

The Cable Nut! ☺

Cable Review: Audio Art Cable IC-1 And 1C-3 1.5 Meter Interconnects. And SC-5 Speaker Cables

Date: 2/21/06. Owner Robert Fritz.

Website: www.audioartcable.com

My system: Rogue 88 tube amp,
Yamaha preamp,
belcanto dac-2, Chang 3200 PLC
The speakers are the B.G. 420's Bolender Ribbons.
My background: Electronic Tech-Telemetry/Radars
25 years U.S. Gov. Audio/Videophile. 25 years.

Hey! What's up audiophiles? Here we have another direct mail order cable company, good! The more the better, No middleman and lower prices, Thank God for the Internet. That's right you can order these fine cables for pennies with a click of the mouse and big Rob will ship them right out.

Cable Description:

IC-3/SC-5 High-resolution silver/copper stranded cable and IC-1 all copper cable with easy to use rca's. IC-1 \$45 1-meter interconnect pair. IC-3 \$89 1-meter interconnect pair. SC-5 \$89 8-ft. speaker cable pair. Design is by DH-LAB's highly regarded design and engineering team. And no, these cables do not sound like the DH-LAB cables. I should know-- I've had a few cables from DH-LABS. In fact --speaking of "Labs"--they remind me of the nice sounding cables from JPS Labs, smooth and open sounding, but the Audio Art cables sound a little bit cleaner, well that's what my notes say.

Day 1. Lets get right to the point. The IC-3's are probably dollar for dollar the best interconnects on the market. The only other cables in this price range that can handle them are my Analog Twos by Signal Cable. We shall see. Out came the Analog Twos and in went the IC-3's between my amp and preamp. The BASS was low, deep and tight with good low-level resolution. The MIDRANGE was right on the spot. Smooth and round with no "snooty" sound to it. And not upfront, in your face like other copper/silver cables. The instruments and voices had plenty of air--and more air around them-- this I like! Close your eyes and hold onto your butt! Too many low price cables get into trouble in this area. They sound choked-off and closed in with no bloom. Not so the IC-3's. My Analog Twos sounded just as open, but where the IC-3's better them was in the low noise department. Man these cables are dead quiet. I mean crazy quiet! Noise floor if you will. Maybe its do to the vibration absorbing fillers inside these cables. Remember as current flows through a conductor back and forth as "A.C." it vibrates or resonates like water flowing through a pipe. This can cause mechanical and electrical distortions. This is why you see all the big damping blocks on most of the high-end cables of today. My analog two's were a bit more upfront sounding, but the IC-3's had a deeper soundstage and rounder sound to it. This helped me pick out and distinguish the instruments much better.

The Two's were a little more dynamic, but the IC-3's were too because I had to back down the volume control a bit.

Another thing that hit me was how the cable goes from soft to loud in a second. Most cables just sound fast all the time, this is not "accurate timing" if you will. The IC-3's rich timing and rhythm is very good, dancing good if you like to dance. You can listen to these cables for a long time without getting a headache. "No Listener Fatigue." This is another reason why the solid-state boys are flipping over these cables.

The TOP END was clean and very detailed without that inexpensive-cable brightness. The IC-1's had this very same sound to them. I had fun switching back and forth, with the IC-1's between the source and preamp and the IC-3's between the amp and preamp. Both cables work well no matter where I had them. But the IC-3's ended up staying in the system and might not make it back to San Diego. The IC-1's were warmer and a little more upfront. After a few hours my son came in and said, hey dad the system sounds good; I can hear Elvis right in my room down the hall. I said it's the best of the Dean Martin CD, but that's ok, I know what you mean. Next I told my wife, hey Marge sit here in the hot seat and tell me what you think, same reaction. Hey Bill it sounds like Dean Martin is right in the room, "sounds live sounding, like when we go to Vegas ha." I said to her could I print that, so there you go. My wife has been putting up with me for a long time in this crazy hobby, and her ears are probably better than mine. Maybe she should be writing this review. I got the same reaction when I played George Benson's "Irreplaceable" CD; it sounded like it did before. His big Gibson guitar was right where it should be with his voice just on top of it. His background singers were behind him and outside to the right of my speakers. Next I put the Analog Twos back in between the amp and preamp. And the first thing I notice was that noise! Man! I've been listening to this noise all this time! "Hiss" if you will. The first thing I did was run over to the amp and put the IC-3's back in. NOW my system is back to its original sound. Like with my Audience Baby Conductor IC's (\$241 per 1m pair) between source and preamp and the IC-3's between amp and preamp, nice....and for only \$89/m!

Day 2. Next we have the SC-5 speaker cable, 10' pairs. My dollar for dollar favorite is Analysis Plus Oval 12's. Bi-wired (\$421 / 10' Set). The Analysis Plus cables are very hard to beat for the money, they beat up on a lot of cables costing 3 times the price. New and right out of the box not even burned in yet, the SC-5 sounded clean uncolored and rich. My tube amp and Bolender Ribbon speakers are warm and rich sounding anyway. I was afraid the just new SC-5's would make things worse but they did not; there was no bloat at all just smooth, rich and clean sound. And the detail remained....WOW! I said to myself this is crazy! These cables should not sound like this for this kind of money (Just \$99 for my 10' Pair, Hello!?!). They sound just like the IC-3 interconnects "detached and dimensional sounding" the plucked bloom on strings and guitars gave a "you are there" feel; voices were sweet with good tonal balance, full sounding in the middle of the speakers. The plain of the speakers were almost gone, that means I wasn't looking from left to right at the speakers all the time.

The soundstage was wide and very deep with no suck out. The cables made the system sound fuller which helped it to blend a little better with my subwoofer. My Oval 12's were sharper, a little more up-front, a little faster and less warm sounding. But the SC-5's made things a little more seductive sounding. I ended up with the copper Oval 12's on the woofers and the SC-5's on the Ribbons. It seems like everyone is doing this these days, copper on the bottom and silver-wire on the midrange and top-end. Ok what did I not like about the Audio Art Cables? Audiophiles are never satisfied, as you know. The only thing I did not like about Mr. Fritz cables were.....I did not think of it first! Seriously, I could have used a little bit more sharpness and focus. But I am nitpicking because that's reviewers do. But I was never bothered or distracted by this factor because of the fun these cables bring.

Finally folks, we have an affordable cable that can run with the Big Boys!! If you don't believe me order some for yourself and try them out.

Need another opinion. I took the cables over to Big Berry's house and told him to pop them in and tell me what you think. He listened and I wrote. His system the AH! Tube CD player and the Prima Luna Integrated Amp, with none other than DH-LAB's Silver Revelation IC's and the A-P Oval 9 speaker cables. First we put in the IC-3's and Barry said the bass was a little lazy but the mid's were full sounding and rich with good center fill. The voices were natural sounding with good detail. He said I could use these cables in my Home Theater system. The best under a \$100 cable he has heard! Then Bryant, Berry's son came in and sat down for a listen. I asked him what he thought. He said the IC-3's are a little bright, need a little more control in the bass, and that they remind him of Kimber Cable Silverstreaks, this is a good \$150 to \$200 dollar cable. I said they cost \$89 bucks. On to the IC-1's. Bryant said he like these better, more musical and better control in the Bass. I said to him, in this system the IC-1's are a better synergistic match.

Conclusion

At these prices you can double up or shotgun the SC-5 speaker cables. Or you can buy two sets for Bi-wire. Also, if you are planning on buying cables for your Home Theater rig, look no further!! So, get out your credit card and start clicking your way to a better sounding system. Don't waist your time and money ordering low-end models from high-end cable companies. The Audio Art Cables will compete with most top of the line cables on the market today. You have to be a Serious Cable-Nut to spend \$800 to \$8000 dollars on cables these days, with cable companies like Analysis Plus, Harmonic Tech, Signal Cable, Oritek, Audience and the new dangerous sounding Audio Art Cables. Make sure you try The Audio Art Cable first before you spend tons of unnecessary money on cables you don't need!!

Bill Glenn
ibbilglen@hotmail.com