

# In-akustik 1203 cable system

by Alan Sircom

In-akustik is one of those brands that we should know more about. On its home turf in Germany, the brand is highly respected and aspirational, representing the more professional end of the audio cable business. But you can tell this the moment you open the packaging. It's not audio jewellery, not made from Star Trek materials, and doesn't come with the attendant wild claims of transformation (although some of the German-English translations do end up a trifle hyperbolic). This is good, solid, well-made cable by good, solid cable people.

We went for a complete system, featuring the 1203 interconnects and speaker cables, and the 1502 power cords, taken from In-akustik's top Referenz Selection range. Currently, the examples of the 1502 cable we had used EU/Schuko rather than UK/13A plugs, so although they are included as part of the complete system, their overall influence is given a back seat here.

There is a more up-market 1603 interconnect and speaker cable and even a still more upmarket 2403 loudspeaker cable. We also had a set of bi-wire adapters to hand, although as the speakers were single-wired, these didn't see a lot of use!

The first part of the number relates to how many multicore copper strands are used in that particular cable, the 1203 models all having 12 high-purity lacquered copper conductors, each in two layers of polyethylene (PE) insulation, wrapped concentrically around a central air-filled PE core. All of this is subsequently wrapped in a high-purity copper braid sheath and then jacketed in PE before putting on

its black-and-white braided outer jacket. In the interconnect cables, this terminates in In-akustik's own Referenz Gap II RCA plugs, which create a three-connection plug inside



the two-connection RCA architecture, and are designed to accommodate the symmetrical construction of the 1203 cable itself. Meanwhile, the loudspeaker cables are fed through a solid metal splitter into spade lugs, pins, or 4mm/BFA connectors. Both speaker and interconnect plugs are rhodium plated.

It should be noted, however, that this symmetrical construction with individually isolated conductors is essentially a Litz design. Litz style cables were popular in the 1980s because of their inherently low inductance, which helps lower series resistance even on longer cable runs, and the increased capacitance that results often helped smooth out the high frequency response of an amplifier. This is also historically worthy of note because some older amplifier designs (in particular, early Naim amps) could find long runs of Litz construction speaker cable particularly difficult to drive. The In-akustik design is not overly capacitive, however.

In-akustik is very easy to live with, creating a sound that is at once as unfatiguing as it is refined and detailed. It's also a very 'big' and effortless sound, not rolled off, but also not as bright as some other contemporary cables. Those after the last word in leading-edge detail and treble analysis will probably



- ▶ look elsewhere, but those wanting a sense of vocal projection and really good bass will warm to this cable system.

The cable family doesn't overstate vocals and certainly doesn't push them forward in the mix, but its tonal balance simply projects a vocal in an effortless manner. I'm reminded of cables like Cardas Clear in this respect, as both help make Plácido Domingo's tenor stand proud when singing 'Una Furtiva Lagrime' from Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* [*Opern Gala*, DG]. This is passionate stuff, sung passionately, and the focus of that midrange coupled with the authoritative bass underpinning gives this a greater sense of sitting in front of a singer, rather than listening to a recording.

Where these European cables differs from its American counterparts is that deep bass can sometimes be over authoritative. This is possibly a combination of too much of a good thing (taken separately, the LS and NF-1203 have a good

deep bass, but in combination this can be a very powerful effect) and yet is ideal for the kinds of systems for which the In-Akustik cables are intended. That almost overbearing bass on full-range speakers just becomes a powerful underpinning on smaller designs.

There's a strong sense of order and structure here, too, which is common to both cables. Where other cables emphasise the imagery and high-frequency extension, these cables both had a more balanced perspective. This was useful on one of the least 'audiophile' discs I own: *Jerry Lee Lewis Live at the Star Club Hamburg* [German Philips/Bear Family]. This early 1960s raucous session was 'The Killer' proving he was no washed-up rocker in the age of Beatlemania, and he tears into the piano with the Nashville Teens barely able to keep up. Playing this on a good system is as much about damage limitation as it is about information retrieval, and the In-Akustik set manages to convey the wild energy of the recording without undermining the control required to tame this wild beast of a session when played at volume. Once again, the powerful bass helps deal out that hammer-blow left hand boogie-woogie with the sort of intensity it needs.

In-Akustik's cables have a similar well-balanced basic presentation, with the interconnect sounding smooth and even, the loudspeaker cable deep and sonorous, and the power cord as the balancing act. That makes for an ideal combination in middle-range systems, where often the source needs a touch of taming, and the speakers need a bit of help in the bottom end. That doesn't mean 'tone control': it means the 1203 and 1502 cables are intelligent products for their price and will bring out the best in many a good system. +

## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

**In-Akustik Referenz NF-1203 interconnects**

£395/1m pair (RCA)

**In-Akustik Referenz LS-1203 loudspeaker cables**

£1,079/3m pair (spade lugs)

**In-Akustik Referenz bi-wire jumpers**

£72.25

**Manufacturer:** In-Akustik GmbH & Co. KG

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