

Jade Audio MoonTails cable

By Alan Sircom



Jade Audio is a small American cable maker, that's been going for about seven years or so. It makes five interconnects and currently one type of speaker cable (with three more and digital connections in the pipeline) but no power cords as yet. In everything apart from the MoonTails reviewed here, the cables are gold/silver, all gold and even gold/platinum conductors. These can get healthily 'spendy', although by the standards of today's audio business, less than \$5,000 for a reference cable isn't punishingly expensive. Regardless, using 'just' gold and silver-plated copper, the MoonTails are the company's entry point interconnect, at \$550 for a one metre pair of RCA connectors (\$800 for the XLR versions).

The first thing that strikes you about MoonTails is just how light they are. These look like big, butch cables with meaty connectors and heavy, thick grade

conductors, but they weigh next to nothing. That's because the MoonTails use relatively narrow gauge high-purity OCC monocrystal silver-plated copper and gold-plated copper solid core cables, in different – but small – gauges, used together to form each conductor in a twin-axial design. The 'send' and 'return' conductor in each cable is separated by half an inch of unbleached cotton as dielectric, and the whole cable is terminated in Furutech plugs and sleeved in a gold-flecked black techflex braid.

Jade Audio is not big on directionality and marks the cables neither for direction nor colour coding for left and right use. The logic behind this is pragmatic; let the customer decide if there's a specific direction to cables and because this is likely to be used in short-run, careful installation places, the need to identify left from right is about as pointless as painting the letters 'L' and 'R' on your shoes. I'm not sure I entirely agree, but in most places where the DAC meets the amplifier, there's not much need for cable marking. When it comes to cable directionality, there are three schools of thought anyway; 'the ▶

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▶ manufacturer says this way’, ‘it defines directionality over time’ and ‘you have got to be kidding me’ and the lack of intentional direction appeases two of the three. Regardless, it is all part of the minimalist approach.

Jade Audio’s cables are sensitive and delicate souls, not exactly built for the studio. This is a deliberate move on the part of Jade Audio, because the company feels over-engineering of the cable would undermine the performance it gets from the cable itself. The down side is it’s not recommended for A/B swap-overs, and especially not the kind of heavy-handed plugging and unplugging that inveterate box-swappers and audio reviewers frequently undertake.

This has a hidden downside; using a cable burn-in device is going to lose as much in disrupting the cable when moving it about, as it gets from the more definitive burn-in process. It’s best to run in this cable in situ, which takes longer. Still, the results are worth the effort.

If you’ve grown out of box-swapping, this is a fine cable for the long game. Its big strength is its midband, and especially in vocal articulation. Voices – like Tim Smith’s gently-twisted vocal to ‘Van Occupanther’ on Midlake’s *The Trials of Van Occupanther*, managing to project out of the mix very well, or when listening to spoken word (Richard Burton’s introductory narration to *The War of The Worlds* works here) the ability to portray the speaker’s diction and vocal presentation both tonally and with precise detail. It also doesn’t impede the soundstage properties of the devices its connected to, even when compared to large scale cables like Cardas Clear.

It’s very much a ‘mid-band outwards’ cable, getting the midrange right and extending that resolution and clarity out to the extremes. This might mean to those who want the ‘sturm und drang’ of hugely dynamic systems with vast speakers in big rooms, they will find the tinkly bits at the top and boomy bits at the bottom not as immediately impressive as some designs, but I’d take the more subtle approach of the MoonTails over the more shouty approach.

Of the whole balance, it’s exceptionally good in the mids and highs, with a natural predisposition toward soft-dome tweeters and the kind of sound that is extended and detailed without being aggressive. There’s a slight trailing edge softening to the bottom end; not a big deal, but if you are listening to Daft Punk’s ‘Giorgio by Moroder’, the precise ‘pop pop pop’ of the click track sounds more like ‘pom pom pom’. This is to many the kind of sound that attracts people to valve power amplifiers, so it’s more of a taste decision than a deal-breaker. I found it works nicely in softening out the taut precision of

the Lyngdorf CD-1, which didn’t sit perfectly comfortably with a valve amplifier like the Prima Luna Prologue.

What I most like about this cable is it’s very easy to live with. It’s refreshingly grainless and natural sounding, again like a nice tube amp. There are ‘faster’, more immediately impressive sounding cables, but this is the one you keep coming back to. It brings a sense of calm balance to the sound of the system; obviously if you have a system that’s on the wild side of crazy, no amount of calm and tempering balance will bring it back to sanity, but if you have a system that is already well on the road to sounding even-handed and satisfying in a natural sense, MoonTails will help.

In fact, the delicate nature of the design aside, the only big issue I have with the cables is the ‘interesting’ Playboy-esque photo-shoot with a Steiff teddy bear on the company’s website. While it gives the company a degree of cute and cuddly, ‘we aren’t corporate drones’ appeal, it does look a bit creepy.

Which is a polite way of saying I really like the Jade Audio MoonTails cable and am scrabbling round to find fault with it. Highly recommended. +

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

MoonTails (gold/silver plated copper conductors)

\$550.00 one meter RCA, \$200.00 each additional half meter.

\$800.00 one meter XLR, \$250.00 each additional half meter

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