

Audience Au24e Low Z

phono cable

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Reviewer for the Magazine Son & Image



Many audio companies have been founded on little more than a chance meeting and a shared passion for music. So it was with John McDonald and Richard Smith who incorporated their first company in Southern California in 1972. With a third partner, design engineer Roger Sheker, they established their second venture in 1997, Audience, for the sole purpose of developing high-performance audio products that push the limits of technology.

The resurgence of vinyl and the turntables required to spin them is now obvious. If you need convincing, the 2012 Stereophile Buyer's Guide shows over 40 brands of decks including ten or more ClearAudio models, 105 brands of phono preamplifiers with over 300 models and 25 brands of tonearms. Here then is a sector of the industry that is healthy, to say the least.

A tonearm requires a phono cable to carry the signal from the cartridge to the phono input of the preamplifier or integrated amplifier or to a separate phono preamplifier. While supplied phono cables are designed to match their respective tonearms, many manufacturers offer after-market cables that can substantially improve performance. Apart from manufacturing a complete range of power conditioners, power cords, loudspeakers, disc-enhancement products, OEM and DIY parts, Audience also produce a full range of cables, including three impedance-matched phono cables: the Au24e Low Z, designed for moving-coil cartridges with internal resistance up to 30 ohms, the Au24e High Z, for moving-coil cartridges with internal resistance between 30 and 100 ohms, and the Au24e MM, for all cartridges with internal resistance above 100 ohms, which include moving coil cartridges rated at 47k ohms and most moving magnet cartridges.

The model that we present in this test is the Audience Au24e Low Z, offered, according to the manufacturer, for vinyl enthusiasts seeking to optimize the transport of the delicate signal of a low-output moving coil cartridge.

MORPHOLOGY

All Audience phono cables are available in one of four termination options: RCA to RCA, straight 5-pin DIN to RCA, right-angle 5-pin DIN to RCA, and tinned leads to RCA for tonearms with captive phono cables. Each conductor in the Audience Au24e Low Z is made of oxygen-free continuous cast copper (OFCC). RCA connectors are gold plated and produced in-house with the exception of male DIN terminations that are outsourced. The positive and negative leads are united in a single sheath at the DIN socket and a grounding wire with a spade connector is provided. The cable sheath is relatively flexible and the RCA jacks fit easily and securely to the female connectors of the preamplifier used in this test.

SETUP

For the listening sessions, the Audience Au24e Low Z cable was used in alternance with the stock Roksan HDC-02A phono cable provided with the Roksan Artemiz tonearm on the Roksan Xerxes turntable. Signal was provided by the Dynavector XX2 MKII moving coil cartridge, whose low output level of 0.28 mV, impedance of 6 ohms and load of 30 ohms make it an ideal candidate for the Audience cable.

EQUIPMENT USED

- Roksan Xerxes / Artemiz / Dynavector XX2 MkII
- Dynavector P75 MKII 5 phono preamplifier
- YBA2 Delta preamplifier
- Modwright KWA 100 SE power amplifier
- Brinkmann Integrated amplifier
- Harmony Audio three-way speakers
- Bis Audio Maestro cables / Nordost Red Dawn Rev2 / Pierre Gabriel ML2

LISTENING

After sufficiently running in the Audience cable, the listening session began with the album *Illustrated Musical Encyclopedia* by Ryuichi Sakamoto (Virgin Records), a standard vinyl pressing recorded in the Japanese studio Onkyo Haus and containing a multitude of sonic detail and syncopated rhythms. The opening track “Field Work” evokes the 80s, a response to the Japanese musical current of the time by Thomas Dolby, who also collaborated in the writing and mixing of the work. The Audience cable expertly presented the wide dynamic range of this recording allowing clear delineation between the loud and soft sounds of this piece. Spatial representation of the orchestra was faultless, providing amplitude and appropriate depth to the electronic instruments and synthesizers used on this disc. Consistency and image stability characterized the positioning of instruments on the second track “Étude”. The definition of the electric bass line halfway through this instrumental was simply top class. Hearing the Dynavector XX2 MKII through the Audience cable revealed a highly satisfactory tonal balance with clear bass, an articulated midrange, and high midrange and treble that clearly presented sonic detail in a manner devoid of listening fatigue.

The Right Time by the Scott Hamilton Quintet (Concord Records) is a jazz album that despite being recorded in 1987 has traversed time like no other. The tenor saxophone is a difficult instrument to get right, often slipping into stridency, but not here on the single “Just in Time” where it eloquently expresses the life force illuminating Scott Hamilton and the swing of his quintet. The single “Skylark” by the composers Carmichael / Mercer is reproduced with aplomb, with velvet texture and openness. The Audience Au24e Low Z phono cable really does what

it was designed for; the impedance match between the cable and the Dynavector XX2 MKII moving coil cartridge is exemplary, optimizing the signal between the Dynavector cartridge and the phono preamp.

When playing *Et si on avait besoin d'une cinquième saison* by Harmonium, a recent 180-gram vinyl reissue from “Classic Reissue” pressed in Germany, the combination of the Audience Au24e Low Z and the Dynavector XX2 MkII was simply remarkable in rendering even more palpable and fluid this mythical recording from one of our legendary groups. The distinctive voices, guitars and transverse flute on this album, combined with the syncopated rhythm that Harmonium accustomed us to, is pure listening pleasure, goosebumps assured... Returning to the Roksan HDC-02A phono cable with the same musical extracts, the sound appeared less open and slightly less articulated but with more rounded bass, a characteristic that, depending on the nature of the upstream equipment, may appeal to many. A final comparison using the Silver Lining Cable, designed and manufactured here in Quebec, in Montreal, revealed a very transparent sound with a highlighting of details in this recording.

CONCLUSION

Each phono cartridge has its particular set of electrical characteristics and each requires an extra degree of attention when choosing a phono cable, in order to preserve or even enhance these characteristics and transport the delicate signal, intact, to the preamplifier. Audience deeply understands the significance of this critical stage of signal transmission and its range of phono cables is a rare find in the plethora of cables on the market. Guaranteed for life, Audience phono cables are designed and assembled with rigour, method and professionalism. The Au24e Low Z distinguished itself with the Dynavector XX2 MKII moving coil cartridge bringing a lot of life to music and an addictive desire to constantly renew the pleasure.

Audience Au24e Low Z

Price: \$1,295 (1,25 m)

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