

ATLAS EQUATOR, HYPER AND MAVROS GRUN

Invest in a good network cable.

Normally I always test products in a familiar environment, in combination with equipment that I know thoroughly. However, in the case of the Atlas network cables, I am forced to make an exception. Since my Bluesound Vault is connected directly to a Devialet amplifier and I don't have a NAS, streaming only via music service Tidal remains to assess the cables. An option that is too limited in my opinion. Fortunately, Lex Kersten, owner of Lexicom Multimedia, is willing to make their listening room and the necessary equipment available to the undersigned for an entire afternoon.

On the agreed afternoon the, in consultation, composite set fully warmed up waiting for me in the listening room. The beating heart of the installation consists of a Naim Supernait 3 amplifier, the source is a Naim NDX2 streamer / dac. Both are through an Atlas Mavros Grun Ultra knotted together. The music is stored on a Melco N100 used as a NAS. This one is with an AudioQuest Vodka network- NEXT 33 tested cable connected to a Bonn8 Silent Angel switch. The loudspeaker is the new Audiovector R3 Avantgarde, the simpler version of my own R3 Arrete. Chord XL Signature speaker cables transport the music signal from the amplifier to the speakers.

All devices are set up in a Quadraspire rack and all power cords are connected via a Naim Powerigel. The listening room at LEXICOM is not acoustically adjusted and measures approximately four by four meters. All in all, a situation fairly similar to a small living room.

The test trio.

Recently the Scottish Atlas Cables has added three different network cables to their range. This type of cable was still missing from their product range. The cheapest cable is the Equator Streaming that costs 100 euros, the Hyper Streaming costs 195 euros and the Mavros Grun Streaming tops the bill with 584 euros. These prices are for a length of one meter. The Mavros Grun Streaming can be expanded with a 112 euro Grun adapter. More about this in the final test.

Atlas makes for all three types use of OFC (Oxygen Free Copper) conductors. The shielding and construction of the cables differ. For example, the Hyper Streaming is structured as U / UTP (Unscreened / Universal Twisted Pair), the Hyper Streaming as U / UTP (Unscreened / Foiled Twisted Pair) and the Mavros as S / FTP (Screened / Foiled Twisted Pair). Of course Atlas pays attention to the connectors. For the Equator and Hyper, high quality shielded polycarbonate

gold plated connectors are used which exceed ten times the minimum industry standard. For the Mavros, Atlas uses molded Zinc connectors with precision pin alignment. If you want to know more about the technique used, there is still at www.atlascables.com find more info.

To work.

Since both the set and the room are unknown to me, after having selected a number of tracks for evaluation, I start listening with a standard network cable.

After half an hour of random music listening I am used to the set and the space and I select my list of test tracks. The general view is a bit on the warm side with a somewhat limited width and depth image. In Angel From Montgomery from Bonnie Raitt's live album Road Tested I miss space. Something where these Audiovector speakers normally don't have trouble with it. You And Your Friend by Dire Straits is a track in which the different guitars play the leading role. In this setup I miss the kernel that is normally there. The image presented is a bit on the small side. Yello's Electrified II is brutal electronic pop music, always recording at a high level, with a lot of low. The set knows how to display this tightly and very controlled. Voices, on the other hand, are somewhat small and a little thin. In the live performance of Bruce Springsteen's Racing In The Streets, everything sticks together a bit and I don't hear very well that the concert takes place in the open air. The latest track is Weather With You by Crowded House. The voices of brothers Tim and Neil Finn match beautifully and can give me goosebumps in their singing together. In this setup this is omitted and it sounds a bit boring and emotionless. Something that should not be allowed given the set, it should be able to easily convey the emotion. Could one simple network cable be the bottleneck?

Atlas Equator.

Does the affordable Atlas Equator outperform the blue hardware store cord? Switching is done quickly and the list of test tracks is restarted. Falling from my chair is exaggerated, but the differences are undeniable. Bonnie Raitt's voice becomes crisper and more powerful.

Although the volume of the Supernait 3 has remained untouched, the music plays louder. The spaciousness also increases, you hear more from the hall and the stage becomes larger. It is very important that the music is now stripped of a certain hardness and you as a listener become more involved in the musical message of the artist (s). The larger stereo image is also unmistakable with You And Your Friend. Both guitars now extend to the left and right of the speakers and sound more powerful. Marc Knopfler's voice becomes more detached from the other instruments and suddenly has body. At Yello tested the low gets a good push in a positive sense, it becomes much firmer, but the set easily keeps everything under control.

As with Marc Knopfler, Dieter Meier's voice gains in expressiveness because the somewhat thin reproduction of the midrange has disappeared. At Racing In The Streets you now hear much more that the concert takes place in the open air and that there is a large crowd in front of the stage. Screaming fans are now further back in the depth image. The harmonica solo really stands out now, just like Bruce's voice. In Weather With You, the voices of Tim and Neil Finn get their own character, even though both voices are very close in terms of timbre. The background voices are easier to follow in the larger stereo image and small percussion instruments become easier to hear.

After this switch to the Atlas Equator, I can answer the question whether a standard network cable can negatively affect the display quality. In view of the value of the prepared audio set, the extra investment is peanuts and more than worth it.

Can a more expensive / better cable add even more? To find out, the Atlas Hyper Streaming is connected.

Atlas Hyper.

The first thing you notice when listening to Angel From Montgomery is that the presentation is more forward. The overall picture in both width and depth is even larger with this Hyper cable than the Equator previously listened to. The different voices are even better to follow separately and the background voices are more prominent. Not in terms of placement, but simply more present in the total music. Instruments gain more power and become more realistic again than with the previous cable.

The Hyper cable makes the audience feel much better, giving you an even greater feeling of being present at the concert. You And Your Friend benefits greatly from the larger stereo image that the more expensive cable manages to build. The guitars who play the leading role in this song now hang loose in the space far outside the speakers. There is more power and the individual strings can be followed. The cymbals of the drum set sound looser and are easier to follow in the mix. The Yello track has a bigger and more powerful voice. The electronic sounds are easier to distinguish from each other where it is still a bit mixed up. The total mix of the music is now being pulled open. In the live track of Springsteen, it is much easier to hear with the Hyper cable that the recording took place in a large stadium. At the piano you now hear the loose strokes on the keys and the fierce harmonica is now stripped of the sharp edge. Fortunately, without damaging the spicy character. Overall you have even more the feeling of being present at the concert.

The better playback quality of this Atlas Hyper is most emphasized when listening to the Crowded House track. On the left in the stereo image suddenly a guitar pops up that was apparently somewhat snowed under by the other instruments. There is more snap and nuance in the lead guitar. As with Yello, the overall music mix is more open and small details come easier forward. The better intelligibility of the singing voices gives the music more weight. What all music benefits from is better flow and the peace that the Hyper brings, so you listen more relaxed. In a direct comparison, the Equator is a bit more nervous and less nuanced.

Atlas Mavros.

We are not there yet with the Hyper. The Mavros would achieve even better performance should be able, and is also upgrade by adding a Grun cable to add. I start with alone the Mavros and leave the Grun cable still just for what it is. The improvements that this Mavros cable brings are in mine ears relatively small but unmistakable. The midrange sounds more persistent and the timbre of instruments and voting gets one step better.

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In my reference set I am now familiar with the positive influence of grounding cables and loudspeaker units. My Atlas Ascent Grun speaker cables perform absolutely better with the Grun wire connected than without. This also applies to the Freedom Grounding cable on Audio Vector R3 Arrete speakers. Would it also be audible on a network cable? Lex connects the Grun cable to the Mavros network cable, which is equipped with a screw 36 connector on one side and an RCA connector on the other. Multiple versions of the Grun adapter are possible so that the system can in principle be used in any setup. Angel From Montgomery can kick things off. What I think I hear is that I'm sitting in the back of the kit, ask the Grun cable to disconnect again. When it plugs the Grun cable back in after a minute or so, I'm sure. The Mavros network cable is undergoing a small transformation with the Grun adapter connected. Apparently there was a veil over the view that I was totally unaware of. There is now an openness and directness that was not there before. The display is now super clean with plenty of room for voice and instruments. The accordion sounds bigger, more powerful and above all more realistic.

The Hammond organ is more easily brought to the fore. When the Grun cable is disconnected built up and limited in width, albeit outside the speakers, but demarcated. This has disappeared with the Grun cable connected. From front to back, there now seems to be an image that is limitless. The set speakers are no longer in the room, there is only the music.

What is special is that everything that the Mavros with Grun adapter makes heard was not experienced as a loss when listening without it. However, after I have connected with the Grun adapter, there is no turning back. With You And Your Friend, the bass reproduction takes a leap forward and the guitars left and right float completely loose in space. At Racing In The Streets I thought I would be part of the audience when listening with the Mavros cable in the set. Now I get the feeling that my fellow concertgoers have a physical interest. The pressure of the different instruments that you feel at a large concert is now actually reproduced in the listening room. The emotion of the song really comes in, this is really enjoying music! When I read my notes when writing this review, the last song I hear, Weather With You, shows the word "Drooling". This word fully covers the load. The image is completely open and the guitar gets a big boost in realism. The layer view goes one step forward and the lack of the previously present veil makes the detail.

Conclusion.

After listening to the affordable Atlas Equator Streaming, it became clear that a network cable does indeed affect the performance of an audio set. You are seriously short of yourself by not investing in such a cable. That you can then take steps became clear after listening to the Hyper Streaming and then the Mavros Streaming. The family connection can clearly be heard in which I found the step forward between the Equator and Hyper the greatest. The price difference is relatively small and both still fall into the affordable category. There is a step forward from Hyper to Mavros, but less than the price difference suggests. However, when you choose the Mavros, you owe it to yourself to invest that little bit extra in a Grun adapter. This transforms the Mavros from an excellent network cable into a real top cable with a price-quality ratio that is particularly good!

It remains for me to thank Lexicom Multimedia for making the equipment and listening room available and Lex for supporting and catering ...