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HiDiamond Cables Reference Black Gold Interconnect & Diamond Power + 1 New Speaker **Review Revealing, with accuracy, the neutral side of music.**

Review By Brett Rudolph

It is amazing how many companies manufacture stereo interconnects for today's high end audio playback market. It would seem to many consumers that there are only so many ways that a cable could be created and produced. Yet, each time the opportunity presents itself to audition and ultimately review a new, or sometimes existing cable, some of us, myself included, jump at the chance to see just what changes might occur when they are included in our systems. Of course the ultimate question is why?

Believe it or not, that is a very simple question to answer. It is because each cable adds certain characteristics to the music when we hear it through our playback system. Sometimes it is because the cable allows a better interface between the components that make up the system resulting in clearer and more defined instrumentals. Other times it is that the cable might create a synergistic effect within the system allowing a richer tapestry of sounds which ultimately coalesce to form a much more lifelike presentation than we have heard previously.

However, whatever the change in the system that change in cable might make, one thing is certain, there will be some change. This change is sometimes subtle and sometimes not for the best, but without exploring them it is impossible to know if our system is performing to the best of its ability in our opinion.

Several months ago we were contact by HiDiamond. The company, which is based in Italy, has created and manufactures a number of audio interconnects and loudspeaker cables from the entry level to the price-no-object range. After looking over their offerings and discussing the possibilities with Salvatore Filippelli, the company's CEO, we decided that the best fit for my reference system was their top end cables, the Diamond Reference Black Gold audio interconnects, which the company refers to as signal cables and the Diamond Power +1 New speaker cables, which are referred to as power cables.

A few weeks after the initial volley of emails to get the sizes and connections correct, a box appeared on my doorstep containing exactly the products we had been discussing for weeks. The cables were packed extremely well, which was important because they did not have the easiest journey between their departure from the factory and their arrival on my doorstep. In fact, they journeyed through a few countries and several stops along the way.

After unpacking them and making sure that everything was intact, I went about replacing my reference system cables with the ones from HiDiamond. The first thing that became clear was just how good the connections were between the cables and the components and speakers. While I have come to expect locking RCA connectors on most of the high end audio cables, I was pleasantly surprised to find that the banana plugs on the speaker cables were also of the locking variety.

Another thing that I need to mention about the cables is that they are not overly stiff or brittle. While this might seem trivial to some people with loads of space allowing for easy placement of most cables, many people, me included do not have this luxury. Unfortunately it could mean in some cases that even the best cable for a system would not work because there would be no way to place it in the system without creating a situation which would ultimately cause an issue either immediately or sometime in the future.

When everything is connected and working correctly my custom is to let them settle into the system for an extended period of time. This allows the cables to "break in" and reach their full potential or at least most of their potential before they are auditioned. However, since these particular cables were both fairly pricey and had already traveled the world before reaching my doorstep, curiosity got the better of me and I gave them a brief audition.

In one way it was fortuitous that my curiosity got the better of me. After a brief audition, one note of caution became apparent, don't do it. While some cables perform at least moderately well without an extended break in period, these are not one of them. My impression was one of grainy sound that had little resemblance to anything one should expect from good cables, and even less from ones as expensive as these. So, with my lesson learned, again, I left them to break in for an extended period of time.

So Much For First Impressions

After about a week and a half, with some trepidation, I once again turned the volume up on my system and placed the first of my auditioning CDs into the drawer. When the first track of *Hiromi's Spiral*, on Telarc's label, *Spiral* issued forth from my loudspeakers, the sound was breathtaking. Gone was the bleakness that was heard earlier, replaced by a tapestry of sound that could only be described as extremely rich and lifelike.

The piano's notes were crisp and clear without even the slightest hint of coloration or deterioration from either the recorded media or the playback system. It was placed perfectly within the soundstage and when the other instruments began to play they had the same qualities as the piano. In fact, while I have listened to this recording many times, I found myself more involved and drawn into the music than ever before.

My next choice of music selections was another piano recording, the Jack Loussier Trio playing *Mozart Piano Concertos 20/23* once again on the Telarc label. Track 4 of this recording is the Allegro of *Mozart's No. 23 in A Major*. Although the piece is a piano composition, the performers have added both a bass and drums to compliment the sound of the piano. Unfortunately with many playback systems the other instruments take away from the sound of the piano giving the impression that the piano does not play an important part of the music.

Once again the HiDiamond cables were able to accurately convey the sound piano without allowing the sounds of the other instruments overwhelming it. In fact when the string orchestra played alongside of the piano, there was both the impression of the piano by itself and as part of the overall performance. Everything blended perfectly without any unnatural feeling of one instrument or several instruments overwhelming the piece.

Female Vocals Anyone?

Well once it was established that piano music and even light orchestral music excelled with these cables, the next step was to try something else that is often difficult for playback systems, and especially interconnects to handle, female vocals. My first selection was Colleen McFarland's *Three Miles from Odessa* on 9th Child Records.

Honestly I would be hard pressed to give the exact genre of the recording, but track 1 titled "A Well Worn

Man" would come closest to Country. The track has a great deal of things going on in it. It starts off with the sounds of a radio changing stations. This is gradually replaced with her band playing and ultimately her singing. In the end she fades out and is replaced once again by the radio.

Although the recording is certainly not of audiophile quality, it is nevertheless difficult to portray without sounding grainy and unrealistic. In fact, the transitions are difficult since it requires that there is a great deal of control in the treble area. Once again the HiDiamond cables were able to keep the music lifelike and realistic without allowing any of the sounds to overwhelm others, except when the music dictates such a circumstance.

However, when listening to this particular selection another thing about the cables became apparent. They are not very forgiving in regards to the recording. In fact, as mentioned earlier this selection was not audiophile quality and it was very easy to hear this fact. There was a definitely grainy sound that came not from the recording, but rather from the poor quality mixing that went into the production of the CD.

Just to make sure that it was in fact the quality of the CD that made the difference, I chose another female vocal recording, Cheryl Bentayne's *Let Me Off Uptown*, on Telarc's Jazz label. On track 3, "Honeysuckle Rose," Cheryl Bentayne's voice was ethereal and angelic sounding. The sweetness of her voice and breath were readily apparent and sounded nearly holographic when sitting back and listening to it. It was hard to believe that it came from the speakers and not from her mouth.

One Last Test

Well everything with the audition went so well, that I felt that I needed to see if these cables were able to mesh well with a lower quality digital front end. So after listening to Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* in its entirety, I replaced my reference CD player with a Pioneer mainstream universal player. While I happen to enjoy the DV-47A, it does not work quite as well as my Wadia CD player for critical listening, but it does sound pretty good.

Unfortunately, when I made the switch there was something that became very evident. The Black Gold cables are not only extremely revealing, but they are also very unforgiving. The well-controlled bass and exceptionally clear midrange immediately became far less appealing. In fact, the difference between the two players was like night and day. Even the slightest flaws of the Pioneer player became magnified and tended to over shadow the overall performance of the system. While that doesn't mean that the music sounded bad, I would not recommend these cables for anything but the most refined system.

It Is Up To You

It seems like only yesterday that I was wondering what the cables would sound like after my first experience with them. Yet, honestly, these cables are only one of a select few that I could honestly recommend to even the most discerning of listeners. Of course, that doesn't mean that they are for everyone. While the choice is ultimately up to the listener, I would say these are definitely worth listening to in your own system. They are extremely revealing, very neutral, and are able to accurately convey even the most difficult material. They are also extremely unforgiving and can highlight even the minutest flaw in your system. However, if you are looking for an exceptional cable option these may well be the ones for you.

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| Tonality | |
| Sub-bass (10Hz - 60Hz) | |
| Mid-bass (80Hz - 200Hz) | |
| Midrange (200Hz - 3,000Hz) | |
| High-frequencies (3,000Hz on up) | |
| Attack | |
| Decay | |
| Inner Resolution | |
| Soundscape width front | |
| Soundscape width rear | |
| Soundscape depth behind speakers | |
| Soundscape extension into the room | |
| Imaging | |
| Fit And Finish | |
| Self Noise | N/A |
| Value for the Money | |

Specifications

Diamond Reference Black Gold Interconnect

Type: Analog interconnect
 External Jacket/O.D.(mm.): PVC/16
 Operating Temperature: (- 30° + 80° C)
 Number Of Conductors: 4
 Type Conductors: Graphite/Copper
 Conductors (Qty/mm.): 160 x 0.10
 Insulation Type/O.D.(mm.): XLPE / 3.2
 Shield Coverage: 98%
 Capacity Maximum: 83 nF/Km.
 Conductor Resistance: 16 Ohm/Km.
 Shield Resistance: 12 Ohm/Km.
 Price: 1400€ for 1 meter stereo

Diamond Power + 1 New Speaker Cable

Type: Loudspeaker cable
 External Jacket/O.D.(mm.): PVC/27
 Operating Temperature: (-30° + 80° C)
 Number Of Conductors: 12
 Type: Copper
 Conductors (Qty/mm.): 12 x 48 x 0.22
 Capacity Maximum: 60 pF/meter
 Conductor Resistance: 7,98 Ohm/Km.

Price: 1600€ for 3 meter stereo set

Company Information

HiDiamond
via Byron 14/A
00143 Rome
Italy

Voice/Fax: +39 06 87907305
E-mail: s.filippelli@hidiamond.it
Website: <http://www.hidiamond.it/>

Iran's Exclusive distributor:

Avin Ava Arta Co.

Tel/Fax: +98 21 22945596
E-mail: info@avinava.com
Web site: www.avinava.com