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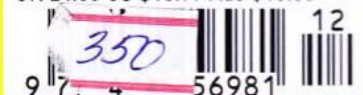
Your guide to the
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Opinion

Our columnists'
hi-fi high points

• **TURNTABLES, TONEARMS & CARTRIDGES** Air Tight to Thorens • **OUTBOARD DACS** Arcam to T+A
• **DIGITAL DISC & MEDIA PLAYERS** Burmester to TAD • **TRANSISTOR & TUBE AMPS** Anthem to VTL
• **LOUDSPEAKERS** Cabasse to Wilson Audio • **VINTAGE** B&O, Electrocompaniet, KEF, Sony and more

UK £4.50 US \$10.99 Aus \$10.50






Monocrystal silver interconnects
 Made by: Crystal Cable/International Audio Holding, Netherlands
 Supplied by: Absolute Sounds Ltd
 Telephone: 020 8971 3909
 Web: www.crystalcable.com; www.absolutesounds.com



Crystal Absolute Dream (£10k+)

Audio jewellery' might imply the worst excesses of the high-end cable market. However, in this case, and for all the right reasons, it's the perfect description of Crystal Cable's new Absolute Dream range. Comprising analogue, FireWire and USB interconnects, speaker and AC mains cables, every Absolute Dream cable employs what the company calls 'pure monocrystal technology' throughout.

The interconnect here, available with RCAs or in balanced form with 'carbon' Furutech XLRs, is illustrative of Crystal Cable's new brood. Copper and silver are used throughout, the 'monocrystal' concept not simply a reference to the long grain

'Silence manifests itself as a velvety rather than chilling darkness'

structure of the strands but to its embedding, as much as plating, of pure gold over the conductor's surface. While interstitial grain boundaries cannot be entirely eliminated, Crystal Cable's use of gold prevents the ingress or growth of other semiconducting impurities over time.

At their heart, these are true 'solid-core' cables, the central

conducting axis a single silver strand that's sheathed in two layers of Kapton and clamped within a PEEK (Polyether ether ketone) dielectric. This core is surrounded by two peripheral braids composed of silver-plated 'monocrystal' copper strands and gold-plated monocrystal silver strands. These screens are responsible for the luxuriant lustre of the cable visible beneath its hard transparent jacket.

In practice, the interconnect is fashioned from four of these screened solid-core conductors, twisted into the geometry seen above, with two for signal and two for return/screen. Holding the twist in place are Crystal's newly developed identification barrels. These are not RF-rejecting ferrite rings but decorative items that carry each cable's unique serial number. Well, priced at £10,500 for a 1m RCA/XLR set (£3900 per additional metre, £23,500 for a 2m speaker cable set and £6000 for a 1m power cable), a little personal engraving is the least we should expect!



SILVER-TONGUED

Anyone who has experienced Crystal's 'Dreamline' series of cables will have a notion of what to expect from this latest flagship interconnect. Laced

between the balanced outs of several passing USB DACs and my Krell S-1500 power amp, these dreamy cables ensured the crisp patter of percussion, the resonant echo of Emil Richards' vibraphone and raspy

timbre of sax, trumpet and trombone from 'Hard Sock Dance' [Odd Men In, 24-bit/96kHz iTrax download] had never sounded quite so deliciously articulate. The sheer poise of these instruments was exquisite, the detailing so utterly believable that this same music began to sound slightly flat, and the ambience muted, when I returned to a lesser cable.

Moreover, the Absolute Dream interconnect realises the truly 'black' backgrounds possible from genuine 24-bit digital recordings without sounding clinical or penetrating. If 'silence' has a quality of its own then this manifests as a velvety rather than chilling darkness with these cables *in situ*.

It is, of course, unwise to generalise excessively about the universality of any cable. Suffice it to say that whatever equipment I was auditioning, it never sounded quite as *musical* as when the Absolute Dreams were in play.

VERDICT

There's no escaping the frightening price of these cables, but handle a pair and you'll be surprised at just how heavy they are. This, in turn, reflects how much metal lies within that transparent dielectric – not just copper but a good deal of silver and gold to boot.

These precious conductors are key to the design and core to its subjective performance, but as with any bespoke jewellery, the aspiration of ownership is as much emotional as coolly rational. ☺

ABOVE: Usurping the Dreamline series, the new Absolute Dream cables are truly exotic! The interconnect is available with XLR balanced or RCA phono termination plugs

BELOW: Cross-section of one coaxial conductor, four of which are used in each interconnect

