Factory-terminated loudspeaker cables
Made by: Atlas (Scotland) Ltd, Kilmarnock
Supplied by: Atlas Cables
Telephone: 01563 572666
Web: www.atlascables.com
Price: £1380 (3.0m terminated stereo set)

Atlas Ascent

hi-fi news EDITOR'S CHOICE

This latest generation of Atlas's Ascent speaker cable is the first to feature its 'Grun Coherent Earthing System'. Will we keep our feet grounded? Review & Lab: **Paul Miller**

Hand-assembled in Scotland, and with no solder in sight, the Atlas family of cables all feature 'cold-welded' connectors in an effort to ensure consistent, long-term performance. Visitors to our Hi-Fi Show *Live* over the last few years will have seen the assembly process for themselves as Atlas has taken its raw materials, jigs and experienced staff on the road!

In practice there are six separate ranges of Atlas speaker and interconnect cables with its Element, Equator and Hyper ranges laying the foundation for the Ascent, Mavros and Asimi products. The Ascent is Atlas's entry point into the high-end and both this and Mavros speaker cable are the first to be relaunched with the brand's proprietary 'Coherent Earthing System' or Grun which is Scottish, I was told, for Ground.

CONNECTOR CHOICE

Priced at £1100 for a terminated 2m stereo set, £1380 for 3.0m and £1940 for 5.0m, the Ascent cable is physically substantial but still usefully flexible and comes complete with a choice of silver- or gold-plated expanding 4mm plugs, hollow Z-plugs or spades. These 'Transpose' terminations screw, and lock, into place on the cable's cold-welded base connector.

Each cable comprises a pair of 90-strand conductors, drawn from long-crystal (OCC) 5N copper and covered with an extruded layer of low temperature FEP insulation. Over this there's another layer of soft PVC, a cotton filler and then an OFC screening braid with two drain wires set 180° apart. These are terminated at the amplifier-end of the cable with a flying 'Grun' connector [visible in the picture, above]. Audiophiles are encouraged to experiment with their choice grounding point, either on the amplifier or directly at the AC mains earth itself.

ABOVE: Modular 'Transpose' terminations allow easy switching between expanding 4mm connectors, spade and Z-plugs if, and when, your requirements change

ABOVE: Built with care and precision, the Ascent speaker cable is hefty but not impractically rigid. It has a drain, or 'Grun', connection at the amplifier-end

On our lab bench this combination of conductor, dielectric and symmetrical geometry combined to a deliver a moderate 103pF/m parallel capacitance, a 0.58µH/m loop inductance and, thanks to its 3.5mm² multistrand gauge, a low 10mohm/m series resistance (equivalent to a loss of just 0.01dB/m). Loops up to 5m will prove an innocuous load for any good amplifier.

REALLY RELAXED

Auditioned with my B&W 800 D3s [*HFN* Oct '16] and the room-filling Magnepan 20.7s [p42], with a Constellation Taurus amplifier [*HFN* Dec '17], the Atlas Ascent cable played its part in creating a really very relaxed musical picture. There was nothing sloppy about these daubs of sonic colour, no dragging of dynamic feet or reluctance to get behind the foundation of solid, powerful bass. So JJ Burnel's bass tab ['Peaches' from The Strangler's *Rarities*; EMI CDP 7 91072 2] rolled out with each resonant *thrumm* not only intact but brimming over with richness and weight.

And Gregory Porter, as composed a performer as you'll hear, sounded positively horizontal on this occasion, albeit still so utterly believable and compelling. His liquid blues flooded the room, counterpointed by percussion that had real bite and edginess ['Time Is Ticking', *Liquid Spirit*; 96kHz/24-bit], but without a hint of acidity. These Ascent cables will surely caress your system!

HI-FI NEWS VERDICT

Atlas's latest Ascent cables may well take your system to new heights but the voyage will be a comfortable carpet ride rather than a swift elevator to the top floor. The 'Grun' earthing option is certainly worth trying – heard here as a slightly darker but arguably 'tighter' and more compact overall sound. But as an upgrade into the realm of top-end cables, Ascent makes a very convincing case for itself, and all without shouting roughly from the rooftops.

Sound Quality: 85%

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