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MIT Oracle 350 Balanced Interconnects & Oracle V2 Speaker Cable

Greg Petan

With these two products, MIT continues its cost-no-object assault on state-of-the-art performance in cable design, but this time exploring the boundaries of flexibility. These Oracle cables can be made to match the customer's amplifier impedances, and fit to tube or solid-state electronics, something no other manufacturer I am aware of offers. With the Oracle speaker cable, you can simply to unscrew the wire portion from the terminator box and upgrade either wire or terminator box, as you wish, or as improvements become available. The whole package (with 1.5-meter interconnects and eight feet of speaker cable) costs nearly \$12,000.

The fit and finish of the Oracle cables is state of the art. The terminator boxes and connectors are engineered and finished to within an inch of their lives. Massively heavy and imposingly large, they are what the Incredible Hulk would use, if the Incredible Hulk were an audiophile.

I have had a great deal of experience with MIT wire, over the years, and I find that the Oracle interconnects and Oracle V2 speaker cable not only correct some past MIT weaknesses, but improve on MIT's traditional strengths, as well, leaving a wonderfully holographic, effortless portrayal of the music. These are by far the most neutral products MIT has produced.

After the requisite burn in time of about 100 hours, I noticed greater detail retrieval coupled with a grain-free ease and extension in the high frequencies that previous MIT cables couldn't quite muster. This gave the

music a lighter, more open sound and an added sparkle and life. There was no residual edge or brightness. On Joe Satriani's *Live in San Francisco* [Epic EK85744], the aggressive cymbal work that penetrates the less-than-optimal mix comes through with its complexity intact, a complexity that is lost in other cable's distortions. On the Tommy Flanagan trio's *Sea Changes*



[Evidence ECD22191], the outstanding cymbal work is vivid and alive without a trace of grain. I have used this disc as a reference since its release and it has never sounded better. Used with the Pass X600 amplifier and the Talon Khourus X loudspeakers, the Oracle cables exposed all the ambience of great recordings and all the hash and distortion on those less fortunate. The high-frequency extension was particularly telling.

The midrange, blending seamlessly to the highs, possessed everything I could ask for—tremendous resolution, effortless dynamics, and dimensionality, and truth in timbre. Voices in par-

ticular gained the ability to just melt me. One of my favorite vocal performances is Johnny Hartman on *John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman* [Impulse GRD-157]. Hartman's straightforward, unselfconscious delivery came through complete in tonal structure, spontaneous in the real-time unraveling of detail and vocal control. Roseanne Cash on *Ten Song Demo* [CDP-7243], a well-kept secret of a sonic gem, sounds at once airy, resonant, and locked solid in space. Few recordings can match the intimate and passionate delivery, or the musicality provided by this recording.

And the bass—ah, the bass! Be prepared for what sounds like an extra half-octave of dynamic bass extension and a level of transparency in the nether regions that I, for one, had never before experienced. There is texture and transient info down there you might not have expected. Furthermore, these cables give position and presence to bass instruments nearly as well as they portray players in the midrange, which is unique. This phenomenon is difficult to describe, since I have been so conditioned to believe that bass information is relatively non-directional.


As for stage depth and width, I couldn't identify any veiling of the rear of the hall or left-to-right constrictions. The volume of a natural space came to life. Earl Wild playing Grieg's *Piano Concerto in A minor* [Chesky CD50] seemed to be in a believable acoustic space. This added greatly to a technically flawless yet emotionally charged performance. Of course, other brands of cable may light up the hall as well, or even slightly better. Some Nordost and XLO designs come to mind, owing to

their slightly lighter overall balance. But they will not have quite the bass performance of the MIT. And instrumental images within the stage are more fleshed out through the Oracles than with other cables I know.

The Oracles' ultra-wide bandwidth helps paint a picture that is rich and palpable in harmonics, offering a slightly rounder and more dimensional image than most other cables. On "Willow Weep for Me" from Duke Ellington's *Mood Indigo* [CK44444], a trumpet sings a beautifully haunting solo. Placed above, behind, and to the outside of the right speaker, the horn opens up and expands within its dynamic envelope, all the while remaining focused and rich in harmonics. While other cables may etch the outlines of individual instruments to a greater degree, the MIT allows the image boundary to bloom naturally, as the dynamics build toward a crescendo, a phenomenon not often experienced in high-end audio.

Changing components proved to be a powerful exercise and a testament to the MIT's neutrality. Moving to the Pass X350 and X600 amps from my reference Rowland 8TiHC, all aspects of the soundscape changed, creating an entirely different musical feel. What was once a laid-back presentation, with a clear bias to midbass weight and color, became more forward, with more apparent transient detail. Image outlines sharpened and dynamics gained a greater sense of urgency. With the Oracles harnessed to the Plinius SA250 MkIV, the system shifted again, this time to a sweeter overall balance and a slightly colored midbass, much like the Rowland 8TiHC. While these differences could certainly be made with many other cables, the MIT Oracle system rendered them in stark relief.

Is there room for improvement? Perhaps a greater feeling of immediacy. But I'm reaching. As I investi-

gate competing brands, I will keep you up on what I find. For the moment, let me just say that those who liked MIT before will be thrilled with these new products; those who didn't, well, they should listen. They may just get converted. Throw in MIT's commitment to upgrades, and you have one element of your system that will live and breathe with you and your music for years. 

ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT

See Petan's Pass X350 review.

MANUFACTURER INFORMATION

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Prices: Oracle 350 Balanced

Interconnects: \$4,495/1.5 meter;

Oracle V2 Speaker Cable: \$6,995/8 feet