

POWER CABLES

BLACK RHODIUM LIBRA/CRATOS

Quite apart from the norm, both Black Rhodium cables are niche designs, aimed at particular categories of product. The Libra is designed for low power units, front-end systems such as CD players and the like. Rated at 5A, the cable, says the company, is designed with low Transient Phase Distortion (TPD) in mind by using much thicker insulation than would be necessary for insulation of the mains voltage.

In contrast, the Cratos power cable is aimed at the other end of the scale, at high current amplifiers and other areas of power distribution. Rated at 15A, this cable has also received the TPD treatment.

SOUND QUALITY

Using the similarly priced Nordost Magus power cable as a reference, I played Stevie Wonder's hit single, 'Superstition' on a Fidelity Audio-modified Cambridge Azur 640C CD player, Rega Brio-R amplifier and a pair of Spendor S3/5R speakers perched upon a Magic-Rack shelf and Track Audio Precision 600 speaker stands.

I noticed how clear the presentation of the music was through the Libra. This sense of clarity existed throughout a wider and less muddled soundstage. It seemingly broadened

the frequency spectrum to provide a wider dynamic. The Libra provided a relieving sense of order to the music, introducing air and space around the vocals. The lowering of a touch of stridency in the upper mids also calmed sibilance.

Better insight meant that notes from Wonder's Hohner Clavinet keyboard better started and stopped.

Treble was tonally accurate, producing a decent reverb tail for the first time while the bass guitar was able to move away from the rest of the band, gaining in definition. This injected a finer, more confident rhythm to the track.

Moving to Mozart's 'Eine Kleine Nachtmusik', the sweeping strings no longer sounded like an amorphous blob. A greater degree of demarcation between individual instruments provided more character to this portion of the music. As a whole, the presentation was more interesting because the wider and more dispersed tonal colour added light and shade to the piece while upper mids lost a degree of lift to, instead, insert a richer, darker tone that spoke of a lowered noise floor.

Moving onto the Cratos and continuing with Mozart, these cables provided a deeper, more confident bass with smoother mids that featured a silky lower mid region that helped the strings to glide by. In fact,

there seemed to be more strings within the soundstage itself. It was almost as if each string element had fattened up. A bit like conditioning hair, where each hair itself increases in size giving the whole head a more voluminous aspect. That was the effect given by the Cratos. It provided more mass to the string section. This effect also added confidence to the presentation, along with strength and power.

For Wonder's Superstition, these cables gave a more rocking track with bigger and bolder drums, Bass guitar took a larger role in the mix, and a major part in how the track ran from beginning to end.

Wonder's vocal performance also benefited, with more gravitas to his delivery. His vocal is obviously the central point of the song but, via the Cratos, Wonder now lead the music and the instruments instead of the instruments crowding him, threatening to take the initiative.

CONCLUSION

Both of these cables are game changing in terms of their design and what they can bring to a typical hi-fi system. They are complementary: the Libra aimed at the front end and the Cratos targeted towards power amplifiers, makes them a dynamic duo, an ideal team that should be demoed together.

HI-FI WORLD

VERDICT 

BLACK RHODIUM LIBRA
1.5M POWER CABLE WITH
5A PLUG AND IEC

Opening up the sound stage, the Black Rhodium Libra offers a significant sound upgrade to a basic power lead.

FOR

- wide soundstage
- instrumental separation
- tonal accuracy

AGAINST

- nothing at the price

VERDICT 

BLACK RHODIUM CRATOS
1M POWER CABLE WITH 13A
PLUG AND IEC

Aimed at power amplifiers, this power cable brings mass and strength to lower frequencies.

FOR

- bass heft
- vocal confidence
- rhythmic drive

AGAINST

- nothing at the price

Black Rhodium

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