

Digital Cable

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The LessLoss Digital Cable is a stellar product, to put it mildly.

Preamble -- We got "acquainted" with the LessLoss cable whilst evaluating DAC, Digital Cable and Digital Source components for our new dealership a few months ago.

The establishment of this dealership was a "second" expression of our passion for music reproduction and a desire to "keep the flame alive", current economic conditions notwithstanding. It follows on from the set-up a year ago of the US-based auditioning facility for a close friend who is a Swiss Ultra-High End manufacturer that markets battery-powered components and ribbon speakers.

Going back in Time -- I, as had many fellow music lovers, witnessed many of the good as well as the sad developments that Audio had experienced over the last 30 years. I had also done the "kitting" and "home-brewing" thing, and had walked the road much traveled by audiophiles in quest of the holy grail. This voyage also included a 12 year stint as a High End distributor in Europe, a business that I decided to exit in 1999 due to other priorities.

Back to the Present -- This was an exciting new start. We had to select our new lines from scratch, and had arranged for sample gear from which to make our final selection. Although we had a fairly good understanding of what it was we were going to evaluate, we had no preconceptions as to what exactly to expect. We had had little first-hand exposure to many of the components, let alone how they would complement one another in a given system set-up.

The Evaluation Environment -- The components in the Digital Front End chain sourced the highly resolved \$350K Swiss High-End system, one that very clearly transmits the various aural characteristics of any associated components. For the purpose of the first stage of the evaluation, the only AC powered gear in the chain were the CDTs and the DACs. In a second stage, AC powered amplification components replaced their Swiss battery-powered counterparts.

The large listening room - 18.5' W x 29' L x 10.5' H (6.0m x 8.8m x 3.2m) - was favorably dimensioned (minimal nodes) and was treated, albeit modestly. Evaluation time : 6 weeks + 5 days cable pre-cooking prior to start.

Caveat -- Before commenting on the LessLoss, we have to point out that all of the Digital Components in our evaluation - whether DACs, CDTs, or Digital SPDIF Cables - proved to be very musical, each contributing, in one combination or the other, to providing a superior rendition of the music material, albeit with each combination and permutation doing so in a somewhat emotionally differentiated manner. Much like a well known Aria from an Opera that is performed alternatively by Pavarotti, Domingo and Carreras.

Overriding Philosophy -- Our overall approach and philosophy as regards Audio is founded on the premise that people have differentiated musical preferences, and inevitably will "hear" and enjoy musical reproduction in their own "emotional" way. Many are conditioned by years of listening to a particular genre (or two) of music, which they have every right to "prefer", and which often puts different demands on a chain of audio components.

We are not "absolutists" and do not believe in absolute systems -- there can be no absolute, as the ears and emotional needs are different to begin with. Furthermore, a high component price is also not necessarily a guarantee of superiority over a lower priced equivalent. Budgets, and thus affordability are very real factors in system composition. We ultimately judge a system, whatever its price, by how "musical" and emotionally compelling it is to a particular sub-set of "ears", and in relation to the investment required to acquire it.

Digital Cable & Pricing -- As for price points of the 7 digital cables in question, these started as low as \$150 per mtr for one cable in particular, and graduated all the way up to \$ 2,000 per m. The LessLoss Digital Cable, for reference, retails at \$ 695 per m, including free worldwide delivery.

Other Digital Components - The 7-DAC line up varied as well, with the lowest price DAC retailing at \$450 and the highest at \$4,500. DAC types included 3 NOS, 1 Parallel and 3 Delta Sigmas. 3 different CDTs were part of the evaluation, and ranged in price from \$2,500 to \$4,500 (2 Sanyo belt-drive types, and one incorporating the Philips

CDpro2LF mechanism).

The LessLoss Digital -- When we first received it from Louis, we were certainly expecting the LessLoss to be a "good" cable - one that did "many things well". So how would it fare in comparison?

Up front, it became very evident that from the 7 cables in test, 3 groupings emerged with each group exhibiting a particular sonic sub-set of characteristics. The first 2 groups comprised 3 cables each, with the last group represented by the LessLoss "in solo". The cables in the first 2 groups performed more or less optimally depending on associated DACs and CDTs. Ultimately, we were able to "match / mate" all of these 6 cables to DAC/CDT combinations that resulted in very good results.

On its own in Group 3, the LessLoss distinguished itself from all others. At first it was difficult to describe in the usual terms why we were consistently "setting it apart". After about 1 week of listening, we simply concluded that it was a beast of a different species, and decided to come to grips with what was happening here.

It seemed to have its own "sound", character, presentation -- very individualistic and immediately recognizable once introduced into the chain -- regardless of what DAC/CDT combination it served to connect.

In a way, the LL consistently dominated the "theme". This was not the case with the other cables where DAC substitutions noticeably took "front stage".

Initially, this was somewhat disturbing, as this phenomenon was not something we had encountered before. The LL listening experience did not cause us to immediately "describe" one attribute or another. It was as though we were suspended in sonic limbo struggling to find our bearings. Intellectually discomforted, we even questioned whether this was a good thing or a bad one. This cable seemed to announce itself very forcefully, and there was this notion out there that a "cable should get out of the way". This consistent behavior also begged the following question: Was the LL imparting a character to the sound or was it in fact "getting out of the way" ?

Whatever the elusive answer to this question, the one thing we instinctively were very sure of was that we liked it a whole lot. So much so, that we found ourselves exclaiming in unison immediately after it was connected into the chain: "Here comes the LessLoss !".

Incidentally, this cable's characteristics are shared by the LessLoss Anchorwave Interconnects and their DFPC Signature Power Cords -- a common "theme" of sorts.

We could talk about improved clarity, sound-staging, frequency extension and so on - but all of this seemed redundant. This cable was "holistic", and thus about something else :

A.

- Order
- Discipline
- Control
- Presence

B.

- Cohesion
- Balance
- Largesse
- Space
- Profundity

C.

- Clairvoyance
- Nuance
- Distilled
- Prescient and Discerning

To be perfectly clear >> What it is NOT is : charming, romantic , dramatic and flamboyant, sweet, laid back, silky-smooth, punchy, visceral, and so on. So, a word of caution to those that have a "rightful" preference -- or need -- for one or the other (or combination thereof) of the aforementioned sonic character traits. The LL will "expose". It does not "tweak". However, the sum total of its attributes is very "alluring" indeed.

The LL cable takes some time to mature and exhibit its full potential. We had pre-treated it (and all other cables) on an AudioDharma Cooker for about 7 days before test. At first it was characterized by the descriptors in list A above. Over the ensuing weeks it progressed to include first those in B, and finally those in list C. This is a cable that needs time and patience.

In Summary, this is a very exceptional cable, one that will complement and transform (almost) all digitally-fronted systems.

Once the LL is "fully on board", just sit back and enjoy the music -- and forget it is even there -- well, well ... I think we just said that it "got out of the way" !?!

Is it the best ? Does it matter ? Of all the very many cables available, it certainly is one of the best. Is it expensive at \$ 695 ? Given its "transformational" abilities, we think not !

Enjoy

Constantin

PS -- We hope you will appreciate that as a dealership representing multiple lines -- and given our philosophy -- we have chosen to remain anonymous and to refrain from citing the brand names of the other cables and components participating in our tests.

Date Added: 12/15/2010 by Russell Lichter

"...felt more like actually "being at the performance," presenting greater image clarity and specificity."

"...able to easily picture the space in which the musicians played, that is, there was greater ambient retrieval."

"...a sense of actually "being there.""

"Nor did she have to struggle with the comparison by having me swap cables repeatedly back and forth: the differences were immediately obvious. Nothing subtle about it!"

The entire review is [here](#).