



FIDELITY – The HiFi Podcast, Episode 8



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[ATLAS CABLES – DEMONSTRATION AT TAD IN ASCHAU](#)



Atlas Cables – demonstration at TAD in Aschau

Tangible differences

ATLAS CABLES – TANGIBLE DIFFERENCES

- 22 degrees and cloudless sunshine: the perfect conditions to drive out of the city to tranquil Aschau - and then in a basement to listen to the first two minutes of Norah Jones' "Don't Know Why" from her debut album 67 times in a row *Come Away With Me* listen.



Martin McCue, lecturing on the ins and outs of Atlas Cables stripping

Of course, we're traveling for work, so we don't have time for extensive sightseeing escapades - but we still make sure to make a quick stop on the way there and take in the Alpine panorama including Hohenaschau Castle before we get to work.

Of course, we can't complain - the charming farmhouse that serves as the TAD sales headquarters can also easily provide a pleasant change of scenery

go through. PR man Michael Wiesler welcomes us directly at the parking lot and leads us straight to the kitchen, where we first sit down for a coffee with managing director Paula Knorn and the real star of today's show: Martin McCue has come all the way from Scotland, to give us a detailed introduction to the world of Atlas Cables. This name has been rather quiet in this country in recent years and I'm happy to admit that I'm happy that that's about to change: The Scottish cables are known as high-quality common-sense connectors that deliver more than decent sound quality and are very manageable deliver prices.



With the amount of illustrative material available, no questions were left unanswered.

The technical approach is just as down-to-earth as the pricing: Atlas Cables does not use any metaphysical miracle technologies; There are simply more or less complex ways to produce a cable, and the pricing depends on this effort. McCue makes the technical design not only intellectually but also physically tangible by handing us one cable sample after another from his bulging suitcase, shown on both sides, so that we can study the internal structure as we wish.

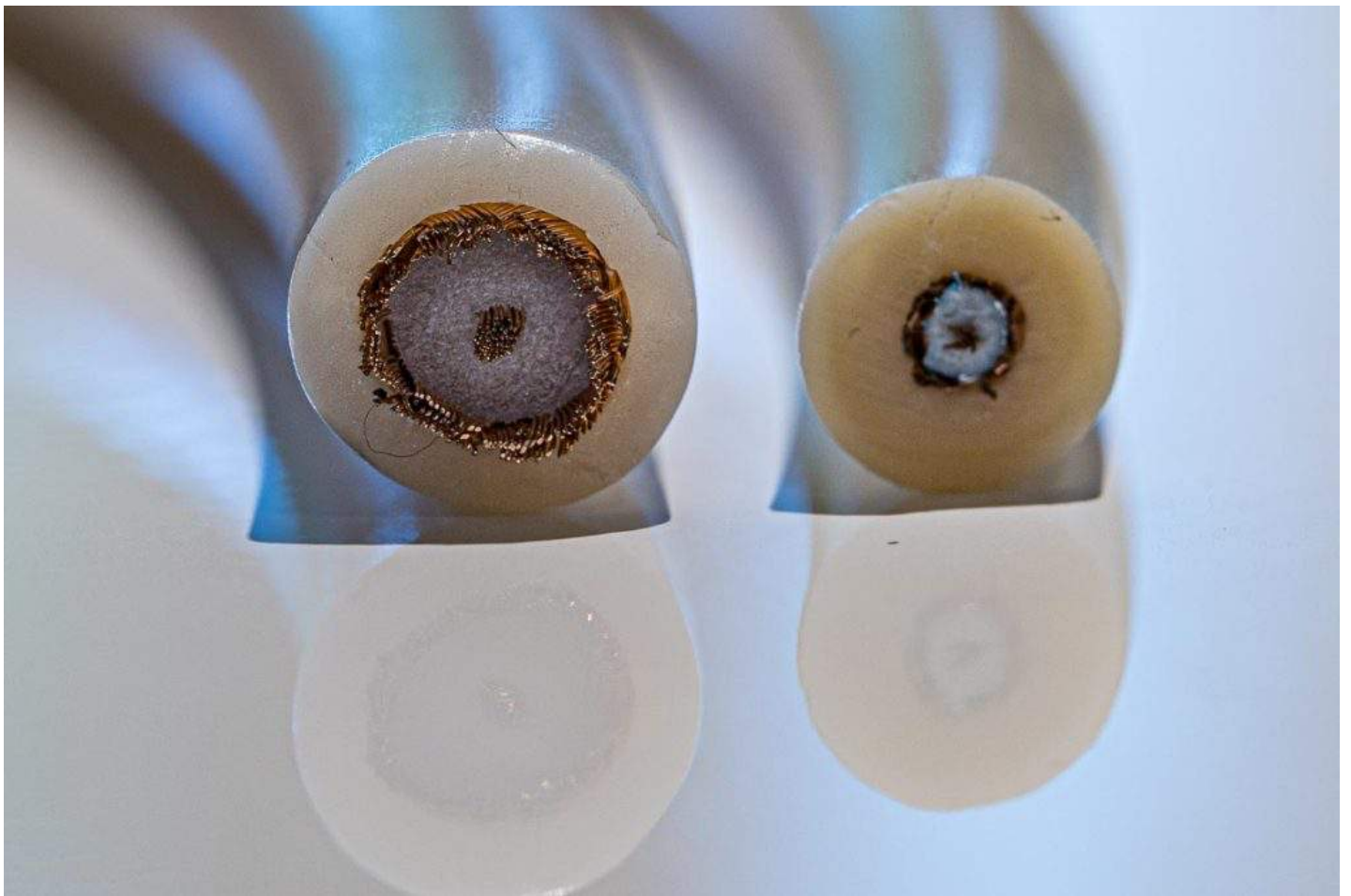
There's a lot to tell - the manufacturer has no fewer than seven cable series in its range, each of which is defined by which solution is used at which point. All of this multiplied by the categories of NF, loudspeaker and power cables. In a pedagogically clever way, McCue divides his demonstration into bite-sized chunks; after each narrative stage we can work on a setup consisting of a pair of Fyne Audio F502s

SP, Rega Elicit Mk5 integrated amplifier and Rega Saturn Mk3 CD player and the piece mentioned at the beginning to understand the sound of what was explained. In fact, we could clearly hear the difference: with each change of strings there was a little more calm in the sound, the individual actors settled into their positions more stable, and Norah Jones' voice also seemed a little more organic.



*The best way to look for cable sound is to use a competent system. Amazing: left on the Rega-Fyne combo
Differences can still be clearly seen even if the cable prices significantly exceed those of the components.*

Specifically, Atlas Cables' design philosophy is based on a fundamental analysis of the factors that influence cable sound. Here the bulkheads identify five relevant areas: the conductor quality (material, diameter), the dielectric, the shielding, the connector and finally the structure of the cable. As expected, the choice of conductor is of greatest importance - Atlas already uses oxygen-free copper (OFC) in its affordable series. However, the developers' favorite material is long-crystalline copper, which is produced using the "Ohno Continuous Cast" (OCC) process. During the process, the individual strands are slowly pulled through the matrix so that the material can cool slowly and evenly, causing it to solidify into a continuous single crystal - and where there are no transitions between individual crystals, no inclusions can form that could impair the conductor quality could influence.



We were able to examine a total of about a dozen such samples. You can clearly see it on the left cable foamed structure of the PTFE dielectric.

This manufacturing process is of course very expensive due to its time-consuming nature and is therefore only reserved for the higher-level cable series from the Ailsa line onwards. The individual OFC and OCC-based series are graded among themselves, in addition to the conductor diameter, and above all according to the quality of the insulation material: While polyethylene is used in the cheaper versions, Atlas uses PTFE in the more expensive series, a material that is characterized by its foamed nature as a dielectric behaves approximately like air.



*The additively manufactured, cheese grater-shaped inner shell of an RCA plug ensures low mass and as much air as possible around it
Signal-carrying parts of the connector.*

It is obvious that the connector type also has an influence on the signal quality when you consider that this is exactly where the contact between the individual components is made. In the Hyper and Ailsa series you have the choice between the “ordinary” Achromatic plug made of plastic and an aluminum version called Grun - we were amazed when we got our hands on the plugs and realized that they Metal connectors are actually significantly lighter. In fact, Atlas follows the concept of mass poverty here so that, if possible, the signal around the conductor does not “see” anything that could influence it. Teflon is therefore used as the insulation material - although a successor solution is already being worked on here: an additively manufactured insulation shell with recesses in a brick pattern reduces the mass and means that air actually forms the dielectric over a large part of the conductor surface.



The highlight of this more complex plug type, however, is the grounding system, whose connection to the shielding does not divert potential via the components, but rather sends it directly to a grounding pin on the power distributor via a dedicated cable
– a clever shortcut that protects large parts of the signal path from ground-related interference.

When we point out that this last trick probably brings the greatest sound gain to our ears, McCue cheekily proves us wrong and explains that the jump is actually due to the fact that all the cabling comes from Atlas Cables, so every connection is now the same design concept is based. In any case, after the listening marathon we sat down with Wiesler and ordered a complete set of cables to put McCue's theory to the test - we will report on the findings in due course.



From left: Stephan Bauer, Nicolas Prata, Paula Knorn, Michael Wiesler, Martin McCue.

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