

LA SOUND “Corium” cables

by Jason Kennedy



You may not be shocked to hear that the overwhelming majority of cable brands do not actually manufacture their own cable. To do so requires pretty serious machinery that churns out miles of the stuff if it's going to do it economically, so most audio companies buy their cable from commercial cable makers. They can specify a wide range of parameters such as conductor and insulation materials and usually have to buy a lot in one go, which is one reason why audio cable is so expensive, but they don't have the sort of ultimate control that a cable manufacturer has. LA SOUND is a division of Comar Srl, an Italian cable and wire maker located in the north-east near Venice that specialises in using exotic materials including silver which is a hallmark of LA SOUND audio cables.

LA SOUND make four cable ranges with the two more affordable examples

“Deviank” and “Titan” using a copper-silver alloy for the conductors and the Olympia and Corium having 99.997% pure silver to carry the signal. Corium is lavishly wrapped in natural leather, but the combination of silver printing and its woven nature makes it seem more metallic than that, it's undoubtedly very exotic and in the case of the speaker cable, substantial. The solid core conductors are a mix of gauges; 16 AWG, 21 AWG, that are produced using a continuous casting process, not something I have heard many other cable brands boasting.

To match the luxurious leather braiding the Corium cables are terminated in heavily gold plated terminals and the ends of the speaker cables finished in equally shiny caps. An LA SOUND slogan is *'Not just cables, but jewels to show'* which when it comes down to it sums up a lot of what high end is about, male jewellery. There's nothing wrong with that, it's just rare for an audio company to admit as much, but then Italians do seem to have a way with style. The packaging gives you some idea of what to expect as well, each pair of interconnects, speaker cables and power cable coming in a real wooden box with a leather catch and a pair of white gloves, so you don't blemish the gold plating.

LA SOUND make balanced and unbalanced interconnects and supplied two one metre examples of their RCA EVO1 models, these are terminated in locking RCA plugs that proved a tight fit on nearly all the sockets I connected them to. As well as solid core conductors they have Teflon and expanded ▶



▶ polythene insulation and “one or more different kinds of shielding”. That sentence applies to the whole Corium range so probably relates to different types of cable given that there are digital and power cables in the range. The Corium S8 EVO1 speaker cable has the same 99.99% silver conductors and insulation and is pretty large in diameter, making it hard to twist but not too stiff. The connecting tails are terminated in spade connectors and fitted with a long ground connector at the amplifier end. LA SOUND explains that this is connected to the internal shield and should be bonded to the star ground of the system, assuming there is one available.

I used a CAD GC3 Ground Control device to keep ground noise at bay and this largely deals with the earth or ground of the mains, so the speaker cable ground wires were connected to this point. However initial listening was done with the RCA interconnects between source and preamp and thence onto the power amp, Townshend Fractal F1 carried the signal to Falcon Audio's IMF100 transmission line speakers. The Corium interconnects made a marked impression by enhancing presence, image solidity and timing, the latter quite significantly. The balance is a bit brighter than my Townshend interconnects, but this speaker is a little polite. The combination was very positive, bringing extra nuance out of Joni Mitchell's dulcet tones and putting the band much more firmly in the room by revealing the ambience in the recording.

With the more revealing Bowers & Wilkins 802 D3 speakers things got better with the electricity of the live performance, image scale and focus were particularly good and the extra fine detail that the cables revealed greatly enhanced the charm of the piece, even at a low playback level. Adding in the Corium speaker cables proved a worthwhile struggle, now the reverb was 'like, wow', Yussef Kamaal's Black Focus (Brownswood) is by no means an audiophile recording. Now, there's plenty of room sound around the drum kit, and these cables also reveal that background noise levels are surprisingly low. I love the power and weight in the bass, but it's the immediacy of the snare drum attack that is most gripping. They have a degree of transparency that is rare even at the exalted prices being asked; this becomes clearer the more you use them. With vinyl the shine you get from new acoustic guitar strings and the precision delivered with all sound sources is uncanny.

Silver has a reputation for sounding bright, and I've certainly encountered

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

RCA EVO1

Type: Analogue interconnect with RCA jack terminations

Conductor: Multi-gauge, solid core silver

Dielectric: Teflon

Shielding: Not specified

Capacitance: 72.4pF

Resistance: 90.5 milliohms

Inductance: 1.05 μ H

Price: €3,300/1m pair

S8 EVO1

Type: Loudspeaker cable with spade terminations

Conductor: Multi-gauge, solid core silver

Dielectric: Teflon

Shielding: Not specified

Capacitance: 803.67pF

Resistance: 3.67 milliohms

Inductance: 0.3 μ H

Price: €16,000/2m pair

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that, but even with solid-state electronics the Corium cables never became forward or aggressive. I read that LA SOUND considers the pure silver models to be better suited to valve electronics and they would certainly work a treat with them, but if your transistor system is well sorted they only make the sound more real and enthralling. I had a particularly entertaining evening with these cables and some German Physiks HRS-130 speakers which are also extremely revealing; even the raw power of the Smashing Pumpkins' Siamese Dream (Hut Recordings) didn't push them over the edge. I have to say that the LA SOUND Corium cables have restored my faith in silver as a conductor, it's theoretically the best material there is but this theory has not often been proved so conclusively. +