

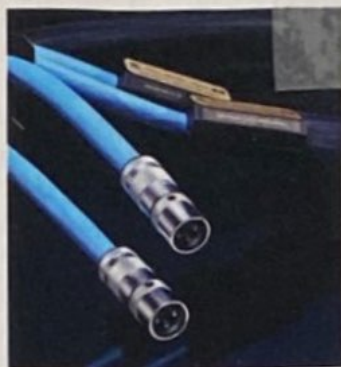
similar, there are still enough differences in nuance and convenience between them to make your choice more a matter of system compatibility and user taste than absolute sonic excellence. There is this, as well: The SRXes are considerably less expensive than the Da Vincis, if that makes a difference to folks buying at these exalted prices. One of JV's references, and the 2022 co-winner of TAS Cable of the Year Award. JV, 333

Transparent Audio XL Gen 6
\$13,000/1m pr. balanced interconnect; \$20,000/8' pr. speaker

These interconnects and speaker cables can be set to match the loads of specific components, and the end results are clearer and more revealing than both the previous-generation Transparent and virtually all of the competition he's had the opportunity to audition. Even if you are a cable atheist or agnostic, you should really audition the Generation 5s. AHC, 264 (new Gen 6 not reviewed)

Transparent Audio Opus Gen 6
\$15,000/1m pr. RCA interconnect, \$25,000/1m pr. balanced interconnect; \$46,000/8' speaker

Jacob Heilbrunn found that Transparent's Opus interconnects and speaker cables were essential to getting the best performance from the Wilson XLF loudspeaker. Opus emphasizes tonal fidelity, spatiality, and low noise. JH said, "I have not heard a cable that delivered more resolute bass, more timbral accuracy, and more hall ambience than the Opus." JHb, 225 (new Gen 6 not reviewed)



Siltech Royal Double Crown
\$18,100/1m interconnect; \$34,985/2m speaker (WBT); \$15,300/2m power cord

These silver cables, which are based on a 6-core Hexagon construction, deliver a purity of sound that truly is fit for a king. The Royal Double Crown does not deliver razzle-dazzle but a lustrous presentation that is cut from the same sonic cloth throughout the frequency spectrum. The Double Crown's lack of grain is remarkable. Without sacrificing detail or transient bite, it captures the natural warmth of a string quartet or orchestra, all set against a jet-black background. The low noise level of the cable means that instruments emerge naturally with an almost soothing quality to them. Bass reproduction is full and taut, helping to endow the music with rhythmic solidity and weight. Is there more to be had? The Double Crown is second from the top of the Siltech line, but the performance it provides should satisfy the most exacting audio connoisseur. JHb, 337

Echople Limited Edition
\$19,500, 3' balanced interconnect; \$23,500, 6' speaker cable; \$16,000, 6' power cord

These exotic interconnects and speaker cables from Echople, sister company to Absolare, feature not just custom design and geometry, but custom metallurgy. With a solid-core conductor so thick it's almost a rod, the cables are heavier and less pliable than

most. Although priced at the upper end of the spectrum, they deliver first-rate sound. Rather than presenting a specific set of sonic characteristics, they seem to lower the level of noise and coloration, allowing the rest of the components in the system to better reveal the music's beauty. Among the cleanest and most transparent cables RH has heard. RH, 280

Crystal Cable Art Series Da Vinci
\$24,000/1m pr. interconnect (\$14,400 per add'l meter); \$46,000/2m speaker cable (\$15,000 per add'l meter)

Crystal Cable's and Siltech's chief engineer Edwin Rijnveld's latest top-of-the-line creations, the Art Series Da Vinci wires, are the quietest components of their type that JV has ever heard. There are sound technical reasons for this: Edwin's Art Series Da Vinci wires have a newly constructed dual-layer shield—one layer a mesh of pure G9 silver/gold-alloy strands, the other of pure MonoX silver—which provides verifiably wider immunity against EM and RF fields, lower ground impedance, lower inductance, much lower capacitance (three times lower than JV's reference Crystal Cable Ultimate Dreams), and lower current distortion. The improvement isn't only a matter of measurements on paper; it is as immediately audible as the shockingly deep silences of tape and optical-cartridge playback are—and fosters the exact same impression of neutrality, completeness, and higher fidelity. Da Vinci is a genuine step forward in cable, interconnect, and power cord design—not a different or more appetizing "flavor," but a lowering of the characteristic noises (and susceptibility to noises) that give wires their flavors. JV, 328

Nordost Odin 2
\$29,499/1m pr. interconnect (\$3250 per add'l half-meter pair); \$39,599/1m pr. speaker (\$5280 per add'l half-meter pair)

With the Odin 2, Nordost has taken an already formidable cable and pushed it into the stratosphere where it achieves dizzying levels of performance. Any lingering sense of aggressiveness in the treble that existed with Odin 1 has been utterly effaced by Nordost's latest effort. What emerges with the construction of this cable, which includes different terminations of the plugs and connectors, is a marvelously dynamic and pellucid sound that most of its competitors would be hard-pressed to surpass, let alone equal. Add tautness of the bass and solidity of imaging, and you have a real winner. This is an immensely impressive cable that will take the finest audio systems to another level of sound reproduction. JHb, 270

AudioQuest Dragon Zero/ Dragon Bass
Zero \$34,100 8' pr. speaker; Bass, \$26,100 8' pr. speaker

This new top-level speaker cable from AudioQuest is easily the best cable the company has ever made. Dragon Zero features AudioQuest's finest materials and technologies, including Solid Perfect-Surface silver conductors, Carbon-Based Noise Dissipation System, and the long-standing Dielectric Bias System. It is extremely open and dynamic, as though a lid were removed from the music. The sense of transparency in the midrange and treble, and of unlimited top-end extension, is stunning. Although the soundstage is highly illuminated, Dragon Zero doesn't sound bright or fatiguing. A reference-quality speaker cable. RH