

This review was never actually published. A different review, written by Jeff Fritz and actually appearing in December of 2000, may be seen at http://www.soundstage.com/revequip/silver_audio_appassionata.htm. I wrote the original article in November and early December of 1999 and it was scheduled for publication in January 2000. The fact that I agreed to accepted the consulting position with Harmonic Technology, which was to begin on February 1, 2000, left some thinking that it MIGHT have had some effect on the outcome of my review. Well, it didn't. And though SoundStage had formatted and posted the piece, they never published the URL. Here is my original review, in its entirety.

Home Audio Equipment Review



January 2000

Silver Audio Appassionata Interconnects and Silver Symphony 48 Speaker Cables

by Greg Weaver

It's no secret that like most SoundStagers I take cabling very seriously. Unfortunately, without exception, cables are effectively very sophisticated tone controls. Typically, as the novice begins to expand his knowledge and grow his burgeoning system by substituting different wires, cables easily come to be used as band aids. For instance, if you start off with a system that is tilted slightly to the brighter side of neutral and you substitute cables with a slight roll-off in the upper octave or two, the two otherwise unacceptable faults may at first listen appear to nullify one another, in effect creating perfection. My friend Curt, one of my sorely missed Southern Maryland Irregulars, likened it to the art of cooking: you simply season to taste. Do two faults, one too additive and one too subtractive, combine to yield an accurate re-creation of the truth? With some experience and understanding, the answer is a resounding no, they do not.



Silver Audio Appassionata interconnects

Review Summary

Sound "Detail and transparency" along with the ability "to create one of the most enveloping, believable soundstages" that Greg has heard.

Features Multiple silver conductors; locking WBT RCA connectors and silver-plated Cardas spades; Teflon and air dielectric offer extremely low

The issue at hand is one of balance and is explained far better by our own Doug Blackburn than I could ever paraphrase here. This is one reason that I urge patience and the use of a great variety of cables to all who test the waters of this highly complex and widely debated arena. Without good references, both in the form of live music and highly accurate reproduction systems, you can be readily led down the easy and sorely incorrect path of compensation and correction and away from the more desirable goal of accuracy. I have gone through many a cable -- both of my own construction and those of many wonderful manufacturers. And though I have settled on what I believe to be a very honest and accurate cable set, the search for truth is an ongoing concern. So when someone like Max Kreifeldt of Silver Audio offers to allow me a personal listen to his premier cable set, I jump at the chance.

dielectric interaction.

Use Quite delicate and easily tarnished; handle with care and the gloves provided.

Value "They are not inexpensive, but their sonic performance is as ravishing as their construction and appearance."

Silver Audio's thoroughbreds

The visually stunning Appassionata represents Silver Audio's most highly evolved interconnect design. It is comprised of eight miniscule (no gauge is specified) silver conductors used in an attempt to drive down self-inductance and reduce skin effect. These conductors, visible beneath the outer jacket of loose white mesh, are woven around a virgin Teflon and air core. Silver Audio utilizes air as the primary dielectric, as air is about as good a dielectric as you can get. Termination for the single-ended sets I had for evaluation is handled with locking WBT 0108 solderless RCA connectors. The cables are said to offer a shunt capacitance of 55pF and a series inductance of less than 100nH per meter, both at 1kHz for the meter set.

Knowing all of this still does not prepare you for the elegant beauty of these conduits. They are simply gorgeous. The fine conductors are visible under the loose weave outer jacket, allowing you to see not only the precious silver, but the geometry employed. They are also quite fragile, so handle with care. The sturdy and utile WBT RCAs facilitate handling without damage as the very back 5/16" or so of the barrel does not rotate, allowing you a good solid point to push on or pull the cable off the unit to which it is to be connected. Good thinking! Otherwise you might easily damage the cables through regular handling.

The Silver Symphony 48 speaker cable is a Litz design utilizing 48 conductors (again with no aggregate gauge mentioned) wound together, once again to force down self-inductance and reduce skin effect. The eight-foot set is said to contain over 12 ounces of extruded silver. The use of silver-plated 6.5mm ID Cardas connectors, which are brazed on rather than soldered to the terminations, are said to offer over ten times the conductivity of even the best solder. They also offer a tremendously strong mechanical termination. Larger 9mm ID spades are available if needed. The Silver Symphony 48, much like the Alpha-Core Goertz cables though not to their extreme, is of a low-impedance design. Listed as offering about 8-10 ohms, the low impedance is an attempt to reduce unpleasant mismatch reflections between the speaker and your amplifier. The shunt capacitance is listed at 730pF and the series inductance is given as less than 100nH, both at 1kHz for the eight-foot set.

Normally included with the cables is a set of white linen gloves. This is done to prevent inadvertent corrosion by skin oils or other hand-borne pollutants. While this may seem a tad

anal even for me, it does make perfect sense in extending the lifetime of the fine silver finish afforded these highly attractive products.

Into the fray

For my evaluation I used four sets of one-meter Appassionata interconnects and one eight-foot set of the Silver Symphony 48 speaker cables. Groove modulation is provided by a venerable Linn Sondek LP12 (with my own modifications) fitted with a Magnepan Unitrac 1 carbon-fiber, uni-pivot-tracking tonearm tipped with a Denon DL103D cartridge reworked with a van den Hul boron cantilever and type one fine-line stylus (watch for a review soon). Other cartridges in the stable include a Monster Cable Sigma Genesis 2000, a Sumiko Blue Point Special (nuded) and a Linn K18 when moving magnets are necessary.

Ones and zeros are generated by a Pioneer Elite PD-41 Stable Platter transport and transferred via my home-brew digital cable (or a Harmonic Technology digital cable) to an Audio Alchemy DTI Pro 32, which in turn feeds an Audio Alchemy DDE v1.2 via I2S bus, both of which are powered by an Audio Alchemy Power Station 2. All the AA equipment sports the full Channel Islands Audio treatment.

Both front-ends feed a Threshold FET Nine/e. The preamp then links to a Source Component Electronics Harmonic Recovery System, which in turn drives any one of a number of amplifiers, including the wonderful Pass Labs Aleph 2 and Clayton Audio S-40. Power cords on all components (except the Linn) are from Harmonic Technology. My listening room is 15' 9"W x 22' 11"L x 8' 5"H. Room taming is realized with Cascade Audio Engineering products and my own home-brew room taming devices. And of course, the use of lots of Vibrapods is mandatory!

Speakers are the Von Schweikert Research VR-4 Generation IIs. As these speakers must be bi-wired or jumpered, Silver Audio included a mini pair of their smaller SS 32 speaker cables to use as jumpers to bridge the 32" between the tweeter/midrange and bass modules of the speakers.

After substituting the Silver Audio cables, I threw in my favorite product-seasoning disc *Environments 1: Special Edition – Psychologically Ultimate Seashore* [Atlantic 84764]. After running that day and night for over a week, Katana, my audiophile cat, had begun to look for seagulls in the trees. But the rough part of the job was over, and serious listening could begin.

Sonic seasonings

The Appassionata's strengths can be summed up in two words: detail and transparency. Try *Harp Attack* [Alligator LCD 4790], which features the voices of Carey Bell, Billy Branch, James Cotton and Junior Wells, each playing their own respective harps (that's harmonica for those of you who are instrumentally challenged). In the opening cut, "Down Home Blues," the four are lined up left to right and take turns soloing. Unreal! Both their location within the soundstage and the resultant sounds of their voices and harps are vibrant, lifelike and so well re-created in space that you might be convinced the four were standing in front of you. There is something raw about hearing a harp blown live right in front of you. There is a roughness to the edges, a bite if you will, and a resultant growl that is very hard to get right -- under even the best of circumstances. The Silver Audio cables got it *completely* right -- and in a big

way. The cables handle micro and macrodynamics with breathtaking aplomb. The subtlety they are able to pass near the noise floor is exceptional, allowing them to render fine detail with a crisp distinctness that leaves you with an undeniable sense of reality, yet not in the overly etched manner all too often associated with lesser silver conductors. Their vividness is so involving that it is hard to do anything other than sit back and enjoy while listening to a particularly well-made recording.

Their one fault, as miniscule as it is, is just a shade too much energy in the upper-midrange/lower-treble region. This is just perceptible with passages like the piano in "Telegraph Road" from Dire Straits *Love Over Gold* [Warner Brothers 23128] or the ride cymbal and triangle from Steely Dan's title cut from *Aja* [Mobile Fidelity MFSL 033]. The result is just the slightest hint of nasality to the decay of the piano and a barely perceptible whitish flavor imparted to cymbals, detracting slightly from that lovely bronzy flavor. Strings, most especially of guitar, but occasionally with violins and violas, can sporadically be a shade too steely. While this may to some extent be an attribute of some recordings, it was not the culprit in all the instances I noted.

Comparing the Silver Audio cables to my reference Harmonic Technology Pro-Silway Mk II showed the Appassionata to be slightly more open, offering a more three-dimensional look into the soundstage. They rendered the musicians and the soundstage with more texture and space. The Pro-Silway Mk IIs, for their slighter less-revealing look into the perspective, offered slightly better microdynamic shadings and a vaguely more truthful shading of timbre.

Contrasting the Appassionata with the JPS Labs Superconductors proved them to again develop a slightly more realistic sense of stage and air, though the JPS offered a more honest timbre and midbass articulation. Though the Appassionata offered the most balanced re-creation of timbre from any silver or silver-plated entrant to ever connect my gizmos, they still had the ability on occasion to accentuate the upper-midrange through the treble, giving them just the slightest balance skew.

Bass performance from the Silver Symphony 48 is simply the most solid and complete I've yet to hear from any silver speaker cable. The space, depth and detail the cables are able to excavate from the powerful organ passages from the Saint Saëns Symphony No. 3 [RCA LSC 2341] is truly remarkable. Try "Sleep to Dream" from Fiona Apple's *Tidal* [Work/Clean Slate DK 67439] or "Tiger" from Paula Cole's *This Fire* [Warner Brothers 46646] if classical isn't your bag. The Silver Symphony 48 seems to offer a nearly perfect balance of power and finesse.

Midbass detail is exceptional. Listen to the opening bass run from "Airhead" on Thomas Dolby's *Aliens Ate My Buick* [EMI/Manhattan EI 48074] to get an idea how clearly these cables can detail and re-create distinct tones and the power of the instrument. The balance afforded by the Silver Symphony 48 showed none of the slight upward tilt that only occasionally reared its head with the Appassionatas.

These alluring white-jacketed cables truly synergize with the Appassionatas to create one of the most enveloping, believable soundstages I've experienced in my system. Illumination of the extremes of the stage, the rear left and right and outside the speaker placement, is acute yet totally believable. The palpability (yes, I finally succumb to using that particular descriptive adjective) of the voices re-created to extreme stage left and right, especially of the processed Genii's voice from *Amused to Death* [Columbia/Sony 468761], is spooky-real in

its believability.

Dynamics were stellar, with a slight nod going to macro over micro performance. Just the slightest loss of microdynamic contrast was apparent with the Silver Symphony 48. The 48 easily overshadow the performance of the Alpha-Core AG-1 in that department, and in bass performance too. While the AG-1 throws an engaging soundstage and provides a delightful midrange experience, it was no match for the more poised and accurate SS 48. The Harmonic Technology Pro 9 bi-wires bested them both in dynamics, especially in the micro category. Take the explosive "P" sound at about 1:02 into "Fade To Black" from Dire Straits' *On Every Street* [Warner Bros. 26680]. While it is apparent with the Silver Symphony 48, it just doesn't have the weight and concussive explosive pressure that I've heard from other cables. The octave-to-octave balance between the two here was a near-even match. Overall, the Silver Symphony 48 was slightly more revealing than the JPS Superconductor, but the JPS entrant seemed to inch slightly ahead in balance, bass and timbre.

By the light of Silver Audio

The system synergy is rhapsodic. I can't suggest that this combo will be everything to every listener, but here in my system they are the nearly perfect blend of musical and audiophile concerns. Properly designed and executed silver conductors have the reputation of being able to shine with a beautiful light, while those less diligently created can blister and scathe with too brilliant an illumination. It is my pleasure to report that the Silver Audio Appassionata/Silver Symphony 48 combo falls delightfully into the best of the first camp. They are not inexpensive, but their sonic performance is as ravishing as their construction and appearance. This cable combo is highly recommended.

...Greg Weaver

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Silver Audio Appassionata Interconnects and Silver Symphony Speaker Cables

Prices: Appassionata interconnects, \$700 USD per meter pair; Silver Symphony speaker cables, \$1700 per eight-foot pair.

Warranty: Lifetime.

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