

Audience Au24SE interconnects and loudspeaker cables

by Alan Sircom



I'm a big fan of Audience's Au24e interconnects and loudspeaker cables. They are on the cool side, but these cables are also incredibly detailed, fast, open, precise, and dynamic. What's more, in a world of tree-trunk sized cables, Audience picks up the ball passed to it by classic slimline wires of old and runs with it squarely over the high-end audiophile goal-line.

Recently though, Audience released the Au24SE series of cables, which build upon the strengths of the Au24e cables. Note that 'SE' does not replace 'e', it sits above the 'e' range, in terms of price and performance. In fact, a lot of what applies to the Au24e also applies to the Au24SE. Both are made from Ohno Continuous Cast monocrystal copper, using several tiny copper cables per conductor. The largest of these conductors is in the loudspeaker cable, and even that's just 4mm in diameter. Polypropylene sleeves insulate these conductors, and the whole thing is wrapped in a woven polyethylene jacket. The cable construction is designed specifically for low eddy current resistance, and goes for low impedance over DC resistance, or even heavy-handed RF shielding. As far as I can see, what separates 'e' from 'SE' mostly falls to the construction of the lower-mass, high-purity copper alloy connectors, and the way they interface with the cable itself. Taking the uncompromising stance right down to the plug itself shows

the kind of dedication seen by the likes of Nordost with its Holo:Plug. Typically, such changes to the connector demand more subtle changes to the conductors, too, but Audience is playing its cards close to its chest on this.

Our counterparts on *The Absolute Sound* have nothing but praise for the Au24SE power cords. Every time one of their team gets a complete system rewire with Audience's finest, they all bang on about the power cord, and almost ignore the interconnect and speaker cables. So, it was felt best to take the power cord out of the equation, and focus on the RCA interconnects, the XLR interconnects, and the loudspeaker cables. And I'm glad I did, because those 'wow, what a power cord!' reviews are missing out on just how the rest of the wire system performs. The reality is 'wow, what a cable!', no matter what plugs in where.

We have a nasty habit in audio of evaluating things – especially cables – by the physical dimensions: by weight; by price, and by just how shiny the product is. Audience does none of that; it's thin, lightweight, doesn't cost as much as a lunar mission to buy, and all the cables are finished in a black woven shield. The only visual difference between Au24e and the new SE cable ostensibly is the terminations. You could ▶





- ▶ swap these out and upgrade your cable without anyone noticing (and I think that might be the point).

Like any good cable, Au24SE takes time to bed in. Audience also seems to need both a lengthy initial run-in period (for this, a Blue Horizon burner-inner thingy comes in extremely handy) and a much shorter 'settling' time, when swapped out. Fortunately, that settling time is measured in minutes, rather than weeks, but the cables do sound distinctly better if they've had 30 minutes or more after being plugged into a new system. But don't think these cables 'fussy', they are in fact a great equaliser of audio equipment and the polar opposite of 'fussy'. It's just they like a few minutes to compose themselves after a journey. I'm 'technopomorphising' I grant you, but who doesn't?

The reason I like Au24e is it's extremely natural sounding. It doesn't draw attention to itself, and if you have good electronics and loudspeakers that are well balanced, the Audience cables simply get out of the way of the music. The Au24SE by comparison, makes the Au24e sound almost electronic and arch. Which means it makes a lot of other cables sound extremely 'hi-fi'; all boom and tizz.

Au24SE is resolving enough to highlight iniquities in the system, especially cable iniquities. It doesn't demand an all-Audience 'loom' (although that helps), but put something wildly off kilter in the mix and it will highlight the differences in micro-tonality that sometimes get swamped between the phono sockets. Despite this, what the Au24SE does is raise your system's game, whatever that system.

You get a significantly improved soundstage, both in terms of width and depth. Mahler's Eighth [Solti, Chicago SO, Decca] has all the size and scale required of this grand work. But, beyond this, you get a sense of deep bass foundations, extremely fine detail, outstanding dynamic range and shade, and sense of very real musicians in a very real space. If you are seeking these things in your audio system, and would like more of the same, the Au24SE will provide just that, without bringing any superfluous extras to the table.

I suggested we should never judge a cable by its size, but inadvertently found myself doing just that. I was pleasantly surprised by the bass weight of the Au24SE loudspeaker cable. It's actually got excellent bass delivery regardless, extremely deep and taut and right, but that shouldn't be surprising because of the diameter of the cable. This is not just Au24SE's rendition of powerful bass notes, although playing

Funkadelic's *Maggot Brain* [Westbound] shows just how much depth and groove this cable has. It's about authority and complete control over your music, no matter what the music. In order of merit, the loudspeaker cables really ram this home, while the interconnects continue the story.

Audience Au24SE isn't a cable that grabs you by the scruff of the ears and throws you around a bit. It is more refined, more subtle, and ultimately more revealing than that. It's the kind of cable that points you back to your musical core. Out came Bob Dylan's *Desire* [Columbia], not to highlight issues with the system, but because it's been a constant companion for decades. Other cables can place accent and emphasis on the pace, the detail, the brightness, the richness, or the imagery, but Au24SE just reminds you why you listened to Dylan in the first place. Just like Au24e before it, but more so.

If you've 'had it' with high-end cables that are so hefty they lift your preamp off the table, or are so thick you could cut them open and drive a car down them, Audience has the answer. It had the answer in the Au24e, but it has the definitive answer in the Au24SE. If you determine cable performance by the sound it makes rather than the amount of floorspace it takes up, you owe it to yourself to give Audience a listen. It's one of the best. Very highly recommended. +

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

RCA interconnect cables: £999 per pair (as tested)

XLN interconnect cables: £1,589 per pair (as tested)

Loudspeaker cables: £2,420 for 2x4m pair (as tested)

Manufactured by: Audience

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