

EQUATOR ACHROMATIC Z/S 3.5 FROM ATLAS

15th February 2024



Looking for a pair of low-cost speaker cables? Paul Rigby checks out a pair of hot contenders at the Equator

Low cost is relative to your expectations and available budget, I realise that but, when you look at other branded, audiophile cables out there and the prices charged, this new Equator cabling release from the Scottish outfit is definitely worth a look.



The Equator Achromatic Speaker Z/S 3.5 speaker cables are actually billed as improvements over and above the company's current 2.0 version, increasing the diameter of the OFC conductors. Atlas states that the Equator 3.5 cables particularly suit higher power outputs while they also reportedly handle well over long runs.



Using oxygen-free copper and high-density PTFE dielectric (insulation layer), the inside of the Equator 3.5 cable uses cotton yarn to reduce microphony. Which is odd because that's what appeared inside the Aurorasound AFE-12 Step Up Transformer that I recently reviewed. Cotton is the new 'in 'thing then, eh?



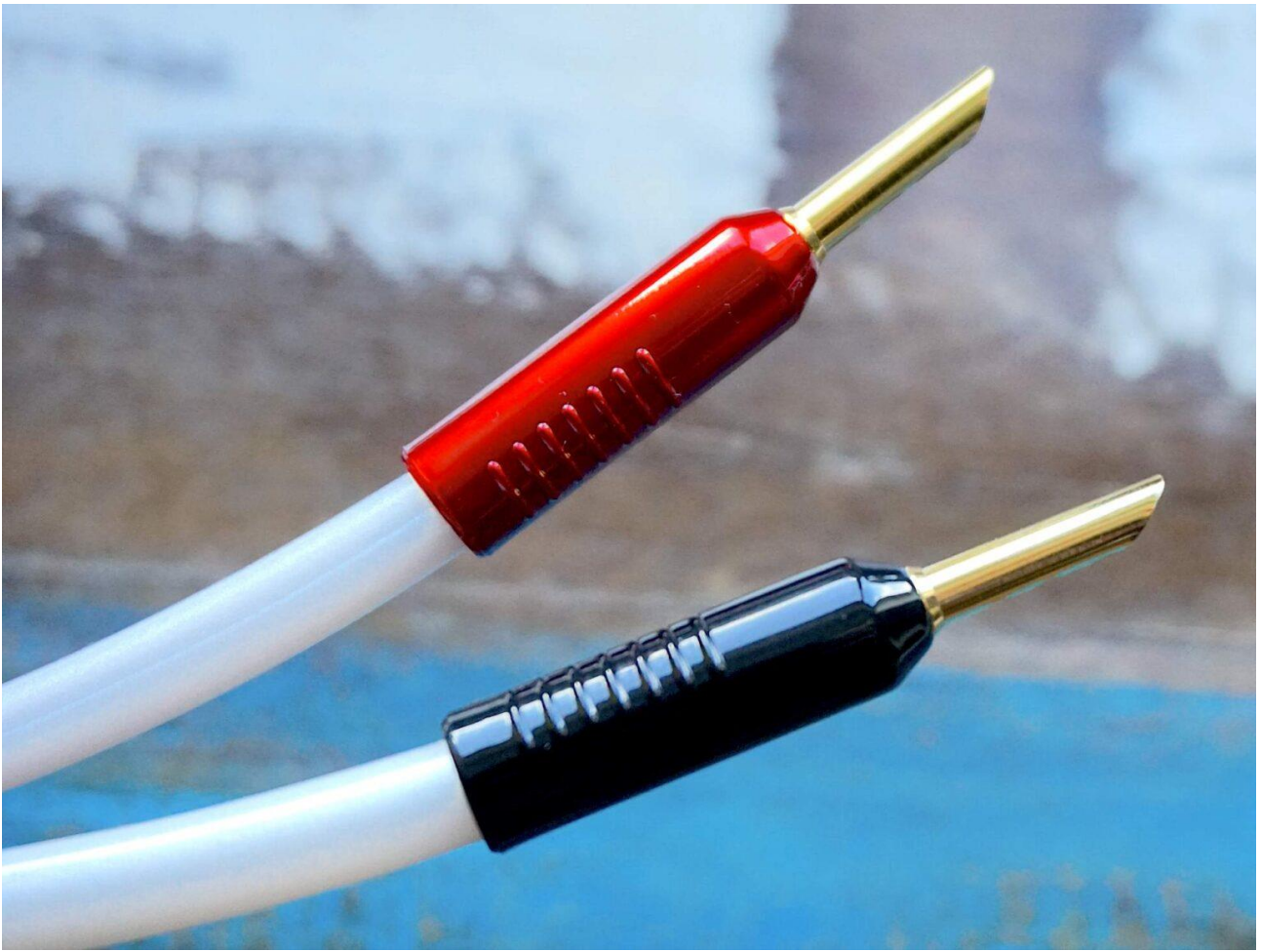
I liked the cold-welded terminations on these speaker cables, well the actual plugs that is. They remain budget models but at least they are metal-based, adding a touch of glam over and above the more usual plastic examples I expect at this price point.

So, how do they sound?

SOUND QUALITY

I started with CD and the track Monochrome from the album *Spooky* from Lush (4AD).

A classic album of shoegaze rock featuring jangly guitars, ethereal lead and backing harmony vocals, firm deep bass, tinkly tambourines (I think, well something delicate and bell like, at any rate), acoustics guitars, well recorded with lots of space for the music to roam around and also, it has to be said, lots of information for speaker cables to cock up if they don't get it right.



And right away, within the first second and a half – because there was a neat little synth effect to introduce the track – I could hear the headline feature of these Equator 3.5 cables. Space. Lots of it. Tons of space and air around the music, much more than could be heard from my reference 50th Anniversary XT cables from QED, which provided a major leg up for any detail that has any ambition to reach your ears.

The large amount of space spanning the entire soundstage seemed to enlarge the same, it provided room for each instrument to roam freely, expressing itself fully with lots of elbow room to manoeuvre.



That extra air around the soundstage was also an indication of the low noise performance from these cables.



In bass terms, the QED cabling squeezed the space around this frequency, compressing it and thus hardening it to provide impact. The spacious aspect of the Equators means that bass wasn't quite so impactful or artificial but tonally it was much more realistic and balanced in the mix.



I then turned to Ella Fitzgerald on vinyl and *A Foggy Day* from the Verve album ...*Sings the George and Ira Gershwin Song Book Vol.3* backed by Nelson Riddle (and quite a team they are too).

What grabbed me here was how the space from the Equator 3.5s allowed my system to manoeuvre the soundstage into a 3D position. When space is low, that 3D sound tends to sound flat, like a piece of canvas. Not here, that sense of depth around the stereo image was dominant.

Frequency discipline was good here, mids were detailed yet never barked, bass was tonally correct and never floaty while treble was delicate and never fizzed.

CONCLUSION

It's been a while since I heard a set of budget speaker cables that forced me to sit up straight after two seconds of play but the Atlas Equator 3.5 certainly slapped me around the chops during this review.



That sense of space and air formed the basis of everything that was good about these cables. The low noise performance allowed heaps of detail to spring forth and the sense of clarity that emerged as a result was a delight. So yes, then. I like them. A lot.

ATLAS EQUATOR ACHROMATIC SPEAKER Z/S 3.5 SPEAKER CABLES

Price: £301 per pair for 3m

Website: www.atlascables.com

GOOD: Build quality, spacious mids, bass tonal realism, 3D soundstage

BAD: nothing

RATING: 9

Paul Rigby

(The Audiophile Man)

DEEPLY GROOVY

9/10

REFERENCE

Funk Firm LSD Turntable

Goldring 1042 Cartridge

Audiolab 6000A amplifier

Trichord Dino Phono Amplifier

Spendor A1 speakers

Tellurium Q cabling

Blue Horizon Professional Rack System

Harmonic Resolution Systems Noise Reduction Components

CAD GC1 Ground Controls

Air Audio AC-2K Balanced Transformer

Russ Andrews Superrouter Signature

Stack Audio AURAs

All vinyl was cleaned using a Degritter