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hardware

# hidiamond

## Speaker cables and interconnects

as reviewed by Danny Kaey, Dave Clark, and Dan Thomas



# one

Check it out, Italian high end cables! Say what? Well, why not? The thick, heavy, and longish review pair of HiDiamond speaker cables made their way into my listening room, which, as of a couple weeks ago, is being graced by the incredible sound of Reimer McCulloughs with matching subs. Having just had the Pure Note Epsilon Reference cables in my system, I was looking for something that offered sweet sound and upper-end detail without sounding bright or analytical. I knew that the cables had spent quite a bit of time on the audiodharma Cable Cooker and then in Dave Clark's system, so with that in mind, that I could dive straight into my listening.

How did they sound? Pardon me for saying this in such simplistic terms, but they sounded good! Actually, they sounded good and then some. Moving through the pile of reference material that I have been compiling,

#### DANNY KAEY'S SYSTEM

LOUDSPEAKERS  
Reimer McCullough and  
matching subs.

ELECTRONICS  
Cary Audio  
CAD808/Rocket 88  
amplifier and SLP88  
preamplifier.

SOURCES  
Cary Audio 308T CD

player.

#### CABLES

Analysis Plus interconnect and speaker cables.

the sound was sweet, extended, and forward, without the brightness and analytical presence of the Pure Notes. Analytical sound may in fact be appealing to someone with a darker, more subdued system, but in my setup, the Italian Stallions did a remarkable job. They presented music in a very pleasing, flowing manner, sort of like, well, gelato ice cream melting on your tongue. Massive Attack came off nicely, as did my good pal Dino. In the case of Dino, I preferred the cleaner sound of the Pure Notes, but the HiDiamonds performed better with a wider variety of material.

Take, for example, Yello's latest collection, recorded somewhat on the bright side. The Pure Notes brought a sense of overkill to the equation. The upper registers tended to sound too bright and because of that fatiguingly harsh in comparison to the Italian cables. The HiDiamonds frequently made me want to get up and play along, while the Pure Notes seemed more like an overly accentuated treble control. These cables really rocked within the context of this music, and when combined with the new subs, moved an awful lot of air. The HiDiamonds do serious bass!

I certainly haven't heard every speaker cable out there, but the HiDiamonds offered a more pleasant performance than any I have previously tried. **Danny Kaey**

## two

HiDiamond of Italy is a new company to us here at *PFO*, and no doubt to many of our readers. While the company has been in existence for only two years, it should be around for considerably longer, as the cables have the look and feel of fine Italian products. HiDiamond shipped us their Signal + Esoteric MKII interconnects (see Dan Thomas' comments below, with more to follow in the next issue) and HD Power + 1 speaker cables. Each speaker cable features twelve pure copper conductors, each made up of 48 x 0.22 gauge wire. This means that these cables are of big-boy size in terms of girth and weight. They are not very flexible, but feature locking banana connectors that, combined with their weight, help to keep them in place.

Before listening to the HiDiamonds, my impressions were mixed, largely because they arrived in a box that had seen far better days and with no literature. Given their price (\$1500) and place of origin, I was expecting a bit more glamour and information. Inserting these into my system fresh from the box was an unpleasant experience. The music was hard, cold, and very hi-fi-ish, and I was not happy. All I could hope was that they would benefit from a substantial period of break-in. Although the manufacturer had said that they were ready to play, I found they needed a solid four days on my Cable Cooker® before they opened up and started to play music.

And play music they did. The HiDiamonds offered a big, bold sound full of richness and musicality. These would not be the first cables I would choose for detail and subtlety, but might well be the rocker's cables of choice, as they provided deep, powerful bass with plenty of slam and articulation. They also threw a big and delineated soundstage, and sounded neither hyped nor etched. Images lacked a degree of detail and 3D palpability, but given the cables' pleasing overall sound, that could easily be excused. I really enjoyed music that stressed rhythm and drive.

#### DAVE CLARK'S SYSTEM:

##### LOUDSPEAKERS

Reimer Speaker Systems Tetons (with the Hi-Vi Isodynamic Planar tweeters and series crossovers).

##### ELECTRONICS

Clayton Audio M100 monoblock amplifiers. E.A.R. 834P phono stage. Blue Circle BC3000 preamplifier w/Tunsgam tubes and BCG3.1 power supply.

##### SOURCES

Cary 306/200 CD player or Sony 777ES SACD/CD player. Transrotor 25/25/60 Leonardo turntable with a Clearaudio Virtuoso wood MM cartridge. Sony RCD-W1 and Magnum Dynalab MD-90 tuner. Sennheiser HD540 headphones and Audio Alchemy headphone amplifier.

##### CABLES

JPS Superconductor+, Audio Magic Clairvoyant, or Silver Sonic Revelation interconnects, and JPS NC or Audio Magic Clairvoyant speaker cables. Sahuaro

Slipstream XP (digital), Elrod EPS2 (preamp), Blue Circle BC63 (phonostage), and JPS Kaptovator AC cables (amps and Stealths).

#### ACCESSORIES

Two Audio Magic Stealth Power Purifiers (one for analog, except BC3000 preamp, and a Digital unit for the digital sources), Blue Circle BC86 Noise Hound (amplifier circuit) and Audio Prism QuietLines (throughout the house). Dedicated 20 (amps) and 15 (everything else) AC circuits. Tons of Shakti Stones and On-Lines and Original Cable Jackets (frig's AC and on DSL phone line). Various Marigo VTS Dots used extensively throughout the system and room (window behind listening seat). Echo Buster acoustical treatments and Shakti Hallographs. BDR cones and board, Blue Circle Cones, DH Jumbo cones, Vibrapods, Mondo racks and stands, and Townshend Audio 2D (speakers) and 3D Seismic Sinks (CD player and preamp). Walker Audio Ultimate High Definition Links. Various hard woods placed here and there along with numerous [Peter Belt](#) treatments.

I threw on some Tabla Beat Science and felt the music propel through my being. Ditto full range and propulsive electronic or rock music. I do not mean to say that these cables only sounded good with the weird stuff we normally listen to. Complex jazz was well served, as was music from Lamb Chop or Low, in which the details are deep in the music and drive and power is the key to making it come alive. While not bringing out all the details nearly as well as the Audio Magic Clairvoyants, the HiDiamonds get you there by making the music so coherent and captivating.

Though they were lacking in subtlety and transparency, the HiDiamonds were as visceral as the Audio Magic Clairvoyants. They may not give you all the facts, but they have such a high fun factor that who cares? The fact that they are not the most revealing cables is not such a bad thing. They allow the essentials to come through with little if any harm. They were neither overly bright nor dark (though they did lean ever-so-slightly towards the darker side), soft or hard, lean or bloated, too closed in or too open, and so on. Highly recommended. **Dave Clark**



## three

Reviewing cables should be an easy job. After all, you don't need to set up isolation devices to eliminate vibrations, make sure tubes are properly biased, check your cartridge's azimuth and tracking force, position and reposition speakers for optimum acoustics, etc. You just make sure the directional arrows are right and connect them from component A to component B. Right? Wrong! Sonic differences in higher-end cables can be quite subtle. It's like being the food taster for King Louis XVI. You expect to taste the lark, but Louie not only wants a report on the lark's tongue, but on the tenderloin of the lark's tongue.

HiDiamond's HD Signal=Esoteric MKII interconnects (yes, that's the official name of the cable—no snakes or Greek gods alluded to) are very flexible black cables with wooden blocks that slide along their length. The excellent RCAs fasten very snugly, giving a sense of comfort that things will stay put. At 650 Euros, or approximately \$650, they're not pushing the price barrier, but aren't inexpensive either. If you're reading Positive Feedback, you've probably already jettisoned your household budget a long time ago, eating Top Ramen to make ends meet while paying down the credit card debt you've racked up on expensive equipment.

The info sheet that comes with the cables says nothing about the wood blocks, and I heard no difference when they were near the load end, in the middle of the cable, or near the front. Perhaps they are merely an adornment. On the other hand, I immediately noticed a difference when I substituted the HiDiamonds for my Aural Symphonics interconnects and played track one of Keith Jarrett's Live at the Blue Note boxed set. The sound was louder, probably due to the HiDiamond cable's high capacitance/low impedance design. When Gary Peacock's acoustic bass chimed in, the bass seemed tauter and more focused, which I liked. The soundstage was as deep, wide, and tall as that of the Aural Symphonic cables, which is saying a lot, as the Symphonics are my cable of choice for this very reason. Vocals sounded about the same as when I listened to another fave recording, Ricky Lee Jones' Pop Pop, while on Dave Brubeck's classic Take Five LP, the band seemed more in focus, with better imaging than I was used to with my reference cables.

Well then, let's all go out and replace our cables! Not. Here's the caveat if your listening biases are similar to mine. I use tube electronics and electrostatic speakers. I have a Valve Amplification Company (VAC) tube DAC. The DAC connects to a Joule Electra LA 150 tube preamp, which in turn feeds a Joule Electra OTL stereo amp. The signal is then fed through a pair of Martin Logan Aeons, and voila—or viola!—a huge, transparent, coherent, layered, and tonally correct soundstage appears. I get an aural picture like one that Leonardo da Vinci would paint, rather than a photo-realistic soundscape à la Chuck Close. It's those little Chuck Close things that muck things up for me. High rez is not what I am after.

What the Hi Diamonds give in tautness of bass and overall focus, they take away by brightening things up. A perfect example was the rendering of Jack DeJohnette's cymbals. His cymbals seemed to stand apart from the drum set, as if they were being "lit" by a brighter light on the stage. I heard this on all the music I played, so it must be a characteristic of the cable. I found it interesting that the HiDiamond people were able to construct cables that render female vocals and trumpets properly while possessing this "spotlighting" characteristic.

The HiDiamonds are worth a listen, as they sound mostly natural while being highly resolving. On the other hand, they may not be for you if your system leans toward the bright side. They worked in my system within the constraints of my biases, which may not reflect yours. **Dan Thomas**

#### **Comments from Dave Clark**

While I have not heard the HiDiamond interconnects in my own system (hope to soon), I heard them on several occasions in the system of E.A.R./Marten Design distributor Dan Meinwald, where they spent a couple of weeks breaking in before going to Dan Thomas. Meinwald's system, as you might expect, consists of E.A.R. electronics (all tube, like Dan Thomas' system) and Marten Design Coltrane loudspeakers. The Coltranes, which employ ceramic woofer and midrange drivers and diamond tweeters, are extremely revealing, yet I heard no evidence of the brightness that Dan Thomas reports. On the contrary, Meinwald's system, with the HiDiamond interconnects, sounded warm and smooth, with no sign of edge or harshness. I say this not to deny what Dan Thomas heard, but to point out, once again, that cables can sound vastly different when heard in different systems, and that when it comes to cables, system synergy is not only critical but unpredictable. **Dave Clark**

**HiDiamond** web address: <http://www.hidiamond.it>

