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Signal Projects Lynx

by Jason Kennedy

Some nations seem to be drawn to great audio more than others and the Greeks are among the most passionate in Europe – you only have to look up the audiophile club of Athens on YouTube to get some idea of how large they go on high-end hardware. They clearly love the stuff and so it's only natural that they should be making it as well, and this extends to the full gamut of components including cable. Nick Korakakis is one such enthusiast, a man who got carried away with hardware but realised that upgrading wasn't providing the improvements he was expecting because certain problems remained. He eventually came to the conclusion that cables were the main source of that problem, the weakest link in the system, and set about building some of

his own, a pursuit which led to the formation of Signal Projects in 2007. This, it turned out, was the eve of a global recession, but the fact that he's still in business suggests he was doing something right in making cables that worked in other systems as well as his own.

The Lynx range of interconnects, speaker cables, and power cables is one up from the Monitor range at the bottom of the Signal Projects tree and five ranges down from Golden Sequence at the top. Lynx cables use four nines (99.9999%) purity, solid core conductors in copper with PTFE dielectric. It's a shielded design with aluminium foil and copper braiding to keep noise at bay. The cables are terminated in RCA phono plugs that Signal Projects machines to its own design, which incorporates a threaded clamping system for a tight fit. Behind the RCA plug is a lump of around 20mm diameter, which makes it difficult to use with components that have the outputs stacked close together. When asked what was in the lumps, Nick told me, "inside these termination modules we apply a specific grounding configuration with lower resistance on the receiving plug, which makes the shield fully directional". But he wouldn't go into any more detail than that. Fortunately, the Townshend Allegri I use has two pairs of outputs so I was able to use the Lynx across both and accommodate their girth. ▶

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► Build and finish quality is professional and the packaging fairly lavish, taking the form of a solid wooden box embellished with a certificate and complete with crimson ties to stop the cable bashing about (the whole product also comes with a free T-shirt – I didn't wear it). Something that Signal Project has decided not to do is provide channel identification on its interconnects, when asked why, the answer came down to, “we never use channel indicators”, which must lead to the occasional mix up in installation.

Used between preamp and power amp, the Lynx made up for its practical shortcomings more than well enough; in fact, it delivered a better sound than the alternatives I had to hand, some of which are more

expensive. For a start, it's tonally neutral and introduces no audible changes in balance, the leading edges aren't emphasised, with a little bit of upper mid zing, and the bass isn't amped up to give more power in the bottom end. It doesn't even have a tendency to exaggerate reverberation to produce a more spacious presentation, something that is extremely common. What it does do is deliver the music in a calm, clear, and clean fashion.

Lynx is not one of those cables with a character that hits you the moment the music starts playing; those that do tend to have a tonal shift that highlights certain details but changes the overall balance. The Signal Projects Lynx is a slow grower: the more you play, the more you realise that it is letting you hear further into the mix simply by giving the signal a very low noise conduit. I don't like those lumps but suspect they have a significant bearing on the overall effectiveness of the cable. With Herbie Hancock's version of 'It Ain't Necessarily So' [*Gershwin's World*, Decca], you get the solidity of the instruments and the spaces in between them and there is less in the way of haze or overhang on each note so the quiet bits are quieter and the notes better focused. When this reduction of noise is applied to dense pieces of music the combined effect is pretty special and you hear more of the timbre and intonation, more of the fine details that go to produce a convincing whole, and this results in greater intelligibility in every aspect of the performance.

Bass does not seem to extend as far as some interconnects but you hear more variety and shape within deep sounds. There is some gorgeously low tympani on Kristin Hersh's 'Your Ghost' [*Hips and Makers*, 4AD]; with this cable, you clearly hear all three strikes to that tympani, where most other cables simply blurs them together into a homogenous deep boom. It is easy to hear the instrument or recording has harmonic detail, and playing classical pieces in reverberant spaces have plenty. This was especially the case with Javier Perianes' Manuel Blasco de Nebra's Piano Sonatas 1-6 Op.1 [*Harmonia Mundi*], which produced a sound that was placed deep behind the speakers in its own charmed world. The character of the room is obvious thanks to the absence of smear from the cable and so the beauty of the playing is all the easier to enjoy.

The most telling track proved to be Tom Waits' 'In Shades' [*Heart Attack & Vine*, Aylum], an instrumental piece played over voices in a restaurant. It's the voices that are hardest to get right because they're not that high in the mix, but the Lynx let me hear the character, if not the actual words, a level of definition other cables would have failed to offer by comparison.

I had three things to review for *Hi-Fi+* this month and not being a cable enthusiast I left this till last, inevitably that meant that the Signal Project turned out to be the best of the bunch, the component I would most like to hang onto! It would seem that Signal Project's assessment of what holds a system back is correct; you can't get truly great sound without truly great cables. +

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Type: Analogue interconnect with RCA jack terminations

Length: 1m pair

Conductor: Solid core copper

Dielectric: PTFE, polyolefin

Shielding: Aluminium foil, braided copper

Capacitance: RCA 23.05 pF/ft

Resistance: 4.48 mOhm/ft

Inductance: 0.61 µH/ft

Price: £940/1m pair XLR, RCA or BNC connections, £230/additional ½m

Manufacturer: Signal Projects Audio Ltd

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