

FURUTECH

AUDIO VIDEO – South Africa

Digi Reference III Review Feb 2009



Precision personified

Furutech's cable family has built up something of a reputation for precise performance and quality construction since it was first introduced to this market.

The Reference III range, of which we've covered both the speaker cables and the analogue interconnects in recent months, fits itself at the top of the line-up.

This time, it's the turn of the digital interlink, which like the analogue cable, has a similar twin-conductor construction, again with particular attention to shielding, to prevent any measure of RF or EM interference.

Beautifully presented, the Furutech Digital Reference III certainly looks the upmarket part, with a flexible, braided sheath, and Furutech's own, superior-quality FP-106 RCA connectors. If all cables sounded as good as they looked, this one would be top of the pile.

The two twisted cores of the Digital Reference III each contain 30 strands of Furutech's proprietary alpha-OCC, with a combined diameter of 1,14 mm. For those unfamiliar with alpha-OCC, it is effectively cryogenically treated, single-structure crystal copper, but with a couple of specific twists.

Firstly, Furutech treats all its metal components, including its conductors and connectors, to a two-stage cryogenic freeze, which sees the metal parts deep-frozen to temperatures of between -196 deg C and -250 deg C, using refrigerants such as liquid nitrogen and liquid helium.

The reasoning behind this process is to reconstitute the molecular structure of the metals in the interests of enhanced conductivity: according to Furutech, the molecules bond together more closely, and the overall structure is more stable.

Once the cryogenic process is complete, the metal parts are exposed to what Furutech calls ring demagnetization, which also boosts conductivity.

Having undergone the alpha treatment, the conductors in the Digital Reference III digital cable may be optimised from a signal transfer perspective, but they also need to be protected from external interference.

This is partly achieved via an intricate construction that provides substantial insulation, together with a three-way shielding process. Two metallic braids, one of which also features alpha-treated conductors, prevent RF interference, while Furutech's GC-303 module, incorporated into the cable addresses electromagnetic interference (EMI) by effectively absorbing any EMI that may be present.

Even the connectors aren't just your usual gold-plated devices: they feature a centre pin made of non-magnetic, rhodium-plated, phosphor-bronze, with Teflon dielectric, and a cast brass body with Rhodium plating.

Transferring digital signals effectively, without the introduction of jitter or other artefacts, relies heavily on unrestricted conductivity, and the prevention of interference. And it's safe to say that the Furutech Reference III digital interconnect achieves this very effectively. But what does it mean, sonically?

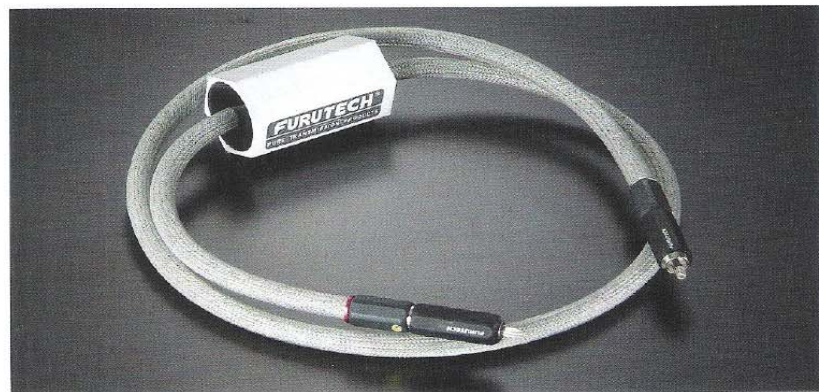
It means that the resolution of subtle nuances and fine shards of detail is enhanced, allowing the listener to enjoy a fuller, better represented and generally more realistic sonic image. The listener gets to connect many, many more dots, making the resulting music picture all the more believable.

That this detail also allows a more complete sense of imaging, with more specific dimensional clues, translates into a spacious and seamlessly created soundstage. And that, in turn, creates an inviting and ultimately entertaining listening experience.

The same could be said of the pace of that delivery: the music is allowed to flow unhindered, and displays the rhythm and attack one would have expected of the original performance.

Tonally, the sound is best described as clean – which, to some, may sound too clinical, but is perhaps better described as neutral. That, after all, is what the cable is about: to simply transfer the signal already provided, and to ensure that it remains completely unaltered and intact.

The Furutech Reference III digital interlink



VITAL STATS

Construction30 strands of 0,18 mm alpha-OCC copper conductors, 1,14 mm diameter

Configuration.....Two twisted cores
Insulation30% air-foamed HDPE
SheathTwo layers of flexible PVC
Shield

.....a. Braided 0,12 mm alpha-conductor
.....b. Fibreglass/copper wire stranded braid
.....c. GC-303 EMI-absorbing module
Jacket.....Nylon yarn braid

PRICER7 450 (1.2 m)

VERDICT

Clean, open and fast performance. Close attention to fine detail. Tonally neutral, but with some emphasis on the higher frequency spectrum. Critical of lesser ancillaries as a result.

SUPPLIED BY

AV Cables
082 774-4831

WEBSITE

www.avcables.co.za

certainly succeeds in that respect. It is a superbly executed digital cable, with a level of attention to engineering and construction that easily warrants its asking price.

Sonically precise and detailed, it may not be everybody's cup of tea – but that's more a case of personal preference, and for those demanding ultimate resolution and signal integrity, it doesn't get much better than this.

Deon Schoeman