

MG Audio Design Cables

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Products Reviewed

- Planus Spira 8' Speaker Cable (\$1080)
- Planus Ag Interconnect (1 Meter Balanced—\$1000)
- Planus Cu Interconnect (1 Meter Balanced—\$500)

MG Audio Design is a newly-formed collaboration between long-time CAS members Lee Matuszczak and Greg Graff. Now before you go running off assuming that this is some “homer” review to promote the products of two CAS members, I caution against it. Read on and you will see what I mean.

Both the speaker and the interconnect cables are formed from high-purity copper (or silver for the Planus Ag) foil with the legs of the conductors running side-by-side to minimize both inductance and capacitance. The two foil conductors are then held together by a high-quality insulation covering both the top and the bottom of the cable. The conductors are then terminated (the really tricky part) onto hand-picked spades or RCA/XLRs for the interconnects.

The original concept behind these cables was hatched several years ago with many iterations between the first versions and the ones

we are reviewing today. Much experimenting and listening resulted in the final designs. Various materials were tested, to include terminations, insulation, etc. before a final version of the product was decided upon. For several years I had owned a pair of the original speaker cables, and one I thought highly of, especially when considering the cost, but it was only over the past year or so when Lee and Greg decided to seriously take the design to a higher level, and they did so in spades (npi).

Word began to spread several months ago among friends that MG had come upon a new design that was significantly improved over the original version. I must admit that I was intrigued, but also a bit skeptical that cables at these price points could compete favorably with the big boys (which were the claims being bandied about). So after speaking with Greg and mentioning that I would be reviewing other cables in this Journal, he offered to lend me a pair of speaker cables for a listen. These were relatively simple upgrades from my original cables with new terminations and other processes they had applied to the cables.

In a word, I was amazed at the improvements

compared to the originals. I was hearing extended highs, improved soundstaging and dynamics, tighter bass — everything had moved up several notches. These cables bested my reference cables in several areas, but were still lagging a bit in low and mid-bass extension, but not by much. It wasn't more than a few days later that I was informed that a newer, more sophisticated design was in the works (based upon the same physical concept), but utilizing improved materials and construction. So one Sunday, Greg dropped by with his new speaker and interconnects, the copper cables under review today.

Planus Spira Speaker Cable

Immediately upon inserting the Planus Spira into the system, I focused upon the extended highs that I was hearing for the first time on my system. My first reaction was that the cables must be wrong, as all the others I'd auditioned (including some of the big boys) did not approach the high-frequency extension I was now hearing from my system. After several minutes of listening and focusing my attention on the upper ranges, I was then convinced that the Planus was providing a component of the musical spectrum that I

had been missing altogether. This heightened resolution also contributed to my ability to hear tiny nuances in the performance while expanding the soundstage to new levels of depth and width.

On Diana Krall's "*A Case of You*" I could now pick out individual noises coming from the audience as well as their relative positions in the hall. These are all sounds I was able to hear from other cables, but I could now clearly delineate a sound's distance from the stage as well as its lateral position. On the Neil Young Massey Hall recording, I was now hearing a fuller extension of the guitar strings' harmonics, adding to a more realistic representation of the guitar's sound. This level of transparency extended down into the midrange, providing palpable vocal inflections previously unheard by either of us. I was stunned that I could hear into the vocal cavities of closely-miked singers, and all instruments suddenly became more life-like and more present within the listening room.

Bass and midbass were suddenly more apparent and dynamic. Bass tightness had improved and matched or even surpassed the reference cables in this regard. The overall improvement in sound is difficult to describe, but a new level of excitement had been added to the musical presentation. This

transformation, and it was a transformation, allowed the system to sing in a way I hadn't previously experienced. It was as if a window onto the soundstage had been cleaned, allowing me to more clearly see into the original recording venue. This initial experience caused me to question all my previously-held notions regarding the system's capabilities. My first thought was that the cable must be accentuating the highs in an unnatural fashion, but after extended listening, I knew this was not the case. We've all heard components or even cables in the past that had seemingly enhanced various portions of the musical spectrum, but none, in my experience, exhibited this level of transparency from top to bottom.

Planus Cu Interconnect

Replacing the reference interconnect with the Planus Cu provided a similar improvement, extending the highs even more, and removing more layers obscuring the sound of the original recording. At this point, I was totally blown over with the sound I was hearing from my once-polite but accurate system. Of course, none of this would be possible were it not for the efficacy of the Rowland DAC and 625 amplifier combination. I am now benefiting from their true strengths.

Planus Ag Interconnect

The final cable that MG provided for evaluation was their silver interconnect which shared the same physical makeup as the copper, except with silver conductors. Here we had a compromise of sorts. The astonishing characteristic of this cable is that it was able to best the copper interconnect in the areas of sheer openness and transparency of the soundstage and all instruments in residence. Upper highs were extended to a level exceeding even the copper and only when totally cleaning and treating every connection in the system were all vestiges of high-frequency grunge eliminated, noise that I hadn't heard in the past (thanks to Bill Ernst for acting as the Cleaner). I mentioned that this cable was a compromise, but I don't mean this as a put-down. In my system the copper interconnect was a touch warmer and more organic sounding, thus more pleasing over long listening sessions, but for that ultimate see-through quality, the silver is unmatched.

The MG cables represent an amazing bargain considering their cost and performance. In my system they provided a transformation I would've never believed could be wrought by cables alone.

Contact Greg at ggraff@q.com for special CAS pricing in conjunction with this review.