

EQUIPMENT REVIEW

Organic Audio cables By Alan Sircom

Even for a magazine with no upper limits to the price of products we review, Argento Audio cables do hit the 'sharp intake of breath' regions. The all silver, profoundly high-end cables are beautifully made and presented, but at nearly £5,000 for a single metre of Flow Master Reference, they aren't an everyday purchase for most folk. Even the 'entry-level' Serenity cables are in practice beyond many audiophiles, especially in today's market.

Ulrik Madsen from Argento clearly recognised this, because he recently founded the Organic Audio cable brand, which is claimed to bring much of the performance of Argento's Serenity range of cables but at roughly half the price. It does this by using pure copper in place of pure silver, and by using Serenity's cryo-treated, hyper-elliptic edgeless quasi-ribbon conductor design. Serenity costs less than Flow because it uses a less complex geometry, less silver and takes less time to make; however, liberated from the sheer cost of wrangling silver, the Organic Audio designs can sport the same custom made plugs, this time with silver-plated pure copper contacts (as befits the design). Both RCA and XLR connectors are designed and made by Argento Audio and incorporates a patented method for increasing contact pressure. All parts of the connectors are machined in high precision Swiss CNC-laths. The exterior of the plug is coated, so hopefully there's no chance of ending up with verdigris terminals in the future. We spent 10 months exposing the Organic Audio cables to the atmosphere to investigate their tarnishing properties, and have no tarnishing to report.

Organic Audio claims these to have somewhere between 4-8x lower resistance than the bronze or brass parts used in lesser plugs. They are also a tight fit – deliberately so, to lower contact resistance – getting close to an almost locked tight WBT plug. They also look cool, too! The legends are a bit

tough to read, because 'L', 'R', the little broken 'o' logo and the directionality arrow are all simply engraved on the copper of the plug itself, but that only adds to the minimalist charm. Possibly.

The cables are wrapped in a gunmetal grey fibre weave. Inside, porous and low weight are used, which means air is the primary dielectric but at same time the cable is also very well dampened unlike your typical air-dielectric cable. The net result is reduced microphony and very low dielectric absorption. Should you feel inclined to wash your cable the thin layer of polymer between the outer sleeve and the interior fibres will prevent the cable from getting seriously wet (more relevantly this layer also prevents moist air getting absorbed into the cable). The cables are exquisitely made, and relatively flexible for a little-finger thick design, and come packaged in soft circular zip-up bags, akin to the kind of things in which drummers keep their cymbals.

From my limited exposure to Argento cables, they are silver cables that don't sound like silver cables. Funnily enough, Organic Audio cables are copper designs that don't sound like copper designs. They just sound like music. We had a complete set from mains plug to speaker socket (although the two-pin Euro plugs prevented too much review expended on the power cords).

There seem to be two kinds of cable in high-end. The first forms part of a synergistic, systematic approach that spells a gradual migration to one brand of cables in order to gain something more than offered by the sum of the parts. Organic Audio cables don't work that way. They simply sound good in and of themselves. Yes, they sound good enough that you may well migrate to all Organic Audio in order to get the same 'good' apply throughout, but the drive is 'this is a bloody good cable' on its own, instead of 'consider this cable the start of a beautiful friendship'.

▶ But what kind of 'bloody good' exactly? It's all about music and detail. In particular, they are adept at separating out the individual instruments in the band, whether that band be a rock power trio, a jazz quartet or the whole Hallé throwing itself at the Dream of Gerontius. This should suggest excellent stereo separation, but it's more than that; the instruments are physically and temporally separated from one another, not simply layered. Strangely, it's often not the instruments or even the ambience that highlight this. Instead, it's the little things, the polite applause from the audience, that dropped manuscript that falls to the floor on bar six, the shuffling of feet and the tube-trains running under the hall. Your attention

PRICES

Organic Audio phono-phono: £495/1m pair

Organic Audio XLR-XLR: £535/1m pair

Additional length XLR or phono: £75/0.5m pair

Loudspeaker cables (spade lugs): £710/1m stereo pair

Additional length speaker cable: £100/0.5m pair

Power Cords (Furutech connectors): £500/.2m cable

Additional length Power cords: £100/1m pair

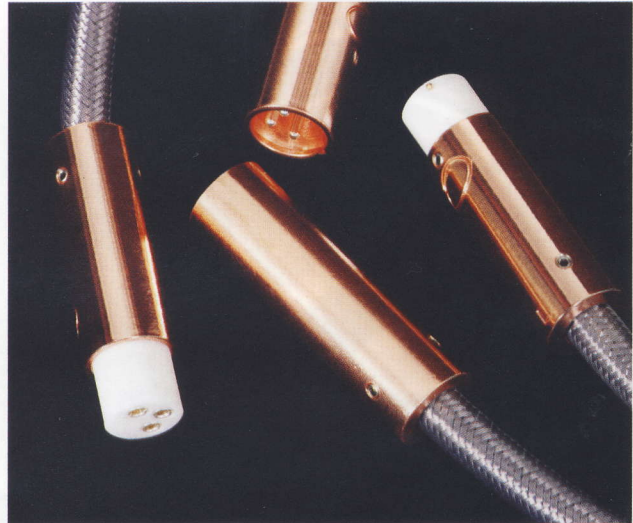
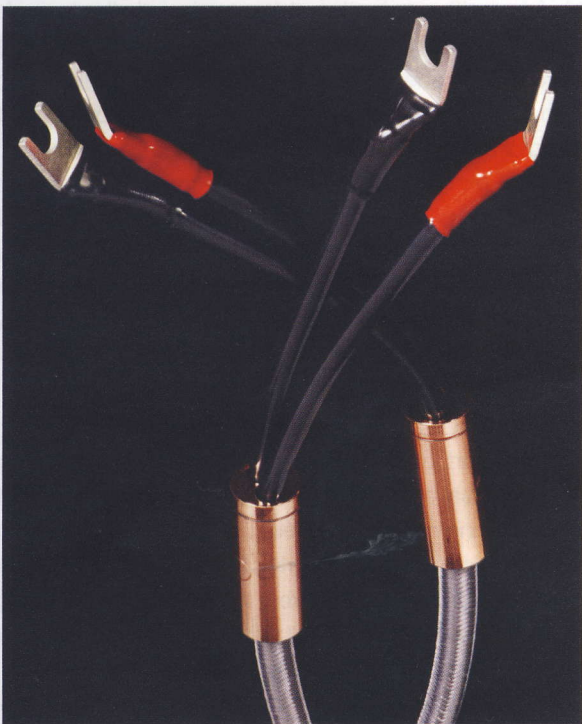
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is not drawn to them, but your attention is enhanced by their heightened presence thanks to all that detail. It's almost like your flight-or-flight mechanism kicks in, but in the 'you are there' way rather than a 'here comes a predator' response.

The detail here never once gets in the way. In truth, in many cases if the choice comes down to a cable that is so detailed that you lose sight of the music, or one that lacks fine detail, but is wonderfully musically communicative, I'd choose the latter. The great bonus to the Organic Audio cables is they join the select group that gives you both in equal helpings.

If I'd have to sum this cable up in one word, it would be 'chimeric'. You put it in one system, it brings that detail and musical insight out of that system, without altering the tonality of that system. Change it for another system, and the Organic Audio does the same, once again without any kind of tonal shift. It has taken some time to find a character that applies universally, but the nearest it gets is a touch of hardness in that ordered and controlled bass, while the top end isn't as clean and extended as some of the really top-flight cables (including Argento's own, I believe). But this seems like nit-picking, because what it does so well is that it doesn't purport to raise the performance of the equipment it is hooked to by imposing its own sense of tonality, just tease out the best in the devices in use.

While that holds universally across the range, I found myself most strongly drawn to the improvements brought about by the interconnect cables. The speaker wire made a similarly significant improvement, but the effect was not so marked as with the interconnects. The power cords are interesting, in that they potentially offer a similar grade of change as the speaker cables, but the lack of three-pin UK plugs in these early samples did hold extended listening back.

Like any good audio component, Organic Audio cables are handmaidens to the music. They are effectively invisible, just bringing out the reason why you started buying good audio in the first place... the music. +