were mirrored with the Audiocrast red-copper plug version taking the honors for most natural overall sound. The rhodium-copper version was a close second and I should say that I believe some audiophiles will prefer it for its outstanding clarity and lyric-resolving prowess.

Be that as it may, I kept the Enigma red copper-plug cord in place on the Lyngdorf and installed the 5.6-gauge Mojo XPC-7 power cord on my Wyred 4 Sound STI-500 amplifier. So how did the Enigma-XPC-7 cable team sound? In a word, "Sonorous"! There was bloom in the bottom like never before, displaying amazing richness and solidity in the lower midrange and bass. The lower registers of the piano sounded very real and drums had solidity and weight. "Hmmm, this is nice," I mused. In fact, when playing a song like Hugh Laurie's "Swanee River," from Let Them Talk [Warner Bros. R2 527497], between the piano, bass, brass, and Laurie's vocal (whatever you think of his voice) the complete musical package was simply mesmerizing and made me want to get up and dance.



For about the first month and a half to two months that I used the XPC-7 cable its sound kept morphing and tended to sound a little different each time I listened. I would say the break-in period was more dramatic (longer) for this cable than for any other cable or component I can recall.

Initially, the XPC-7's sound was very warm and rich with big bass and somewhat of a roll-off in the upper treble. But during the break-in period its balance shifted more back to neutral. It still has great bass that is both solid and deep (perhaps not quite as thick/syrupy) and an authentic-sounding, grain-free midrange. Probably the largest change is that the high frequencies now sound much more natural and extended than they did originally. In any case, Mojo Audio recommends 300 hours of break-in for their cables and I don't disagree.

I am listening to John Mayer's "Belief" from his CD Continuum [Aware/Columbia 82876 79019 2] as I write this and the guitars have that authentic blues twang while John's vocal is just slightly gritty (per the recording), dynamic, and intimate sounding. It's a very realistic presentation and I'm enjoying it immensely. To me, the musical enjoyment factor is the true test of any



component and I must admit that with the Enigma copper-plug AC cord on my preamp and the XPC-7 cord on my amp, there is little left to be desired. There are only strong points and no weak areas that I can detect.

Summary

I very much enjoyed my evaluation of the Mojo Audio cables. I can heartily recommend the Enigma AC cords. The Audiocrast copper-plug Enigma and the Furutech rhodium-plated copper-plug cables were my favorites for high-end applications. I liked the copper-plug Enigma best in my system for its harmonic rightness but I'm sure there are many who would prefer the rhodium-copper Enigma cord for its crystal clarity and its uncanny ability to unravel lyrics like no other.

In my Large-Room Reference System the dynamic duo of the Enigma copper-plug cord on my Lyngdorf preamp and the XPC-7 AC cord on my Wyred 4 Sound amplifier proved to be outstanding, providing a level of musical ease and finesse heretofore unequaled with any other combination of power cables in my cable arsenal.

The Lucent Interconnects also fared very well in my systems providing crystal clear vocals and articulate bass. My feeling is that the Lucent interconnects are missing a touch of air at the very top and are possibly not the final word in bass extension (though deft they are). But I believe they will work well in many systems and are certainly worth an audition.

As mentioned previously, Mojo Audio has a very liberal and comprehensive warranty and trade-up policy so there is little to risk by trying their fine products. I'm confident they'll have you swaying and nodding in agreement as you listen—as I am while finishing up this enthusiastic review.

Happy Listening!

Frank Alles

Stereo Times, November 2012