



Atlas Cables Element Integra/ Element Integra S/PDIF/ Element 2.0 £216

If you're after an honest, no-frills loom that puts solid engineering before gimmicks, this could be the one

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Atlas Cables
Element Integra/
Element Integra S/
PDIF/Element 2.0

ORIGIN
UK

TYPE
Interconnect/
digital interconnect/
speaker cable

DISTRIBUTOR
Atlas Cables Ltd.

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With a reputation for no-nonsense engineering and bullish about its clean sheet, from-the-ground-up approach to designing and producing cables, Scotland's Atlas rates its build consistency and quality control highly enough to offer a five-year guarantee as well as a bespoke build service for customers who want something a little out of the ordinary.

Element is its entry-level tier, but incorporates much of Atlas' core thinking. As such, the Element Integra interconnect features a high-quality OCC copper conductor, is shielded against RFI and fitted with solder-free, cold-welded, non-magnetic Integra RCA plugs. The central conductor is insulated with a low-loss

porous polyethylene dielectric (PEF), while the outer conductor employs a braided copper and aluminium foil screen. The plug's cover is made from a non-magnetic polycarbonate sleeve.

The Element Integra S/PDIF is identical in appearance and feel, so care needs to be taken to avoid

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mixing it up with the analogue one. The central conductor is multi-stranded OFC, insulated by an extremely low-loss foamed polyethylene dielectric. As with all S/PDIF digital cables, the aim is to maintain a true 75ohm impedance and, to this end, Atlas contends that its cold-weld solder-free connectors avoid the continuity breaks and compression of the cable's shielding screen that cause impedance problems, leading to poorer jitter performance and digital 'glare'.

Completing a smart and compact loom, the speaker cable contains 2mm² of concentric stranded OFC within a high-density polyethylene dielectric. Atlas says this is unusual at a price point where PVC is more common and will have a tendency to

IN SIGHT

- 1 Copper conductor
- 2 Polyethylene dielectric
- 3 Cold-weld connection Z plug

degrade the music signal by imposing a characteristic blurring on the sound.

Sound quality

Sigrd gets us started with the bassy synth glow of *Strangers* and it's immediately arresting. We have definition, a wide-open soundstage, oodles of drive and attack. That cavernous bass is taut, deep and articulate, the crystalline vocal a vivid, vital presence. The performance is animated and compelling with excellent midrange clarity, resolution and punctual start-stop timing. Presentation isn't as creamy as the QED or Kimber, but has more inner detail than most with terrific transparency and layered depth.

Playing Michael McDonald's quietly affecting *Honest Emotion* – the standout track from *Wide Open* – I'm struck by the precision and focus. The song sounds as emotionally nuanced as it should, but the Atlas loom clearly respects the delicacy and intricate interplay of instruments. There's plenty of air and ambience, McDonald's famously mumbled enunciation is easier to unpick, the massed strings in the background are clearer and more plaintive. Best of all, there's an overarching sense of performance. Here's a loom less concerned about minding its sonic p's and q's that has a winning way with textures and timbres and homes in on the emotional core of the music ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Crisp, entertaining, insightful sound; neat look

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Not the warmest or weightiest presentation

BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★ **WESAY:** No qualms recommending this loom. A fine all-rounder

FEATURES ★★★★★

OVERALL

★★★★★

