



In-Akustik Premium

German cable and accessories maker In-Akustik prides itself on designing, developing and manufacturing a broad range of hi-fi and AV cables that conform to high standards of workmanship and deliver commensurate levels of quality.

Of course, it's a crowded market, with an almost infinite number of brands (and many more generic, no-name products) competing for the attention of consumers. And let's be frank – it's not always easy to distinguish between ho-hum and high fidelity in the cable context, unless you're able to spend time auditioning them.

The In-Akustik Premium range is positioned at the affordable end of the quality cable market, and comprises a comprehensive array of applications – from RCA and minijack-terminated audio cables to HDMI and RCA video cables, USB 2.0 cables and Ethernet network cables. The cables are all available in various lengths.

Under scrutiny here are three examples:

a minijack-to-stereo RCA cable, which is ideal to link high-def music players to stereo amplifiers; a classic stereo RCA-to-RCA interconnect, arguably the most common interlink in any system; and a high-speed HDMI connector, which is again intrinsic to all modern AV systems.

All three cables come in attractive, well-presented packaging that immediately creates a favourable impression. Those impressions are further strengthened by the cables themselves, which look and feel the quality part.

Both the HDMI and the RCA-to-RCA cables are flexible and feature a handsome blue-and-white braided outer sheath, while the connectors have injection-moulded mounts and solid metal housings, complete with 24k gold connectors.

The minijack-to-stereo RCA cable has a thinner diameter and is even more flexible. It's finished in a white braided sheath, again with immaculately executed metal alloy connector housings and gold-plated contact surfaces.

In pure visual and tactile terms, the In-Akustik cables appear to be much more sophisticated than their asking price suggests. That notion seems to be borne

out by the technical details.

All three cables employ oxygen-free pure copper conductors and extensive shielding, thus addressing two key issues that are critical to cable performance: ensuring efficient signal transfer, and protecting the signal from noise and interference.

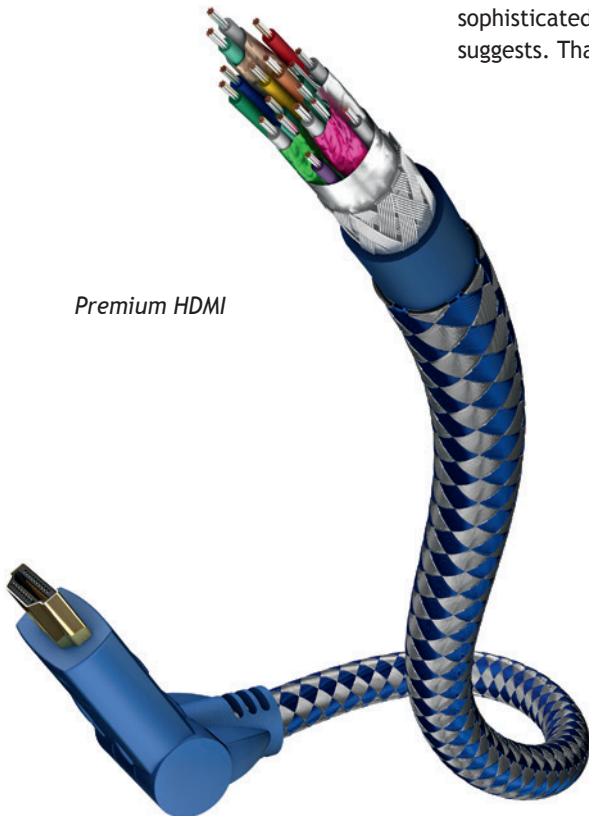
Of course, those robust connectors and gold-plated contact surfaces also ensure a snug fit, which is equally important for both signal retrieval and delivery.

The triple-shielded HDMI cable is certified to be fully compliant with Ultra HD, 4K video signals as well as HD audio, and features an integrated channel for transmitting network data. It also supports Audio Return Channel (ARC) functionality.

Notable in the case of the RCA-to-RCA interlink is the foam dielectric and the 0,32 mm² OFC copper conductors.

However, as they say in the classics, the real proof is in the pudding, and in this case, the pudding is the level of

Premium HDMI



Premium Minijack to RCA





Premium RCA to RCA

performance these In-Akustik cables achieve in practice. I started off by running the minijack-to-RCA cable between an Audioquest Dragonfly Red DAC plugged into my MacBook Pro, and the RCA stereo analogue input of an ADL Esprit headphone amp.

Using HiFiMAN HE400S headphones, I compared the In-Akustik Premium cable with a generic version, and was astonished by the difference. There was a greater clarity and generosity to the sound, with vastly improved staging, enhanced detail retrieval and a sleeker overall tonal character.

The generic cable sounded brighter and edgier by comparison, resulting in less refined sound and smudged midrange detail. The bass seemed more generous but lacked definition, while the stage sounded flat and two-dimensional. This would be R280 very well spent!

The RCA-to-RCA cable showed similar improvements when compared to one of those generic cables that come in the box of most CD players. While the no-name brand interconnect's sound lacked life and lustre, the In-Akustik reflected the pace and energy of the original recording, while opening up the soundstage.

The generic cable's opaqueness was

replaced by a greater sense of clarity, allowing more complete access to the sound, while detail was better defined and more convincingly contextualised in both spatial and temporal terms.

The HDMI cable's performance was a little more difficult to define. Running between my Yamaha AV receiver and a 50-inch LG Full HD television set, picture quality was excellent, with vivid colours, decent contrast levels and no apparent artefacts or blurring when watching fast-moving action sequences.

Compared to a generic HDMI cable, picture quality appeared better – slightly brighter, perhaps, and with some improvements in shadow detail. But the differences weren't marked. It might be worthwhile revisiting this cable by using it for the entire signal path: Blu-ray deck to AV receiver, and AV receiver to LED display. It might also be that the differences would be more apparent in an UHD system, as opposed to my FHD, 1080p set-up.

Given the keen pricing, the tactile quality of the cables, and the significant gains in audio quality compared to generic cables, these In-Akustik cables are a class act, and well worth the modest investment.

Deon Schoeman

VITAL STATS

Premium Minijack-To-Stereo RCA

Construction OFC conductors, double shielding, PVC sleeve
Conductors 3x 0,11 mm² solid OFC
Termination Solid metal, 24k gold-plated
Shielding Wrapped metal film, second spiral layer
Length 1,5 m

Premium Stereo RCA-to-RCA

Construction Gold-plated contacts, PVC/braided textile sleeve
Conductors Dual-mono design, 0,32 mm² cross-section, foam dielectric
Termination Solid metal RCA 24k gold-plated
Shielding Wrapped metal film, braided second layer
Length 0,75 m

Premium High-Speed HDMI

Construction OFC conductors, triple shielding, PVC and braided textile sleeve
Conductors Tin-plated 0,088 mm² multi-strand OFC conductors,
Termination Gold-plated contacts, metal plug
Shielding Film-wrapped layer, 160-wire braided layer
Length 0,75 m

Verdict

Exceptional build quality and attention to construction detail results in a cable range that boxes well above its price category. Effective shielding contributes to an overriding sense of audio and video clarity. Exceptional value.

Price

Premium Minijack-To-Stereo RCA (1,5m).. R280
 Premium Stereo RCA-to-RCA (1,5m) R490
 Premium High-Speed HDMI (0,75m)..... R390

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OUR RATING: 80/100

