

The Art Of Atlas

Jon Myles reviews the latest state-of-art Asimi loudspeaker and interconnect cable from Atlas.



After long discussions about cables with Kevin Kelly, MD of Atlas Cables, I visited their factory and was invited to review their new flagship loudspeaker cable, the Asimi – a cable aimed firmly at the high-end. Price is £6600 per metre. To understand why, you only have to look at its construction. While most cables use 99.999 per cent oxygen free copper, sometimes plated with silver, Atlas have gone the whole hog.

The Asimi not only uses solid 6N-purity silver but the strands are OCC-drawn using a heated die to create one long crystal with no grain boundaries. There are six silver strands per conductor arranged in three pairs. Each strand is then

wound in air-filled cotton before being wrapped in a microporous PTFE tape. All six insulated strands are then twisted together at the ideal tension to quell microphony without expelling the air.

It sounds complicated and it is a lengthy process. Added to this the conductor ends are screened with an alloy/mylar foil and tin-plated OFC braid, terminated at the amplifier-end of the cable with a flying Grun connector.

You can also choose from 4mm connectors, spade and Z-plugs to suit your equipment. Our example used standard RCAs but also came sheathed in Atlas's stitched leather sleeve. These are produced by a specialist manufacturer in Scotland - and you can even specify your own

colour. It certainly looked cool – but how does it sound?

SOUND QUALITY

Inserted between a pair of our resident Martin Logan ESL-X electrostatic loudspeakers and a Naim Supernait 2 amplifier the sheer resolution of the Asimis became clear with the Grunt cable connected to a free RCA input.

Some listeners associate silver loudspeaker cables with a degree of hardness but Atlas have avoided this. The plucked guitar on Antonio Forcione's 'Meet Me In London' had improved delicacy and a little extra bite. Instruments came to the fore with enhanced clarity.

Delving a little deeper I tried The Clash's 'London Calling' where Paul

Simonon's bass had sufficient weight but a little more subtlety about it. These cables are adept at bringing out nuances in music that can often lay hidden. Dynamics and subtle shadings were laid bare but not in an overt, sharp way.

So with Nick Cave's 'Where The Wild Roses Grow' the piano

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was sweet but still carried sufficient menace. An enthralling performance.

ASIMI LUXE INTERCONNECTS

The Asimi loudspeaker cables are not the only Atlas product to benefit from Atlas's new and unique topology. There's also their Luxe interconnects. Again these use solid 6N-purity silver OCC-drawn using a heated die to create one long crystal with no

grain boundaries. The Grun system is incorporated and they are again sheathed in hand-stitched leather.

Plugging these into the existing system added something again. Admittedly the gains were not quite as distinct as with the 'speaker cables but the soundstage became a little wider with a definite increase in bass weight and top-end definition.

Most noticeable was where the



shimmering guitars on The Pixies' 'Into The White' coalesced together. Instead of becoming one squall of sound I could hear two distinct instruments - one playing the melody, the other the lead line. It's a subtle change but one for the better and helped bring the track to life in an impressive way. Furthermore, drums and bass took on more presence, each having a depth and clarity that came to the fore.

It all coalesced when listening to Billy Mackenzie's voice on 'Party Fears Two' by The Associates. His baritone voice had a richer timbre to it - seeming to dig a little deeper into the register. Yet it did not dominate

the rest of the track - with the backing instruments holding their own scale in the overall sound.

Switching from the Martin Logan to a pair of standmount Spendor A1s the two Asimi cables worked together to provide a seamless and smooth presentation. I couldn't help but be impressed by just how the guitars on Lynyrd Skynyrd's 'Free Bird' came across. The interplay of the guitars was excellent - but most importantly there was a rapid feel to the music and real depth to the sound. Even the applause at the start and end of the track sounded realistic - not something all cables can manage.

Listening to BBC Radio 4 I couldn't help but notice just how rich the tones of presenters were - each taking on a stronger sense of individuality and presence.

CONCLUSION

The Atlas Asimis are expensive but they are superbly constructed and, most importantly, have a gravitas few others can match. They impose little of their own character on the system and allow the music to flow freely.

The bespoke leather sheath is also something not seen elsewhere and adds to the luxury feel. Plug these into your system and you will definitely hear a difference.



The picturesque town of Kilmarnock, Scotland, is where Atlas has its base. Crucially, they told me, there is no soldering involved with their cables - MD Kevin Kelly firmly believes adding different materials adds a filter to the

sound flow. They are crimped instead.

Kevin is always looking at new materials and construction techniques. One of the latest is the Grun coherent earthing system designed to combat the low levels of EMI (electro-magnetic interference) and noise on the signal ground which can subtly modulate and

degrade the overall noise levels of the system. It earths the loudspeaker lead by attaching to an unused RCA socket on the amplifier.

Attaching the Grun lead to a pair of Atlas's flagship Asimi loudspeaker cables the noise floor dropped and instruments were projected much further into the room. Acoustic guitars took on a richer timbre while the whole sound had better musical tone. It works well. **JM**



Kevin Kelly, the Managing Director of Atlas Cables, inspects the latest products.

ATLAS ASIMI LOUDSPEAKER CABLE FROM £6600 PER METRE



OUTSTANDING - amongst the best

VERDICT

If your system warrants it these cables could be just the combination to take it to another level.

FOR

- silver conductors
- unique construction
- grounding system

AGAINST

- not cheap

ATLAS ASIMI LUXE INTERCONNECT CABLE FROM £2950



OUTSTANDING - amongst the best

VERDICT

Builds on the qualities of the Asimi loudspeaker cables but adds a little extra.

FOR

- OCC silver conductors
- grounding ability
- leather sheaf

AGAINST

- best with Asimi 'speaker cables

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