



Neutralis The Progeny

Last year, we reviewed a pair of ambitious, locally developed and produced interlinks sold under the Neutralis banner. Neutralis is the brainchild of Joe Lima, whose day job is running high-end audio outlet The Audio Zone.

In all fairness, I was a little sceptical of the Neutralis products: after all, designing and producing audio cables is a specialised endeavour that often entails a significant investment in research and development, let alone sophisticated manufacturing infrastructure.

The Neutralis cables are crafted by hand, utilising a combination of high-grade, high-purity copper and an air dielectric, which requires both engineering skill and innovation. That already explains why they carry a sizeable price tag.

Lima believes that hand-producing the Neutralis cables represents an advantage over mass-produced cables – even high-end ones. He says mechanised

manufacturing processes restrict what can be achieved from cable design, specifically as far as cable geometry and specific materials are concerned.

Hand producing cables may be less efficient and more time consuming, but it does mean that there are fewer constraints on innovative geometries in cable design, for instance. And if the sonic results are anything to go by, Lima has a point.

My recent review of a pair of Neutralis interlinks indicated that the most compelling reason for purchasing them is their convincing ability to get out of the way of the music by ensuring that the audio signal enjoys an unencumbered transmission path.

That key characteristic is also true of the Neutralis Progeny speaker cable, which is the subject of this review. The Progeny is the entry-level member of the Neutralis range, but it features the same design philosophy and hand-crafted approach

as adopted by the top-end models.

The key design objective of the cable is to minimise the influence of the signal transmission on the audio signal itself. Other design considerations associated with this objective include a low inductance, together with limited capacitance – elements achieved via the Progeny's geometry, and its use of an air dielectric.

The cable design also addresses the skin effect, associated with high frequencies flowing on the outer area of the conductor, while low frequencies flow more uniformly across the conductor's cross-section.

In the Progeny, the conductor gauge is specifically chosen to minimise the skin effect and afford a uniform flow across the frequency band.

Finally, the Progeny steers clear of form-hugging insulation as these sleeves can retain conductor energy, also known as voltage retention. When unpredictably discharged, this energy can impact on



resolution and clarity through smearing of the audio signal.

Using an air dielectric prevents this from happening, which in turn benefits resolution, imaging and dynamics.

The Progeny speaker is a thick but light cable that is surprisingly flexible. The outer sleeve hides the hand-polished, pure copper conductors carefully arranged in three air tubes. The cable has a maximum diameter of 36 mm, which is substantial. Pure copper, unplated spade termination is provided.

Given its lofty sonic aspirations, I used the Progeny cables to feed the signal from an Ayre VX-5 power amp (reviewed elsewhere in this issue) to a pair of Vivid B1D speakers (review pending). According to Lima, the cables need sufficient time to settle in, so we let them run for a good week or so before sitting down for the evaluation session.

Our long-time reference speaker cables are StraightWire Virtuosos, which made way for the Neutralis Progeny for the sake of this review. The Virtuoso uses silver-plated copper conductors and is a go-to cable in our listening room because of its open, honest and neutral sound that seems to offer full passage to the signal it's asked to transfer.

In that sense, its sonic capabilities seem similar to what the Progeny sets out to do – and indeed, that was borne out in practice. It also has to be said that the accompanying amplification and speakers set a very high standard of performance, demanding a cable of superior quality – and likely to reveal any shortcomings.

The Neutralis Progeny stood up to scrutiny without any problems. It seemed devoid of a specific sonic character – which is a good thing – and instead was able to reflect the essential elements of the music with clarity and precision.

Trebles were lucid and detailed, with no sense of sweetening or roll-off, while displaying an inherent honesty that benefited overall resolution. The progression into the midrange was smooth and linear, with no apparent spikes or artefacts.

The midrange was presented with verve



and impact, displaying a fullness of tone that added authority and credibility to the music. Again, there was no sense of exaggeration – no untoward richness, no lavish extravagance – but the cables created the impression of respecting and retaining the music's original tone and texture.

The bass was powerful and robust, providing plenty of bottom-end authority, together with good speed and dynamics. The low frequencies were solidly, succinctly presented, but never allowed the music to become ponderous – the essential flow and rhythm of the music was effortlessly maintained.

Did the Progeny inject a measure of its own character into the music? Did it boost those low frequencies ever so slightly, or smooth over some of the more obstreperous trebles? Not that I could identify. The sound was clear and natural, with an inherent authenticity that drove the musical message home in no uncertain terms.

The Bassface Swing Trio's *Plays Gershwin* (Stockfisch SACD) sounded splendid, with the added dynamics and bandwidth of the DSD recording proving no problem at all. On 'Oh Lady Be Good', the piano was rendered with just the right combination of timbre and impact, while still retaining the flow and pace of the music.

The upright bass was reproduced with such authority that it was easy to picture the instrument and its player on the soundstage. And the percussion had just the right balance of splash and zing to confirm the lively, boisterous tempo of the music.

Yes, the Neutralis Progeny is a fine cable, and it delivers a level of

performance that elevates its sonic status well beyond the asking price. Besides, it's South African – and that makes it all the more worth owning.

Deon Schoeman

VITAL STATS

Inductance per foot	0,0384 µH
Capacitance per foot	39 pF
Max. cable diameter	36 mm
	at centre capsule
Spade stud size	8 mm
Spade material.....	Pure copper, no plating.
Conductor material...	High-purity copper
Primary dielectric.....	Literal air and virgin pigment-free PTFE
Air tubes	3 x 4 mm air tubes
Centring technology	Random
Terminations ...	Double-crimped spades

Verdict

Does full justice to the life and soul of the music without resorting to bias or artifice. Lets the music do the talking.

Price R6 900/pair

Supplied by Neutralis Cables
011-072-6702

e-Mail info@neutraliscables.co.za

Website www.neutraliscables.co.za

OUR RATING: 87/100

