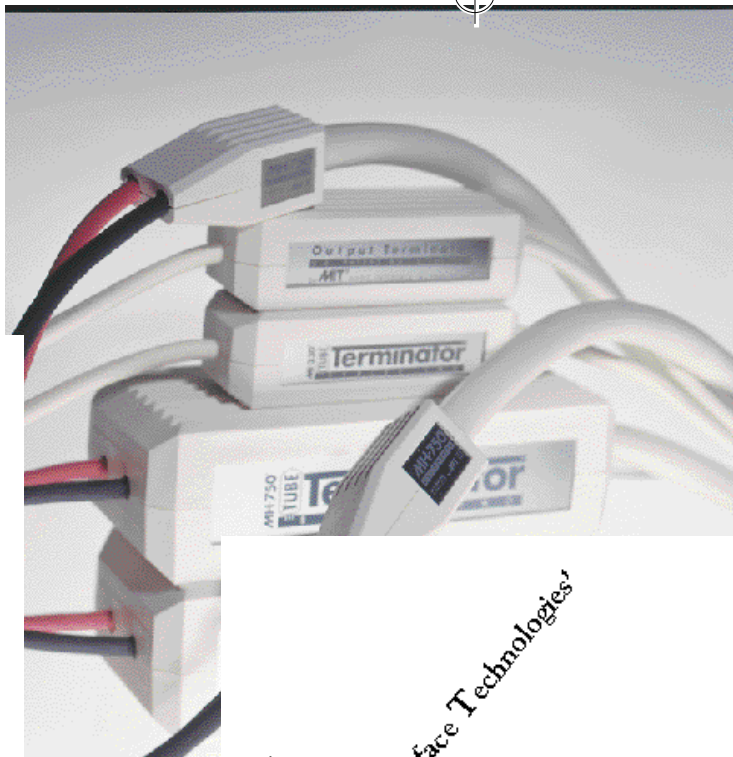


& MH-750 MI-330



Which way are you steering your audio boat? Towards the cool, clean solid-state waters or the warmer currents of the tubular sea? To be blunt about it, we love our colorations. Sure, we believe our course is towards the “accurate,” “truthful,” or ever-popular “musical,” but what do these words really mean? We’re busily making our choices: Analog and/or digital? Dynamic and/or electrostatic or horn speakers? And yes, tubes or transistors? It’s as complicated as you make it; just remember, all you have to do is please yourself. I’ve spent most of my years listening to solid-state gear, switching over to tubes about six years ago. I don’t think I’ll be going back anytime soon—I love tubes’ round sound. On the other hand, I have to admit I miss a few solid-state qualities; the taut bass, resolution of fine details, the extended high frequencies. So, even those of us who are relaxing in our glass boats might be a little envious of our friend’s silicon-powered rigs from time to time. We all want the best of both worlds.

When it comes to choosing cables for a tube-based system, MIT’s name isn’t likely to be bandied about. That’s understandable; for a long, long time MIT’s interfacing proclivities were exclusively oriented towards transistorized gear. Bruce Brisson,

Music Interface Technologies[®]

MH-750 Tube Terminator Series Two Speaker Interface
& MI-330 Tube Terminator Series Two Component Interface

Music Interface Technologies

By Steve Guttenberg

MIT’s founder, chief designer and general agitator, is a solid-state kind of guy: “We became very adept at transferring the signal down our cable from a fairly low impedance, solid-state amplifier into very low impedance speakers.” A not-so-oblique reference to the venerable Wilson Watt-Puppy/MIT/Spectral troika, but the other solid-state biggies, Krell, Levinson, Classé, et. al., are also MIT’s natural cabling partners. Legions of tube-loving ‘philes took their cable business elsewhere. In the early nineties Brisson finally acknowledged the tube-powered segment of the high-end market by introducing Tube Terminators (now in Series Two configuration). The fact that MIT made that distinction set them apart from the one-size-fits-all strategy of most manufacturers who claim “Our cables perform miracles in every system we’ve tried them in.” Get real, there’s no such thing as a universal cable. Cables do more than passively connect components together; they complete the “circuit” between them. They’re actively involved:

the cables’ unique electrical characteristics will determine just how synergistic the match-up is. Let’s put aside cable-as-tone-control thinking about the sound of wire, and try substituting more-effective-coupling-of-components. That’s what I hear with MIT’s Tube Terminators throughout my system; the interface feels tighter. They give a stronger connection to the swaggering rhythms of Mingus, the heartbreak in Lucinda Williams’ voice, and the many-splendored distortions of Hendrix’s Strat. The information in those LPs and CDs is there, it’s just takes a little extra something to retrieve it.

Brisson describes the Tube Terminators interconnects and speaker cables as “voltage driven” designs; they’ll maximize the signal transfer of low current/high voltage tube electronics. Tube Terminators are part of MIT’s mid-priced “High End” line that features those mysterious CVT Couplers and Output Terminator boxes. Yes, yes, putting any extra stuff between your electronics seems counterintuitive, and Bris-

MIT Tube Terminators

son bristles if you even ask what's going on in those boxes. "Better bass, better midrange, and better imaging," says he. Under duress he would go no further than "Passive components, L, C, and R [inductors, capacitors, and resistors]." Thanks for the info Bruce. As for the wire itself, the MH-750 speaker cables and MI-330 interconnects feature MIT's Vari-Lay construction (multiple gauge copper wires wrapped at different pitches), which have remained pretty much the same for the last twelve years. MIT's ongoing research has been directed to the passive networks. The MH-750 Tube Terminator speaker cables are only available in a single-wire configuration; bi-wire fans are out of luck.

After a week or so of burn-in I listened to the Tube Terminators with a bunch of tube power amps: my own conrad-johnson Premier Eleven A, a Cary SLA 70B Signature, Audio Research VT 60 SE, Anthem Integrated 1, and an Audio Note Conquest. The MIT interconnects and speaker cables were at their very best with the Cary SLA 70B Signature and my c-j Premier Ten pre-amp. The Tube Terminators further opened the already expansive soundstage of this combination, the Cary's 6550/pentode midrange took on a "triode glow," and the amp's grip on the bottom end was firmed up. Wow! The Tube Terminators speaker cables seem to like the higher impedance taps—e.g., the ARC VT 60SE's 16 ohm tap was clearly the sweetest-sounding—but experimentation is always the best course. The MH-750s were compatible with all of the amps mentioned above except the Audio Note where the Tube Terminators diffused the overall sound, muddled detail, and softened bass definition. Perhaps this zero-feedback singled-ended amp's output impedance is higher than optimum, or there may be other compatibility questions with SE amps—it wasn't a happening combo.

Looking over my listening notes for the other MIT/tube electronics pairings, a definite pattern emerged: they pretty much maintained those positive tube qualities—holographic imaging, overall naturalness, etc.—while solid-state-like virtues such as control and speed/detail were markedly improved. The bottom became more focused, more tuneful; the middle

and top frequencies delineation was heightened. Less murk, more "room sound," more low-level resolution. Brisson's cables seemed to couple everything together more securely.


MIT consumer tip: for speakers with binding posts that are fairly high up off the floor (like my Gallos), Brisson likes to leave the Output Terminator box hanging in the breeze. For speaker with inputs closer to the floor, try putting the Output Terminator boxes on Styrofoam cups to isolate them from floor-borne energy.

The amazing new JVC XRCB of Bill Evans' ravishingly beautiful reissue *Everybody Digs Bill Evans* is quite an earful. His lyrical touch was never less than sublime, and this was only his second recording as a leader. Evans communicated on a higher plane; he was a philosopher/pianist. He was quoted as saying he was usually unaware of his fingers as he played. I feel the same way; after listening to Evans I can't listen to any other pianists—they invariably sound stilted. Thinking about hi-fi while I'm immersed in this music is just about the last thing I want to do, so I pulled the Tube Terminators out of my system. Yikes! Too much of Evans' magical performance evaporated; to reduce it to a list of audiophile adjectives would be a waste of time. But it was a shock to my nervous system!

One of my favorite equipment "tests" is listening to music I should like but don't because the recording's quality stands in the way. How frustrating. Iggy Pop's *TV Eye 1977 Live* [Virgin] sounds like a bad telephone connection, but properly "terminated," Iggy's thrashed-to-hell-and-back sound complements rather than clashes with his music. The wretched sound quality of *TV Eye* thwarted my musical satisfaction for years, but lately I've come to depend on this music to get me going, to cut through the BS of life.

And from the "I used to be disgusted, now I try to be amused" department, the Kronos' cover of "Foxy Lady" (from *Kronos Quartet on Nonesuch*) started to make sense during my time with the Tube Terminators. Where before I felt Kronos put "Foxy" on more as a gimmick, now they don't sound like effete posers—there's a muscular energy to their performance that brings the tune home. Their string tone is better, and the digital reverb is less obnox-

ious. I think Hendrix would now recognize it as his own.

If you're a tube-o-phile searching for a little more, hmmm, control, the MIT Tube Terminators deserve a place at the top of your audition list. Take advantage of MIT's 30 day home-trial plan, and rediscover your music collection. 

MANUFACTURER

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DESIGNER

Bruce Brisson

SPECIFICATIONS

Prices: MH-750 Tube Terminator II speaker cable:
\$695/8 ft. pair

MI-330 Tube Terminator II interconnects:
\$350/1 meter pair

ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT

Front End: Linn LP 12 turntable/ Lingo power supply/Naim Aro arm/ Linn Klyde cartridge; Muse Model Two DAC/ Muse Model Five Transport and Theta Data Basic II transport
Electronics: conrad-johnson Premier Ten pre-amp/Premier Eleven A power amp; Audio Note Conquest power amp
Speakers: Gallo Nucleus Reference, Totem Stiff
Cables: Nirvana S-L Series interconnects and speaker cable and Digital Transmission Cables; Cardas Golden Five C interconnects and AES-EBU digital cable; Audio Note interconnects and speaker cables; JPS Labs Supercouductor interconnects and speaker cables.

ACCESSORIES

Bylux Dedicated Powerline Conditioner, VansEvers power cords, ART Q-Dampers, Michael Green Audio Points, Symposium Shelves



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