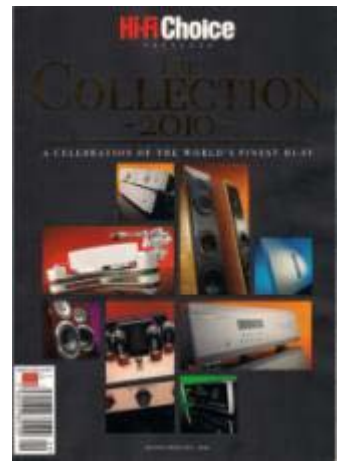


Furutech

Product Review

HiFi-Choice Collection UK 2010

Flux Cable Series



Furutech

FLUX CABLE SERIES

You won't get a great system without great cables, so entangle yourself in the best

Price PowerFlux mains (1.8m) £1,800; LineFlux interconnect (1.2m RCA) £1,720; (1.2m XLR) £1,950; SpeakerFlux speaker cable (5m) £3,615 **Contact** Sound Foundations ☎ 01276 501392 🌐 www.furutech.com

Cables are often considered an accessory rather than a critical part of the system as a whole – and it's a short-sighted approach. That's why a cable loom like the Furutech Flux system assembled here warrants attention: it's a fundamental part of the end result. And while the prices are high, they are not as high as some and certainly not unusual in high-end cable circles.

Furutech is a Japanese company that established itself in the UK with the most comprehensively engineered IEC mains plugs on the market, but it started out making AV cables with high purity OCC single-crystal oxygen-free copper, a material which it still considers to be the ultimate for audio applications. Although the Flux is Furutech's flagship range and consists of all the key signal and AC cables, the range of off-the-shelf lengths is limited to 1.2m for Lineflux interconnects and 1.8m for Powerflux mains cables, but Speakerflux can be had in 2m, 3m, 4m and 5m pairs with prices starting at £2,295 for the shortest. Other sizes can be made to order.

The Flux cables are built using conductors treated with its Alpha process. This consists of deep cryogenic freezing, in order to bond molecules more tightly, and ring demagnetisation, also designed to enhance conductivity. This process is applied to connectors, cables and metal parts. We've come across several cable makers using cryogenic treatment and have experienced the improvement it achieves. We've also experienced burn-in discs that are said to demagnetise entire systems, so it makes sense for cables to be treated in the same way from the outset.

Furutech's connectors for both speaker and interconnect cables are elaborate things with their carbon fibre covers and rhodium-plated contacts. Both the RCA phonos and 4mm banana plugs have a means of clamping onto their sockets in order to make maximum contact.

While these are chunky cables, they are not so stiff as to make routing difficult; even the biggest – Powerflux – is pretty user-friendly. Build and finish are exemplary. We particularly like the yolk that divides the speaker cables in two at each end, and the carbon fibre does look fabulous.

SOUND QUALITY

Installing these cables into a system, we had to make a choice about which component to use the Powerflux mains lead with, deciding to try it on the Leema Pyxis preamplifier and the Metronome Kalista CD player. Given the lengths to which Metronome goes to remove nasties from the power supply, we were not surprised to hear that the preamp benefited the most from this beefy cable. Although it managed to give the Kalista a small boost in areas like imaging and dynamics, it did the same but more so to the preamp and conferred a greater sense of calm thanks to lower noise.

The effect on the system as a whole is not subtle. Even where pretty serious cables are being replaced, the overall character of the Flux cables seems to be one of transparency and neutrality. This is a starkly revealing cable and some will find its ability to look under every stone a shade uncomfortable,

depending on the choice of music and quality of hardware. But, in a system that's smooth and clean, its remarkable ability to reduce noise allows everything to become more clear-cut. The differences in level of individual notes or microdynamics are all the more obvious. Even a voice and an acoustic guitar can deliver a more interesting sound if they are reasonably well-recorded. For example, Gillian Welch's singing over two guitars is projected directly into the room alongside the acoustic character of the studio where the recording was made. It's a thrilling experience for something to 'be there' in such palpable fashion; to be transported across space and time with such realism. 3D TV has nothing on the sonic holography that can be achieved with high-definition audio.

You do of course need hardware that's capable of taking advantage of this cable's qualities to achieve such a result, but there's no getting away from the advantages that these

"Prepare to be transported across space and time with stunning realism"

cables deliver once you have such a system. We knew that the bass on the Kalista CD player was good, but it didn't become apparent just how powerful, solid and tonally rich it was until these conduits were in place. In another system where only a single-ended Lineflux interconnect was used, many of these qualities were also apparent, with definition being dramatically enhanced across the band, giving kick drums extra slam and soundstages extra depth. Arvo Pärt's *De Profundis*, for example, rarely sounded so profound and gloriously architectural.

This is an expensive cable system, but Furutech puts a lot into achieving the best result it can and this is reflected in a degree of resolution that can transform a fine-quality system. It won't turn a mediocre system into a giant-slayer, but it will take the best to a higher plane. #

Jason Kennedy

