



Factory-terminated interconnect cables
 Made by: Atlas (Scotland) Ltd, Kilmarnock
 Supplied by: Atlas Cables
 Telephone: 01563 572666
 Web: www.atlascables.com
 Price: £500 (1m stereo set, terminated in XLRs)

**AUDIO
FILE**

Atlas Equator

Given the increased number of XLR sockets we've seen on hi-fi separates in recent years, 'balanced' is rapidly becoming the new black.

Here, we look at a new Atlas interconnect that illustrates the industry trend towards XLR-equipped cable derivatives. In this particular case Atlas's new Equator XLR is a symmetrical/balanced version of its well-reviewed and longstanding Equator Integra RCA interconnect.

Within the Atlas hierarchy the Equator XLR sits between its Element XLR, the base model, with Hyper XLR at the top of its hi-fi range (the Ascent/Mavros/Asimi cables occupy the 'high-end' range). Prices start from £500 for a 1m stereo set, increasing by £50 per stereo metre (£600 for a 3m stereo set).

While Atlas's Element XLR uses OFC conductors and XLR pins, and a foamed polyethylene dielectric, the Equator XLR uses OCC (Ohno Continuous Casting) copper conductors and silver-plated OCC pins, plus the same

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dielectric. There's no soldering to be found here as the OCC-to-OCC connections are all cold welded.

The internal geometry is very straightforward – both the signal (L) and return (R) cores are a twisted pair, comprising 2x60x0.1mm strands, while the screen (the 'X' in XLR) is a combination mylar/aluminium foil plus woven OFC braid, terminated at both ends of the cable.

The Equator interconnects are not marked for directionality although slow-drawn OCC copper directly embraces the concept. Either way, a cotton filler holds all the cores in place, reducing

microphony, and the entire cable is jacketed in a soft, white PVC.

OCC copper may have fewer grain boundaries than an equivalent-purity OF copper but the 75mohm/m loop resistance remains unaffected as does the low capacitance and series inductance of 75pF/m and 0.40µH/m, respectively. This is another Atlas cable suitable for long runs.

A ROUNDED VIEW

We had the opportunity to compare these new balanced Atlas Equators with the brand's costlier Mavros Ultra cables [*HFN* Mar '16] as well as the stratospherically-priced silver/gold Absolute Dream from Crystal Cable [*HFN* Jun '12] and in no respect did the Equator XLR come up embarrassingly short.

Laced between a dCS Vivaldi One player/DAC [*HFN* Feb '18] and Constellation Inspiration monoblocks [*HFN* Oct '19] the Equator XLR offered a slightly more rounded view of musical events, trading some micro-detailing for a smoother balance that, potentially, will find a very sympathetic home in a slightly brighter-sounding system.

Yello's limited edition 'Virtual Concert' DVD-A issue of *Touch* [no cat no; 48kHz/24-bit] provided a focused example of how

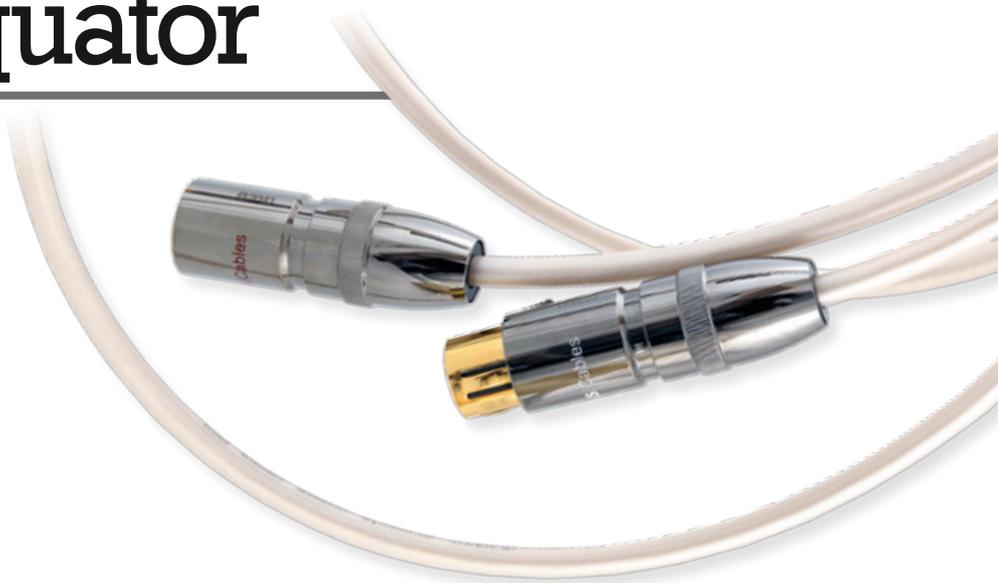
ABOVE: Supplied sheathed in an ivory white soft PVC jacket, the Equator XLR features OCC copper in both its conductors and XLR pins

the Equator XLR interconnect succeeds in taking the edge off the liveliest percussion while still retaining the body and ambience of the performance. The cable ensured that the band's Dieter Meier and Boris Blank's energy, power and enthusiasm was retained on their virtual stage, while avoiding any opportunity for grit and grain to aggravate what might already be a forward-sounding amp or loudspeakers.

The sound remains nimble too, the bass unmuddied and quick where it needs to be or heavy and extended where the recording demands. It's a very realistic upgrade from the company's basic XLR interconnects.

VERDICT

These interconnects offer a very subtle emollient that trades forensic insight for a sound that is forgiving and musically compelling. There are 'brighter sounding' interconnects to be had, but don't read the Equator XLR's story as a euphemism for 'dull' or recessed for these are shrewdly balanced and will reward without stripping your music to its roots. 🎧



HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Series Inductance (1m loop)	0.40µH
Parallel Capacitance (1m)	75pF
Resistance (1m loop)	75mohm
Leakage	300Mohm