

<http://www.theaudiophileman.com/#!black-rhodium-oratorio/cboi>

Bit Of A Drama

Aimed at high-end users, Black Rhodium has released a new interconnect packed with bells and whistles. Paul Rigby reviews the Oratorio.

As the name suggests, this new cable aims to sing a song of sonic beauty but, to do so, the design and construction is anything but simple. Made from 99.99% pure silver wire, the cable has also been treated with DCT++ cryogenic processing which involves temperature processing above and below room temperature. The idea of DCT++ is to alter the molecular structure of the cable to improve uniformity.

Also added to the cable is the relatively new Crystal Sound process that is applied to the cable following the completed DCT++ process. It is supposed to refocus the outermost skin of the conductor. The result is that the surface of the conductor is supposed to be more closely packed and regular, to aid conduction.

The silver wires of the cable are insulated with PTFE low dielectric distortion. Vibration stabilisers have also been added to reduce distortion. The Oratorio has also been covered in a braided screen to protect the inner cores from picking up radio frequency interference (RFI) by twisting the cores. Also, the cable uses two separate cores for positive and negative signal flows. These are connected in opposite directions from the way they were wound on the reel.

The RCA version of the Oratorio is terminated with specially designed Graham Nalty Legacy Range GN-4 RCA connectors. There is a XLR version on offer too alongside a digital version of the cable.

SOUND QUALITY

I began with Eydie Gorme and a slice of bossa nova from the album, *Cuatro Vidas*, with El Trio Los Panchos. This track consists of a female voice, male harmonic backing, Spanish guitars and congas.

Where the reference Nordost Frey 2s produced a gamut of detail from the lead vocal, the Oratorios managed to grab the same detail but did so without increasing the clinical nature of the sound. That is, the Black Rhodiums were allowed to reduce the slight strident nature of the presentation. It's almost as if the Nordost cables had to sharpen the entire sound stage to extract the necessary detail whereas the Oratorios allowed the natural detail to exude without having to 'play the heavy' with the suite of frequencies. More than that, the Oratorios were able to apply significant attention on the Spanish guitars, not only focusing on the finger picking and strumming but also producing a great deal of textural detail in *how* the fingers attacked the strings, giving that rough edged stream of collisions where fingers hit the strings in a violent fashion. While the Oratorios did light up the upper mids to some extent, they also maintained an open and airy suite of midrange frequencies that allowed the conga percussion a sense of ease and freedom.

Moving to the orchestra arrangements of composer, conductor and arranger Gianni Ferrio and *El Varon Rebuscante* which combined a complex array of European folk instruments from recorders, the accordion, strummed acoustic guitars alongside grander orchestral excerpts including a bank of strings and brass. The Oratorios allowed the recorders to play without adding any distortive blooming while a harmonium was both precise and focused and the accordion was both melodic and textural in its presentation. Secondary percussion such as sleigh bells and wooden blocks offered air and space that gave them and other instruments a satisfying sense of separation. In fact, the wooden block percussion, which can be hidden and pushed to the rear of the soundstage, was spotlighted by the Oratorios thus adding to the overall complexity and richness of the soundstage.



I finally turned to the half-speed master of Queen's Death on Two Legs from the album, *A Night At The Opera*. The introductory piano was clear, concise and dynamic while the touch of light on the upper mids, which could be a little excessive in already bright hifi systems, added extra precision to the lead vocals of Freddie Mercury. In fact, Mercury's diction was honed to perfection from this effect. This same treatment also added a sheen to the Roger Taylor drums, enhancing the punch and impact from these instruments.

CONCLUSION

You do need a measure of caution with matching the Oratorios to your system. If your hi-fi is quite bright in nature or near to the edge of clinical then the Oratorio might tip the sound into a bright arena. Other systems will find the added precision and detail that these cables can produce wholly welcome. These interconnects have the innate ability to dig down deep into the mix to scoop little heard details that result in a busy and rich soundstage that can not only bring a hi-fi to life but can introduce you to parts of your recordings that you never knew were there in the first place.

BLACK RHODIUM ORATORIO DCT++ 1M INTERCONNECT CABLE

Price: £1,500

Website: www.blackrhodium.co.uk

Tel: 01332 342233

RATING: 8



Good: midrange insight, bass punch, rich and spacious soundstage

Bad: careful system matching required

REFERENCE SYSTEM

Origin Live Sovereign turntable/Enterprise 12" arm/Miyajima Takumi cartridge

Icon PS3 phono amplifier

Aesthetix Calypso pre-amp

Icon Audio MB845 Mk.II monoblock amplifiers

Quad ESL-57 speakers with One Thing upgrade

Nordost Frey 2 cables