

Dyrholm Audio Zodiac review



The story goes: Dyrholm Audio has been around for about five years and was founded by John Dyrholm who at that time was involved in loudspeaker design. When one of his friends brought a cable that surpassed his own design, he immediately becomes intrigued by cable design and after some time his own cable designs showed encouraging results. Eventually one of his friends wanted to buy his newly developed cable and that marked the beginning of the small company.

Design and functionality

Dyrholm Audio sent their Zodiac line of speaker cables and interconnects along with the powercords for a review and not knowing their price region, upon looking at them I thought they must surely be expensive because they looked like really expensive cables. Everything, from material selection, attention to constructional details, overall aesthetic elegance and of course the sonic results, show incredible passion and labor of love that has been put into them. I spent much time just holding them in my hands and marveling at their looks – impressive stuff.

After discovering their pricelist and based on the visual impression, I feel they are actually quite reasonably priced, shall I say affordable.



In the package there were two Zodiac line power cords, speaker cables, a pair of RCA interconnects and a pair of XLR interconnects, all wrapped up in a very stylish, elegant design.

Handling of the cables gives good impressions; they look massive on the outside but actually aren't heavy and they could be bent relatively easy. I really liked the idea that the speaker + and – wires are physically separated, this makes for an easier handling. The speaker cables were supplied with Furutech bananas and after plugging them into speaker binding posts it was obvious the connection was firm - same for the interconnects.



About their cable construction, on their website we read: “The Zodiac series is made of solid cores of both fine silver and silver-plated copper. All threads are insulated in separate cotton braids and then assembled in a sealed tube in order to prevent oxidation. Shielding is provided by zinc plated copper shield that effectively stops radiation from other sources. Finally the cable is covered in a dampening foamed silicon hose.

This uncompromised construction minimizes static electricity and absorbs vibration and noise.”

Further on, for the Zodiac line we read: “This cable offers an exquisite, full-bodied sound reproduction: sweet, fine-grained and detailed. It draws you closer to the musical events that seem effortless and as natural as it gets. It also features an exceptional control of the soundstage and a calmness that highlights the beauty of the music. These cables are top notch for upgrading your high end system.”



The above statements really got me curious about the sonic potential. There are countless approaches in cable building: cable geometries, choice of materials for signal transmission, choice of materials for insulation, shielding, etc, all very important issues that can make one cable stand or fall in its performance. Every now and then I try to read what cable manufacturers say about their respective choices but to come up with a clear picture of what is all about is not easy. I have even performed some measurements of various cables and although they measurements show differences, they do not even nearly explain enough the differences heard during auditioning them.

So what's the secret behind all this cable "cooking"? Frankly, I don't know and I doubt I will ever understand this complex field. But being a music lover I'm certainly interested in cabling that elevates my music enjoyment to a higher level.

From the Dyrholm Audio Philosophy page I learn that all products go through the burn-in process in an Audiodharma cable cooker, so that the user can expect pretty much final performance right after the installation. This is something I really appreciate: my curiosity is immediately appeased 😊.



Dyrholm Audio has a 4-week return policy with full refund in case you wouldn't be satisfied with their cables and this shows their faith in their products as well as care for the customers. The cables are sold directly to the customers.

Performance

The order of appearance: first I have tried the powercord (on the DAC), then the RCA interconnect (coming from the DAC), followed by a XLR interconnects (between preamp and power amp) and finally the speaker cables, all compared to known references of entry level and later, to the cables of very high quality – reference level (Skogrand and Paradox).

Compared to the entry level cables, Dyrholm Audio cables exhibited a much higher degree of calmness and a balanced level of musical insight. No part of the frequency spectrum stood out and the overall sense of smoothness was greatly enhanced. The authority of the sound was much improved, with a strong, firm and precise bass foundation. The energy levels contained in music were transferred with much less losses and overall believability was enhanced. They exhibited a very well balanced and homogenous sound picture that made music listening really enjoyable.



The Zodiac speaker cables in particular showed excellent control over the whole spectrum sounding very seamless to my ears. The sense of instrument body was reproduced intact and the transparency levels were just right to enable very good insight into the music. The Zodiac powercord was also an excellent performer, giving a very solid foundation on which music was built upon.



One of my favorite tracks for comparisons, Michael Franks – Hourglass (from Abandoned Garden) that features upright bass, guitar, piano and percussion, was reproduced with all the tension, drama and emotional involvement one could ask for. With entry level cables one does get information however, to enjoy the music fully on the highest level and to experience its message completely, emotional involvement is a must and here Dyrholm Audio showed its capabilities to a great effect.

Female vocals like for instance Benedicte Torget`s performance on her SLEEP AWHILE track from the “After A Day Of Rain” album was just beautiful (like the song itself); the presence and the color of her voice was very natural and believable, with all the subtle breathing noises.

Same with Shelby Lynne` “THE THIEF”, her dark voice was reproduced equally impressive, very touching and her guitar showed real body and sonority.

Trying out some instrumental music, the Swedish jazz trio Lekverk`s album EVERYDAY was awarded the Manifest Award - an alternative Grammy for Swedish independent labels - for best Jazz album, and also elected as one the best albums of 2010 in one of Swedens largest daily newspapers, Svenska Dagbladet. Recorded entirely at home, EVERYDAY “redefines the concept of home recording” (from their website) – the sound has breathtaking immediacy and seems perfectly balanced with astonishing dynamics. This is simply great music recorded in a grand way and I truly believe more people should become familiar with their creative opus. Same goes for their debut album 21st Century Jump that is simply filled with exciting music.

The Dyrholm Audio cabling was equally adept at showing sudden dynamic swings of this explosive jazz trio and held its complete composure from the start to the end. The piano was reproduced with proper size, tonal colors and micro and macro dynamic responsiveness; the upright bass was very well resolved, all bass runs clearly defined and punchy. The drums were dynamically pulsating in a very convincing manner.



Classical orchestral music was reproduced as expected: the separation of the individual instruments was very good indeed, the tonal colors likewise and the dynamic graduations were nicely evolved. One of my favorite works is Rachmaninov` - Piano Concerto No 3 (Allegro ma non tanto), a haunting melody with fluid and technically demanding piano runs that always manage to enchant me. Here, I could easily concentrate on the music and just surrender myself to its emotional content.

While Rachmaninov` music is melodic, the Tsontakis - Man of Sorrows - Gethsemane: Shards is much less so. Still, this music possesses drama and unexpected/unpredictable dynamic and structural shifts which make for a very exciting listening experience. The Dyrholm Audio cabling didn`t stand in the way of musical enjoyment; quite on the contrary, I could easily forget the medium and my physical surrounding, which says a lot.

Moving on to some Flamenco music, Tomatito, the legendary guitarist playing the beautiful tune A MILES from AGUADULCE album. The explosive rasgados were nicely portrayed by the said cabling combo. The song ¿DONDE ESTA TU CARIÑO sung by Tomatito`s daughter Mari Angela, is one of my all time favorite songs. Mari`s voice is sexy and seductive (OK, I can`t believe I`ve said it!) and unlike most of Flamenco female singers, she sings with a perfect pitch and her voice is just gorgeous. Whew, I got carried away and that`s a good sign because it speaks for the cabling and its abilities to step out of the way and just present the musical message unaltered. Staying in the Flamenco realm but in a more contemporary setting: another favourite of mine - Niña Pastori, the track "Gira y que gira" is another example of timeless music that comes from this rich genre. The song starts with a simple sigh and with Dyrholm it sounded very immediate and authentic; the electric guitar solo climax was very intense and touching – I was moved.

OK, time to do some comparison to the higher class known references. Here the Dyrholm combo fared really well but the differences were obvious nevertheless.



Compared to the few times more expensive Paradox Tesla powercord, a slightly less transparent sonic picture was noticed, also the frequency extremes were a bit curtailed with a touch less energy transfer but not severely so. Same goes for the XLR interconnects, here the Paradox Audio Serenity Balanced gave a clearer insight into music – of course at a higher price point. Out of fun I have compared the Zodiac speaker cable to the Skogrand Beethoven top of the line cable from this Norwegian cable manufacturer (that cost some serious money) and the differences once again although not big, were important nevertheless - but only if you aim for the ultimate performance and the price is of secondary concern, or none for that matter.

Conclusion

In my view Dyrholm Audio has brought some serious cables into its price region. The level of craftsmanship is quite above the asking price and the visual design is simply stunning. There are cable companies which charge much more for much less elaborated designs that on top of it sometimes look cheap and sloppy made – not so with Dyrholm Audio, here you get timeless design with above average craftsmanship and choice of materials. The sound quality performance stands firmly on its own and should please demanding listeners with ease. They sound very neutral, superbly balanced, musically involving and just enough transparent to make the listener hungry for music and forget the technicalities. What more could one wish for?

Recommended.

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