

Atlas Equator III interconnect

It was about a year or so ago that certain UK cable specialists began to realise that conventional RCA phono plugs were doing little to help the sound of their wares, so they duly redesigned these ubiquitous connectors. Two such companies now use ABS outers instead of metallic sleeves on their plugs. The effects of this alteration are dramatic in my view, and the ABS outer gives a sound markedly superior to the same cable with no outer covering on the plug, so it's not merely a case of the metallic cover introducing negative effects. The first of these companies that came to my attention, Chord Company, named its connector VEE after its Vibration Eliminating Enclosure.

The Atlas Equator III interconnect uses a similar ABS outer, but over a non-magnetic low mass metal, solderless connector. This it calls the Integra plug. The Scottish manufacturer duly supplied me with a metre pair of the 'before' Equator analogue interconnect cables fitted with metallic plug covers, and a pair of metre-long 'after' cables, identical but using the aforementioned non-metallic Integra plugs. Any performance differences therefore could only be attributable to the plugs, as all else was the same...

So, to discover what differences were audible between the before and after versions, I inserted the cables in turn between my Well Tempered Amadeus turntable and Dynavector XX-2 moving coil, and my Naim SuperLine phono preamplifier. As well as being the only phono-equipped gear to hand in my DIN and BNC ruled environment, it's a mission-critical interface that really highlights what an interconnect is up to. Good for reviewing, then!

Sound quality

Tested running between my turntable and amplifiers, the newest Equator III cables sounded markedly more transparent, cleaner and faster than their predecessors with the old type of metal plug. Even at very low replay levels, the new Equator III scavenged greater information – especially subtle detail – from the John McLaughlin, Al Di Meola and Paco de Lucia album, *Friday Night in San Francisco*. The cable distinctly revealed the off-mic activities during the opening of *Mediterranean Sunrise*. The Integra-fitted cable was far better at revealing low-level information, and

overall it excelled with dynamics. This gave the recording true chiaroscuro and contrast.

In presentational terms it also triumphed, vividly discriminating between the texture and harmonic character of each of the trio of acoustic guitars in the carefully delineated soundstage. Notes and flurries had greater individuality – they sounded comparatively blurred and smeared on the original cables with the metal plugs. By contrast, the new cables with their ABS connectors gave more clearly defined leading edges and a better sense of space between the notes.

The new cables made the music more exciting and the trio's playing more characterful and invigorating. The music exhibited greater rhythmic bounce and vitality than before. So, all round, it seemed to be a convincing win for the Integra-fitted Equator cables.

By way of explanation Atlas says that the Integra plug uses a non-magnetic ABS cover which may avoid a saturation in the return leg at an RCA plug's metal sheath if it's in the signal path. The Integra sheath facilitates a direct barrier free return signal path with less interference, the company claims.

That sounds entirely plausible given my experience of the crisp, open detailing and musicality provided by this cable alongside an earlier generation of the same. And in the great scheme of interconnect(ed) things, the Equator III is very fine indeed – you'll not find much at the price that comes close in terms of musicality. **MS**



► DETAILS

PRICE: £75 (1M)

CONTACT:
01563 572666

WEBSITE:
ATLASCABLES.COM

OUR VERDICT

