



Neutralis The Progeny

Most interlinks and speaker cables are imported, and understandably so, since economies of scale in the South African market are less than favourable by European, US or Far East standards. That alone makes the Neutralis – a bespoke interlink hand-made in SA – something of a rare achievement.

The Neutralis The Progeny is an analogue stereo RCA-to-RCA interconnect, and at face value, there isn't that much to distinguish it from the literally thousands of other single-ended interlinks out there.

The RCA connectors are gold-plated and look the quality part, with heat-shrunk vinyl protecting the connection between cable and RCA connector. A short woven fabric sheath at either end leads to some sort of in-line device, encased in a black plastic canister. The section of cable between these two canisters is a plain black nylon braid.

Understandably Joe Lima, proprietor of The Audio Zone and designer of the Neutralis, is cagey about exactly what the interconnect's construction comprises. But there's nothing secret about his objective: to create an interlink that has as little influence on the signal it transmits as possible.

Typically, that requires a cable design with an ultra-low capacitance. Lima's approach is to use what he calls a literal air dielectric between the conductors, together with low-dielectric constant materials in areas where air dielectric isn't possible.

Some 98 percent of The Progeny is air dielectric! The result is a low 3pF per foot, impressive given it's diameter.

He's also arranged the conductors so that they don't run in parallel, and ensured consistent spacing between the conductors, even in tight bends. This configuration means the conductors remain free of close-fitting dielectric materials, which tend to store conductor energy, and then release that energy to the detriment of signal purity and integrity.

Lima manufactures the Neutralis by hand, utilising a pair of hand-polished solid-core conductors made of high-purity, oxygen-free copper. He claims the conductor gauge has been carefully optimised to

ensure an even flow across the full frequency spectrum, thus minimising skin-effect anomalies.

The conductor diameter is 0,74mm which allows over 33kHz free of skin-effect issues. So, a lot of care has clearly gone into the design of the Neutralis, but does it pay the expected sonic dividends?

Cable evaluation is notoriously difficult – differences are often subtle at best, and while there are big gains to be had from replacing those cheap 'n nasty ripcord connectors with something a little more substantial, the incremental improvements thereafter become inversely proportional to the size of the price tag.

I ran the Neutralis in a variety of systems, comparing it to a number of different interlinks, in an attempt to define a consistent sonic character. I used the dynamic, technically brilliant and faithfully recorded *Carmen-Fantasia* (DG CD), featuring the virtuoso violin of Anne-Sophie Mutter, as a musical reference, mainly because of its exciting dynamics, broad tonal range and, well, because I like the music, too!

The Neutralis emerged as a mainly neutral cable, perhaps displaying a slight gleam at the upper end of the spectrum, but also showing off its revealing and finely focussed nature. It provided the music with a welcoming wide-open soundstage, and easily exposed the finely balanced contrast between delicacy and virtuosity at the core of Mutter's performance.

The violin's rich, resonant timbre was potently presented, easily soaring above the accompanying orchestra, but without diminishing the latter's presence or authority. At the same time, the Neutralis allowed full access to the finer details and nuances of the performance, adding to an overall sense of participation and realism.

On Claire Martin's *Time And Place* (Linn 96/24 FLAC), the British singer's breathy vocals were presented with vivid immediacy, accompanied by a brilliant, liquid piano, while the cellos sounded



vibrant and dynamic. Staging again was generous in both width and depth, making for an immersive, engaging listening experience.

Simply put, there was an honesty and an accessibility to the way the Neutralis delivered its sonic wares. Pace and timing were impeccable, together with a sense of coherence that ensured full, absorbing enjoyment of the music. It's certainly a cable that offers more of the music, but without meddling with its soul or intent.

The Neutralis No.2 isn't cheap in rand terms, but given what imported cables of similar quality cost, it represents good value, too.

Deon Schoeman

VITAL STATS

Cable type Dual-conductor interlink, RCA-terminated
Length 0,8 m
Directional Yes
Conductors ... Hand-polished solid core high-purity OFC copper
Insulation Literal air dielectric

Verdict
 A transparent, articulate cable that reveals the music's full scope and intent.

Price R6 500/metre length

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Website www.neutraliscables.co.za

OUR RATING: 88/100

