



Diamond Fever

Know-how and unusual materials characterize the standalone „Reference Diamond“ line from CrystalConnect. They appear thin only to the eye.

Matthias Böde

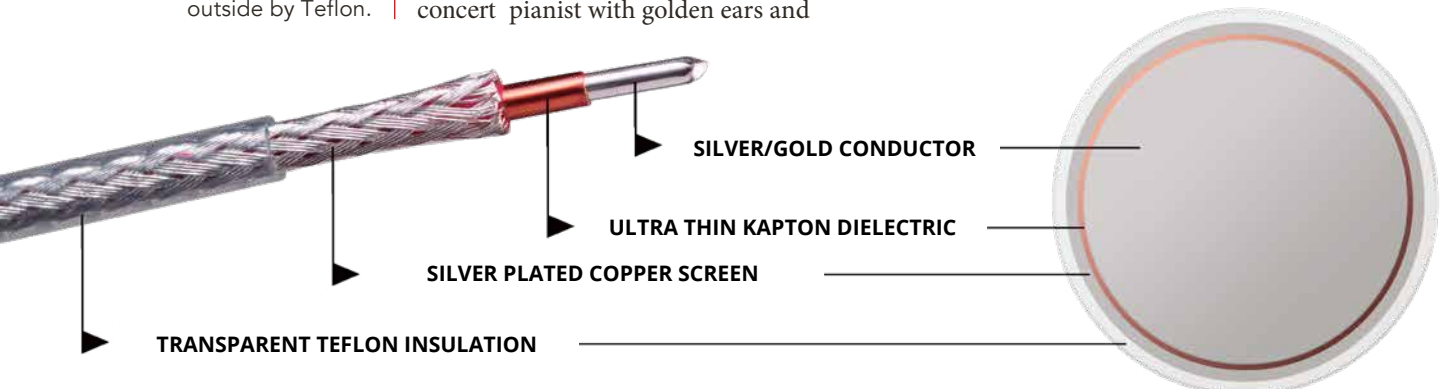
an understanding of technology, claims, having started the Crystal Cable project about 20 years ago.

As far as the first one hundred hours are concerned, we can indeed confirm her statement. Straight out of the box, the extremely thin and highly flexible cables, shimmering silvery, and protected under an insulating, transparent Teflon skin, only hint at their incredible potential, at best. They initially sound slightly brittle, over-present and dry. Flair, swing and grandeur are missing. Anyone who disappointedly repacks the expensive cables and returns them to the dealer is making a huge mistake, though. They

FINE DETAILS

The solid-core inner conductor is only about one millimeter thick, insulated by the kapton dielectric. Around it, the silver plated copper screen is braided, insulated from the outside by Teflon.

The gods of hi-fi tend to put patience before pleasure. This is especially true concerning the „CrystalConnect“ cables from Dutch manufacturer Crystal Cable, rooted in the Siltech brand – which has a great reputation among high-end enthusiasts. The need for patience stems from the fact that they are said to get better and better with use. That’s at least what Gabi Rynveld, concert pianist with golden ears and



do unleash their potential slowly, but powerfully.

This is evidently due to the exotic conducting material, an alloy of pure silver and gold.

Crystal Cable believes to have discovered what causes the typically bright and, in the upper layers, slightly biting „sound of silver“: They assume „gaps“ in the crystal structure of the metal to be at the core of the problem, which are thus filled with gold atoms in a complicated process. The electrons rushing through the cable then ensure gradual homogenization in the material through tiny increases in temperature.

The two layers of the expensive Dupont material „Kapton“ used as dielectric between the cables – which are basically coaxial, i.e. laid one inside the other – also have to be saturated by the electrons. Anyone who observes how the sound of the cables „relaxes“ while playing, gains homogeneity, breath and ease – we had our entire set of mains, digital, interconnect and loudspeaker cables „burned in“ at once – is convinced. By the way, even modest volumes are quite sufficient for the speaker cables to achieve these positive effects. The main thing is that electrons travel.

Hot Tips for Top Systems

In addition, the fine conductors – the solid-core conductor is just one millimeter thick – are wound extremely tight. Thus, they can hardly move and are correspondingly less susceptible to microphonics, i.e. sound emitted by the speakers, or to the magnetic fields created by the flow of the current. That is a very important, often overlooked aspect when it comes to the „independent life“ of cables, by the way. I attribute the fantastic, defined and sharp-edged plasticity that can be achieved with the Crystal Connects not least to their inner stability.

After a mostly complete play-in period – according to the manufacturer, they constantly get better, even after years – the Crystal Cables unleashed fireworks in the listening room. As restrained as my enthusiasm was at first, I am now even more convinced: These are hot cable tips for the finest of systems. How do I arrive at this conclusion? Keep on reading!

The five-year warranty can be easily activated via the in-house app and the NFC tag on the serial-numbered cables.



CRYSTALCONNECT REFERENCE DIAMOND IC

Crystal Cable did not promise too much: Fresh out of the box – and even for some time afterwards –, the sound of the IC cable might have been described as a bit artificially-present, tighter and slightly dull like tarnished silver when compared to HMS' Suprema, which served as our reference. The 75-hour break-in period with our STEREO „Burn In“ CD, which speeds up the process, loosened any knots and transformed the thin „Interconnect“ into a true dream cable.

Then, the Reference Diamond seemed to even be slightly more sonorous than the outstanding HMS but at the same time extremely open, transparent, energetic and firmly contoured down to the lowest registers. Allan Taylor's „Beat Hotel“, accompanied by a multitude of details, came out of the speakers in a simply fantastical way, regardless of whether the rest of the cabling was called Crystal Connect or if other top cables were in play; unity, however, brought unmistakable advantages to the cohesiveness of the sound image. The raspy-voiced bard gave us goosebumps. The plasticity of the CrystalConnects is almost unique; both in terms of the sharply outlined localization and general spatial organization of the reproduction, as well as the clearly worked out depth profile in the dimensions of front and back. And the manufacturer claims that its Reference Diamond gets even better with time. Oh dear!

Price: around €1980 (with RCA or XLR) for 1 Meter, plus €660 per additional 0,5 m



CRYSTALCONNECT REFERENCE DIAMOND PHONO

Although we received the phono version of CrystalConnect's Reference Diamond also in its original sealed packaging, it was tamer than its IC counterpart right from the start. The sounds it transmitted were extremely open, fast and detailed, but at the same time also smooth and hardly overdone in the upper registers. That's rather good, as it can hardly really „burn in“ with the few microvolts that come out of an MC pickup. We obtained the cable with a typical connector for tonearms. The three ground connections are a noteworthy feature, with an additional ground conductor coming from each RCA plug.

In terms of sound, Crystal Cable's Phono-Diamond absolutely lived up to its proud price by captivating with the exactly same merits that also characterized the interconnect: a spacious, perfectly ordered, tightly knit and yet relaxed-sovereign performance with delicate resolution. These skills illuminated, for example, Diana Krall's concert at the Olympia in Paris in all facets. A super-cable for top pickups!

Price: around €2040 (with RCA or XLR) for 1 Meter, plus €695 per additional 0,5 m



TEST DEVICES

Turntable:

Transrotor Rondino nero/
TRA 9/2.1/EMT Pure Black

Music-Server:

Aurender N10

Media-Player/DAC:

T+A MP3100HV,
Brinkmann Nyquist

Pre-/Power Amp:

Accoustic Arts
Preamp III/AmplII-MK4

Loudspeakers:

B&W 800 D3, Dynaudio
Confidence 50 und 30

Cables:

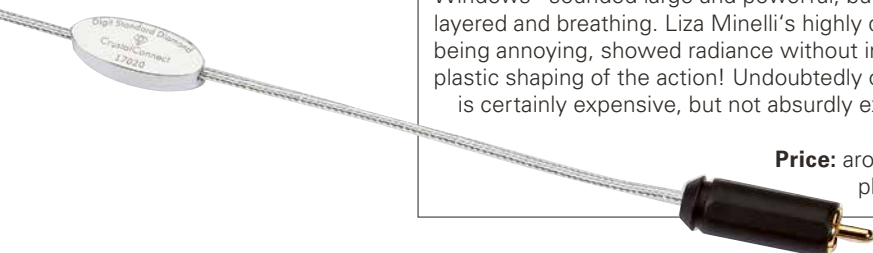
HMS Suprema and Gran
Finale Jubilee (NF/LS/
Mains), Boaacoustic Black.
sonic-25 (LS), Goldkabel
Supercord Vario (Mains)

CRYSTALCONNECT STANDARD DIAMOND

With the 75 ohms digital cable, another tailor-made conductor from the Dutch company enters the competition. The fact that the individual diameter is 2.5 millimeters here, while the Interconnect has 2.9 and the Diamond Phono twice 2.2 mm, shows that different practical uses are also granted different constructions. The digital interconnect, which is equipped with RCA or BNC jacks as desired, does not have a running direction indicator like its counterparts. Thus, we connected it according to the writing on the metal plaque that carries type identification and serial number, which Crystal Cable confirmed as correct.

Whether the Standard Diamond clearly improved during the play-in process is beyond my knowledge, since I did not perform cross-checks every few hours. After three days of continuous operation, it presented itself in an outstanding form, though. The immensely complex orchestra that is at play when the Archangel Michael enters the scene in Respighi's „Church Windows“ sounded large and powerful, but at the same time completely fanned out, precisely layered and breathing. Liza Minelli's highly demanding „Old Friends“, easily tipping over into being annoying, showed radiance without intrusiveness. On top of that, we also get a superbly plastic shaping of the action! Undoubtedly one of the best digital cables that we know of, which is certainly expensive, but not absurdly expensive – and therefore worth every cent!

Price: around €790 (with RCA or BNC) for 1 Meter, plus €200 per additional 0,5 m

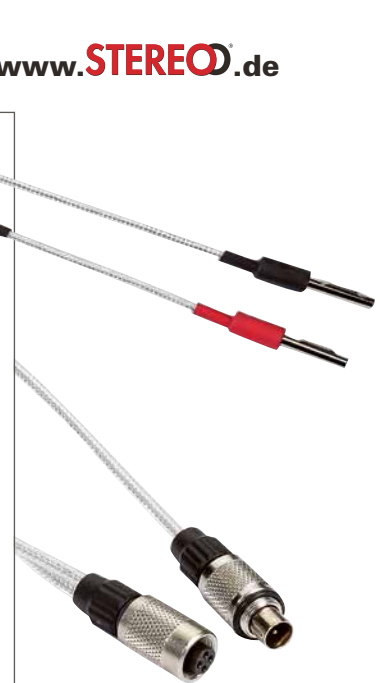


CRYSTALCONNECT REF. D. SPEAK

The transmission of AF, phono or digital signals doesn't require a huge cross-section, that makes a certain sense. For powering loudspeakers, though, quite some material and thickness should be needed, right? Here, the Reference Diamond Speak with its two 2.9 millimeter diameter conductors is the opposite to every usual hi-fi instinct, and it feels strange to connect the measly thing to man-sized speakers such as Dynaudio's Confidence 50. Can that yield a good result?

You bet! While it might have sounded a bit stiff, flat and „silvery“ at the beginning, all objections dissolved into pure pleasure as the playing time progressed. The Reference Diamond Speak is equipped with a plug-in coupling (lower right) for attachments with different connectors that can be screwed securely tight. After the play-in, it sounded perfectly balanced, as „big“ as it was tidy and displayed no limitations in the dynamic range, even when Accoustic Arts' potent AmpII-MK4 shot the vehement impulses of Monty Alexander's „Moanin'“ at brutal volumes through it. Paul Kuhn's „Young At Heart“ enchanted with a profound, decidedly contoured foundation as well as a feel-good atmosphere made of harmonious, vibrant timbres. On top of that, its skills in depth gradation and unbiased naturalness were captivating once again. In short: This super-cable overturns common prejudices and makes us think anew.

Price: around €3960 (with spade or banana connectors) for 2 meters, plus €790 per additional 0,5 m, price for bi-wiring connectors around €300



CRYSTALCONNECT REFERENCE DIAMOND POWER

We met the „Power“ cable of the Reference Diamond line with the same reservations we showed the „Speak“ cable. The mains cable consists of two conductors, each only 2.9 millimeters thin, on which the solid connectors seem strangely out of place. Can they transmit enough power? We have already experienced that the look of the CrystalConnects is not to be trusted, though. Thus, we went to work unbiased and attached the two cables available to us to Accoustic Arts' amplifier combo. Consisting of a delicately sounding pre- and a power amp with a strong grasp, different demands are placed on the cables.

The fact that the system sounded first-class with these power cables – homogeneous, clear and refined down to the smallest corners and details – is one thing. Experts might become even more excited when they hear that the „Power“ Crystals not only played on par with the excellent HMS Energia Suprema; but even brought a tad more motion and concentrated verve into the performance of Brian Bromberg's lively „Dolphin Dance“. In comparison, the music came across a touch more relaxed when powered by the top conductors from HMS, which unfortunately have a similarly ambitious price. Summing up, CrystalConnect is incredibly exciting in the power sector as well.

Price: around €1320 (with high quality jacks) for 1 meter, plus €320 per additional 0,5 m



CONTACT

Gaudios
+43 (0)316337175
www.gaudios.eu