



Audience Au24 SE

'Gold standard' says Audience, but while there's none of the precious metal itself in its Au24 SE this cable eschews bulk to prove that less is more. Review & Lab: **Paul Miller**

There's much more to Audience's loudspeaker cable than meets the eye, although its Au24 SE model is already one of the more attractive and unimposing designs on the high-end scene. In fact, the sylphlike build of its cable goes directly to the heart of the company's two key design philosophies.

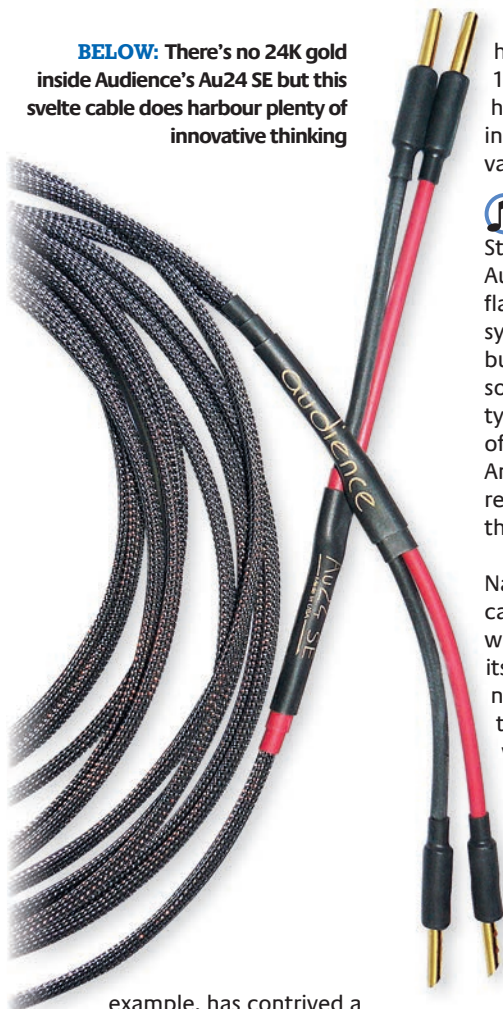
Audience claims (and not without some foundation – see www.youtube.com/watch?v=VkyqfiOVVY&feature=youtu.be) that reducing eddy currents within a cable will necessarily improve signal propagation, the former also influenced by the thickness (the mass) of the conductors themselves. Part of Audience's juggling act is realised in reducing the conductor size without unduly impacting on its resistance, a trade-off amounting to 85mohm/m or a power loss of 0.092dB/m for the Au24 SE. Audience specifies very fine strands of superior OCC (Ohno Continuous Casting) copper, but the overall cross-sectional area of the conductor is evidently quite small.

TRANSMISSION LINE

If you were to stretch to a 5m stereo set (a not inconsiderable £2750) this would amount to a loop resistance of 0.425ohm, which is sufficient to cause some exaggeration of the amp/speaker system response in line with swings in the speaker's impedance. Any 'change' in sound will also depend on the output impedance of the amplifier, the effect necessarily less obvious with many tube amps but arguably more so with designs like the NAD M22 [see p58] or Devialet 800s used in my listening tests.

Audience also subscribes to the idea that aspects of transmission line theory – normally applied to the propagation of very high frequency/RF signals – extend down to the audioband and, by way of

BELOW: There's no 24K gold inside Audience's Au24 SE but this svelte cable does harbour plenty of innovative thinking



example, has contrived a geometry that achieves a notional 15ohm characteristic impedance. Other cable companies have argued similarly in the past, achieving a low characteristic impedance by paralleling multiple 50ohm coaxial lines. Capacitance also typically rises as a result so Audience, in another carefully tuned trade-off, has opted for a single and extremely densely-packed coaxial geometry for the Au24 SE using a hard polypropylene dielectric and polyethylene sleeve. Capacitance is still

higher than average at 595pF/m (a full 1.8nF for the £2090, 3m set reviewed here) but at least the associated inductance is proportionally if not vanishingly low at just 0.41µH/m.

AN AUDIENCE WITH...

Straight out of the blocks, Audience's Au24 SE moves with grace rather than a flat-out sprint. In my Devialet/B&W 802D system it encouraged a particularly relaxed but still very insightful and finely detailed sound. The brightest of brass instruments typically sound silky-smooth, the roughest of rock recordings coated in a rich honey. And yet modest lengths of Au24 SE do not render the music in so civilised a fashion that it fails to stir the blood.

Take Troyka's recent release on the Naim Label, *Ornithophobia* [CD210], as a case in point. This is a powerful recording with occasionally fierce percussion but its somewhat dystopian subject matter never grates thanks to the Au24 SE's trick of maintaining all the musical bite while simultaneously lancing any poison. Bass is robust and well-rounded too, if perhaps not so taut as achieved with the Devialets coupled with a far thicker cable. Not that I especially noticed any lack of grip or drive, for the system possessed an almost liquid ease and fluidity, the Au24 SE ensuring the sound was serene without lacking authority.

HI-FI NEWS VERDICT

Audiophiles who judge high-end speaker cable by its girth or weight in noble metals may baulk at the Au24 SE's seemingly under-nourished frame. But there is method in Audience's sparing application of OCC copper strands (in my view, the finest type of this conductor) and in the unusual choice of a tight coaxial geometry. The result is a particularly smooth-sounding cable, arguably better suited to shorter runs, but still supremely compelling.

Sound Quality: 85%



ABOVE: The Audience Au24 SE is available with Z-plug (BFA banana) and spade terminations, or even a mixture of both to suit amp and speaker