

CABLES FURUTECH REFERENCE III-NI

A sense of purpose

Furutech's flagship Reference III cables are of the thick, weighty and slightly unwieldy kind that suggests performance to high-end standards – and a price to match.

That's not a bad thing: after all, when you are spending lots of hard-earned cash on pieces of wire that are supposed to make your system sound better, you want something that doesn't only sound as good as promised, but also tangibly looks and feels expensive.

The Furutech Reference III speaker cable and interlink under the spotlight here certainly conform to the latter parameters. Common to both the balanced interlink and its speaker cable colleague under scrutiny here is a substantial girth, although they remain fairly pliable and user friendly.

The next aspect you notice is the module included in the signal path of both cables.

They're called GC-303 modules by Furutech, and are designed to absorb electromagnetic interference, which in turn allows more of the music to be heard.

Indeed, the battle against noise and interference in all its forms is a core design principle of all Furutech's cable products, and as one would expect, that offensive reaches its most sophisticated level in these flagship products.

The modules are a primary part of the shielding efforts, but in the case of the balanced interlink, the primary conductors are surrounded by a braided layer of alpha-PCOCC conductors, forming a further barrier against external interference.

What is alpha-PCOCC, I hear you ask? Well, let's start with the PCOCC part. It's an acronym for Pure Copper by Ohno Continuous Casting, a process with allows

VITAL STATS

REFERENCE III-NI BALANCED INTERLINK

Construction30 strands of 0,18 mm alpha-OCC copper conductors
ConfigurationTwo twisted cores
InsulationAir-foamed HDPE
SheathTwo layers of flexible PVC
ShieldBraided 0,12 mm alpha-conductor layer, GC-303 module
JacketNylon yarn braid

VERDICT

Fast, energetic and transparent delivery from this top-class cable. Exceptionally low noise floor and astonishing detail retrieval.

REFERENCE III-NI SPEAKER CABLE

Construction6x bundles, each with 20 strands of 0,18 mm alpha-OCC copper conductors
InsulationAir-foamed irradiated polyethylene
SheathTwo layers of flexible PVC
ShieldGC-303 module
JacketNylon yarn braid

VERDICT

Clean, open and fast performance. Close attention to fine detail. Tonally neutral, but with some emphasis on the higher frequency spectrum. Critical of lesser ancillaries as a result.

PRICE

Reference III-NI balanced interconnect (1.2m pair)R11 900
 Reference III-NI speaker cable (3m pair)R14 200

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single-structure crystal copper to be drawn into super-pure wire without the random copper crystal structures that can impede signal transfer.

The alpha designation refers to Furutech's cryogenic and demagnetising processes, which the conductors are subjected to. The cryogenic part of the process sees the use of liquid nitrogen to cool down the conductors to between -196 and -250 deg C.

Furutech says this changes the conductor material's molecular structure, binding it closer together and allowing a more cohesive, and thus conductive material, than before. Next, ring demagnetisation uses controlled attenuation to eliminate magnetisation, and further enhance conductivity.

Thus, high conductivity, exceptional EMI rejection and a focus on combating all other forms of noise and interference are really the

key elements of these cables.

I ran the speaker cable and the balanced interlink individually at first, but the sound really gelled once I put the two together, and thus, it would appear that the Reference III wires like talking to each other, and even inspire each other, when used in tandem.

The Furutech Reference III-NI speaker cable was supplied as a straightforward stereo pair, which meant using couplers between the bi-wire terminals of my Vivid Audio V1.5 speakers, as well as the Wilson Benesch Square 2s also on review at the time.

The balanced, XLR-terminated Furutech Reference III-NI interlink did the signal transfer honours between the Esoteric UX-03 SE universal player, and the Electrocompaniet EC4.7 pre-amp.

The results were quite hard and cold initially, with a starkness and a flat tonality

that didn't sound too promising. Yes, they were very open and very revealing (almost too revealing, in fact) but the music lacked the harmonics, the timbre and the depth to sound real or appealing.

I let the system run, and a couple of hours later, the sound had been transformed. Now there was depth and colour, richness and dimension. The flow and the natural rhythm of the music had been restored, and the result was a majestic, engaging listening experience.

The Furutechs have the ability to extract and resolve ultra-fine grains of detail, and to mould them into a smooth, cohesive whole. The result is an extremely focussed image, smoothly resolved and beautifully presented.

Layer upon layer of musical information allows a structured, dimensional and revealing delivery that retains vital balance and intonation, but draws the listener into the essence of the music itself.

And importantly, there is nothing aggressive about the presentation, especially at the top-end: the treble sounds clear and clean, but without any brittleness. Again, like an image printed on fine-grain paper, the music picture is highly detailed and perfectly focussed, but still easy on the ear.

The Furutechs were able to create a generously dimensioned soundstage, with loads of ambient information to create the illusion of a much larger listening space when demanded by the original recording. And their talent for pace and precision also meant that there was nothing sluggish about their delivery.

Most of all, however, the Reference III cables have the ability to come to grips with a wide spectrum of genres.

Be it the raw honesty of early Led Zeppelin, the operatic passion of Mozart's 'The Magic Flute', the stirring blues of Dave Hole, or the foot-tapping jazz standards of Steve Tyrrell, these wires always capture the essence of the music.

The result is an engrossing and endearing combo with all the punch and pathos one could wish for.

Deon Schoeman

