

High Fidelity

hi-fi, hi-end magazine

TEST

Interconnect + Loudspeaker cable

Ramses-II

Ramses-II IC + Ramses-II SC

Price: RAMSES-II SC speaker cable
single-wiring 2 x 3,00 m – 2.100 Euro

RAMSES-II IC interconnect cable
RCA-RCA 1,5 m – 800 Euro

Distribution: Kurt Hecker Marketing

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Sometimes cables fall from heaven, like ripe apples. That was the case with the Ramses-II cables. Kurt Hecker sends me information, that the cables could fall on my head, in response to my thanks sent to the organizers of the High End show in Munich, the High End Society. Being one of its members, now also the president of the society. He is the distributor of cables from companies like Audio Note, Isoda, Fadel Art for 26 years. The cables Ramses-II are his new acquisition, and you can feel, that he is especially proud of them.



However to understand well the role played by the German cables in the system, we must think about them differently, not as another, warm, homogenizing cables. I use this word “homogenous” in a different meaning than above, where this means that the sound is devoid of any distinctive characteristics, intrinsic contradictions so to say, that differentiate the individual elements, details, phrases. Like in a homogenous milk, where the long strains of protein are broken, also in “homogenous sound” everything is blurred. Here is not a trace of something like that. Homogeneity described in the company materials is about the lack of tonal anomalies, the lack of underlining or withdrawing anything, at least in terms of timbre. And I agree with that to a large extent – such a smooth sound without warming is a very unique thing. I like very much both mentioned interconnects from Tara, I admire them, and I know, that in many systems they are the only way to feel anything except that technical sound, to feel Music. But at the same time this done at the expense of something very well defined – at the cost of going to the other side, to go OUTSIDE the system used with those cables. The Ramses IC gives the same smoothness, but without warming. And this allows to use it in another group of systems, those, where the amount of sugar must be just right, otherwise they would have diabetes.

Ramses II was one of the biggest pharaohs. He reigned in the years 1279-1213 BCE called Ramses the Great by current historians and by his successors Great Ancestor (after Wikipedia). When somebody uses this name for his company, he or she has to be bold. Or be convinced to what he or she does. Or the one and the other – because a combination of those elements leads to success in all branches, also in audio. The man behind the company Ramses-II is Thomas-Michael Rudolph, a German constructor, who designs devices and accessories for many German companies for 30 years now. Kurt Hecker writes, that the cables Ramses-II are “surely the most important project in his career”.



Those are not just another Taiwan manufactured cables. And 99% of manufacturers buys them there, and then re-brands them – the percentage is of course my supposition, I do not have other proof than some talks with Taiwan other country manufacturers, who deal with the first ones, but regardless of the exact percentage, the majority of the cables is manufactured there. Thomas-Michael cables are handmade in Berlin. On demand. Their structure is unique, although the

The tested Ramses-II cables show clearly, that a cabling system should be the starting point in any system, and will be the ending point in 99% of the systems. While the interconnects sound in a slightly darker way, they have the tonal balance shifted slightly to the lower midrange, the loudspeaker cables are livelier and have a more colorful midrange. Together this results in a dynamic, more

look similar to the British Nordost. But Thomas-Michael claims, that it is his own design. The grey outside mesh covers a wide, flat ribbon ending with plugs – and this is true for the interconnect and the loudspeaker cable. The mesh is grey, and this distinguishes them from the production destined to the German market – there the mesh is black, the finishing is less exclusive, and there is no wooden box for the cables. Inside Germany, the cables are sold in a cardboard box. The basis for the project was to find such a topology of the conductors, that would distribute the electromagnetic field between them in the most even way. To achieve this, the thinnest possible structure had to be designed. In case of loudspeaker cables a big summary cross-section was needed – thus the wideness of cables was increased. Different to the competition, Thomas-Michael does not use Teflon as a dielectric, as he believes it damages the sound of many cables. He uses only natural materials – unfortunately we do not know which, I can guess, that this is silk and paper, but I am not sure. This however, results in an increase of the price, as a result of complication and longitude of the manufacturing process. Using a ribbon dramatically reduces capacitance, but increases inductance, so we need to check, if our amplifier can handle such a load. In construction of loudspeaker cables and interconnects there is a tendency visible to minimize the amount of metal used, hence the usage of the brilliant RCA Bullet-Plugs from Eichmann for the IC, and small, although splendid, BFA plugs for the SC. The signal cables are available in RCA and XLR versions, and SC as single, bi-wire or tri-wire. We can also purchase jumpers for the loudspeakers named Ramses BC, and a power cable PC1. For the test we received the interconnect IC with 1.5 meters length and 2 x 3 meters of the loudspeaker cable SC with single plugs on each end.

SOUND

Discs used for the listening sessions:

- *Die perfekte Räumlichkeit*, Stereoplay 10/10, sampler, CD.
- Abba, *Super Trouper*, Polar Music Production/Universal Music K.K. (Japan), UICY-9508, CD.
- Chet Baker, *Chet Baker Big Band*, Pacific Jazz/Toshiba-EMI, TOCJ-9442, SBJC, CD.
- Clifford Brown, *Clifford Brown With Strings*, Verve/Universal Music K.K. (Japan), UCCU-9525, gold-CD.
- Derek And The Dominos, *The Layla Sessions. 20th Anniversary Edition*, Polydor/ Universal

open sound, when compared to the interconnects alone, and at the same time, still very smooth and homogenous (in Kurt Hecker way of understanding it). The system shows a much better defined sound stage than the interconnect and loudspeaker cables alone, combined with other, even brilliant cables. We have splendid depth and width and a very good depiction of the three dimensionality of the shapes. This is not yet the level of the Acrolink and Tara, but still surprising especially given their price.

Tonally the German system is somewhere between the Cardasem Golden Reference and XLO Limited LE-4 on one side and my Acrolink together with the Tara Labs Omega Onyx on the other. Maybe not even directly in between, rather in a triangle, with the third corner occupied by the mentioned Tara Labs interconnects. The tonal balance of the Ramses IC is shifted down, in which it resembles the Cardas. Similar to the American cable the bass is also splendid, strong and full. The Ramses IC sounds in a more leveled way, while the Golden Reference had a clearly underlined part responsible for the kick. This was audible in the piece *My Foolish Heart* from the disc *Blow Up 2* Isao Suzuki, and on the disc *Third* from Portishead. The upper treble is withdrawn. This is not like in the Tara, where there was also warming, but rather like in the XLO. And again – the German cable is much cleaner in that region, also on the midrange, than the Limited LE-4. “Cleanness” is something that can be found all over in my notes. The events are shown in a smaller acoustical surroundings, smaller than with the Acrolink. The Ramses IC shows everything in a more intimate way, filling the room between the instruments and the reverb, and not the “room”, with a kind of fluid, connecting all the events. These results in some unexpected things, like much better saturation of the sound in the too much muffled before *Blow Up 2*, and allowed to listen in comfort to discs like *Super Trouper* Abba.

Music K.K. (Japan), UICY-93958/60, 3 x SHM-CD.

- e.s.t., *Leucocyte*, ACT Music+Vision, ACT 9018-1, 2 x 180 g LP
- Herb Ellis, *Man With The Guitar*, Dot Records/Universal Music K.K. (Japan), UCCU-5287, CD.
- Isao Suzuki, *Blow Up 2*, Jazz Fine, JFIS-001, XRCD24 + DVD.
- Portishead, *Third*, Island/Universal Music K.K. (Japan), UICI-1069, enhanced CD.
- Tomasz Stańko Quartet, *Lontano*, ECM Records, ECM 1980, CD.

Japanese versions of the discs available on CD Japan.



When we plug the interconnect Ramses IC into our system, one thing becomes immediately clear – the tonal homogeneity, promised in the company materials, understood as cooperation of all elements of the sound, their interdependence and equity is there and rules. This is not an easy thing to achieve, and besides my Acrolink, which is a completely different cable (about that in a moment), I heard it in such a way only twice before: with the interconnect Tara Labs ISM The Zero and... ISM The 0.8 from the same company. Different to their American counterparts, which brought slight warming together with the brilliant coherence and a slight sweetness, making the recordings more “handsome”, the Ramses IC seems to be more neutral. Also natural, but this is more a result of homogeneity, naturally absorbed by the listeners. Everything has its place and its purpose. This is not such an analytical cable, like the Acrolink Mexcel 7N-AD6300, and I will talk about that later, but it can be heard, that Thomas-Michael, the designer and constructor of the cable, wanted something else. As usual, he needed to work within the limits, the



But there is a second side to that sound – differentiation is not as good as in the Acrolink. I know, that this is absolute top, and the Ramses-II handles it better than the top XLO, Clearaudio or Tara Labs cables, but Acrolink does it better. This was the reason, that master differences, gigantic ones, between the Abba disc and the anniversary edition *Layla* Derek and The Dominos, although clear with the Ramses-II, were much deeper with the Acrolink. And yet... Similar to the Tara Labs The Zero, the sound of the German cables was incredibly nice, without a trace of grain in the treble, resembling coming from a CD player, even a good one, to a turntable. This is a fantastic example to how similar technologies lead to completely different effects – the bright (for me) and too light sound of the Nordost cables is the exact opposite of the smooth and vivid sound of the Ramses-II, despite the similar starting point, and technology. The German cables are not bright, not warm, not “boosted”. And at the same time, there is not a trace of mechanicalness or sucking out of emotions. So are those the best cables in the world, as claimed by the company materials? Well noooo... The top interconnects of Acrolink, Siltech and Tara Labs still have some aspects, which are not available here. The same case is with the loudspeaker cables from Tara Labs and MIT. But there is a price to pay for that, literally. You would need to pay so much more money, that for many music lovers, the Ramses-II cables are for now the best solution. No doubt about that.

Technical data (according to manufacturer):

IC

Characteristic impedance: around 3Ω

Inductance: $<0.01\mu\text{H/m}$

boundaries, what resulted in – compromise. The final result, so to speak, speaks for itself – this might be the **ONLY** and **IRREPLACEABLE** interconnect in many systems. I write it in capital letters, because I want to underline the specifics of the Ramses-II – those cable works on a bigger scale than other cables, deepen their role to the max, combining all elements into one whole.

Capacitance: around 900pF/m

SC

Characteristic impedance: around 3Ω

Inductance: <0.01μH/m

Capacitance: around 900pF/m

Resistance: 4.5mΩ/m

Manufacturer:

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g a l l e r y



ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT

- CD player: Ancient Audio Lektor Air
- Phono preamplifier: RCM Audio Sensor Prelude IC
- Cartridges: Air Tight Supreme, Miyajima Laboratory Waza
- Preamplifier: Ayon Audio Polaris III with Re-generator Power Supply
- Power amplifier: Tenor Audio 175S and Solution 710
- Integrated amplifier/headphone amplifier: Leben CS300 XS Custom version
- Loudspeakers: Harpia Acoustics Dobermann
- Headphones: Sennheiser HD800, AKG K701, Ultrasone PROLine 2500, Beyerdynamic DT-990 Pro, 600 Ω version
- Interconnect: CD-preamp: Acrolink Mexcel 7N-DA6300, preamp-power amp: Wireworld Platinum Eclipse
- Speaker cable: Tara Labs Omega Onyx

- Power cables AC (all equipment): Acrolink Mexcel 7N-PC9300
- Power conditioning: Gigawatt PF-2 Filtering Power Strip
- Audio stand Base – under all components
- Resonance control: Finite Elemente Ceraball under the CD
- Pro Audio Bono platform under CD

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