RCA and XLR-terminated silver interconnect cables
Made by: Atlas (Scotland) Ltd, Kilmarnock
Supplied by: Atlas Cables
Telephone: 01563 572666
Web: www.atlascables.com
Price: £2750 (1m RCA stereo set)

Atlas Asimi Ultra

Atlas aims to raise the bar with its new flagship interconnect featuring exotic materials. Is this a cable with a silver lining? Review: **Paul Miller**

hi-fi news EDITOR'S CHOICE

Silver has long been the conductor of choice for many audiophiles even though its implementation typically comes at a premium price. Atlas's flagship is certainly not timidly priced, but it's far from being the costliest silver-based interconnect to tempt the well-heeled enthusiast.

Befitting of its place in the Atlas range, the Asimi Ultra is beautifully constructed and finished – its new Ultra phono plugs are exquisitely machined and polished, the silver-plated contacts offering a deliciously snug fit with standard RCA phonos (XLR termination is also offered). These plugs offer a 57% reduction in material weight over their predecessors and employ a solid cylinder of Teflon as the internal dielectric.

CONTINUOUS CASTING

Not only does Atlas specify solid silver conductors for the Asimi Ultra but each strand is drawn using the OCC (Ohno Continuous Casting) process, employing a heated die to minimise interstitial grain boundaries within the metal. Atlas claims one grain boundary per 125m of cable, but this is likely to increase over time due to its physical handling in construction and use. Choice of dielectric is also key to the 'sound' of any cable and here Atlas has chosen a microporous PTFE tape covered by a flexible polyethylene layer.

The new Asimi Ultra adopts a symmetrical geometry with identical signal and return cores comprising six bundles of 12 silver strands surrounding a thicker strand in the centre. The twisted signal/return pair is covered by a continuous copper-mylar electrostatic screen and silver-plated copper braid, offering shielding from RF and other noise. The outer sheath is made from HD PVC and is covered by a very attractive and functional light grey woven cotton.

I mentioned earlier that silver is ideally suited to audio interconnects, not least because it has the highest electrical conductivity of any metal, ahead of copper and gold. This is reflected in the low 56mohm/m loop resistance I measured for the Asimi Ultra, a figure complemented by its low 86pF/m parallel capacitance, 0.45µH/m inductance and 33Mohm leakage. It's obviously a good choice for long runs, and Atlas offers a range of 0.5m, 0.75m, 1.0m, 1.5m, 2.0m, 2.5m and 3.0m lengths. A 1m set costs £2750.

SILVER TONGUED

Inserted between my Oppo BDP-105D player/DAC and Krell S-1500 amp, the Asimi Ultra immediately dispelled the notion that silver cables necessarily emphasise treble detail. Recorded live to two-track and mastered by none other than Doug Sax, the percussion and rich guitar work that infuses Jerome Sabbagh's *The Turn* [96kHz/24-bit FLAC; Bee Jazz BEE 064] was dripping with opulent detail. Notes rolled off the cymbals with a casual clarity while the lush tenor sax lit the scene with a warm glow. I was hearing my 'analogue' system at its best, enjoying music with no hint of grain pervading the open, atmospheric and fresh-sounding vista before me.

ABOVE: The Asimi Ultra interconnect is terminated with Atlas's own solder-free Ultra phono plugs with self-cleaning contacts

Vocals typically sound superb too, as illustrated by the fabulously unlikely duet between Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga [*Cheek To Cheek*, 96kHz/24-bit FLAC]. The Asimi was party to revealing a powerful set of lungs on the Lady while TB sounded as assured as ever. A fun recording revealed by a great cable.

HI-FI NEWS VERDICT

Just as there are audio bloggers who never like an amplifier once they discover it has a Class D architecture, there's a similar myth that silver cables all sound 'bright'. They don't, and the Atlas Asimi Ultra illustrates this beyond doubt. Reflecting the mood of the music, the Asimi Ultra allows the very best hi-fi systems to sing – sing loud, sharp and clear when required or soft, slow and relaxed as the recording demands. It's a true flagship cable.

Sound Quality: 86%

0 - - - - - - - - - 100