

Clearer Audio Silver-line Optimus Reference Interconnect – £570.00 / 0.5m

By David Price, Hi-Fi World, September 2008 (Vol. 18, No. 7)

Having been impressed with Clearer Audio interconnects over the years – finding them to offer high end performance and mid-fi prices, we couldn't resist trying the company's own flagship wire. With its lavish silver-plated nylon braiding, the Silver-line Optimus Reference Interconnect looks and feels exotic. Indeed, it's hand made as a pseudo quad-balanced design running 99.9999% silver conductors insulated in low-loss foamed polyethylene. Clearer Audio says it is, "not technically a true multi-strand cable nor a sold core cable - it is in fact both with several solid conductors arranged in a spiral multi-strand configuration". This interconnect runs four cores of MSS Super-Pure Silver conductor with a total of twelve per core. It is shielded using the company's Star Shielding Technique with all layers being grounded using the Parallel Earthing System – this is claimed to be effective across the whole EMI spectrum with an attenuation of over 130dB. The cable is also fitted with the company's Super Suppressor ferrite rings which attenuate RFI on the cable line, and termination is by Eichmann Silver Bullet RCAs or Neutrik X-Series XLRs. Finally, the interconnect is fully burnt in on the Audiodharma Pro 2.5 Cable Cooker. The standard half metre version costs £500, or £725 for the 0.75m and £912 for the full 100cm; additional 0.25m lengths cost £187. Expensive stuff, but Clearer Audio do say that, including burn in, it takes sixty hours to build!

Its always hard to assess what, for most people, are unrealistically expensive interconnects, and very hard to recommend them on value for money terms, but these can still be given an enthusiastic thumbs up if cost is no object and you have a system great enough to unlock its abilities. Compared to its closest rival – Chord Company's Indigo (£832/m) – the Clearer Audio is an altogether smoother and darker sounding wire. Whereas the Indigo majors on dizzying amounts of detail and a stark, explicit presentation that leaves you breathless with its energy and life, the Silver-line is a deeper and more velvety listen. Although possessing less conspicuous detail, close listening confirms it's all there – along with inky-black silences and vast background atmosphere – just not served up with quite the same vigour. Instead, this cable has an uncannily natural, unforced presentation that lets the components in your system do their thing, unfettered and uninterrupted. It's wrong to say this cable sounds 'superb', as it doesn't really sound much at all – being amazingly self-effacing. I'd recommend it heartily to those with high end systems that sound a tad too brightly light and mechanical for their tastes – this would be the perfect palliative.