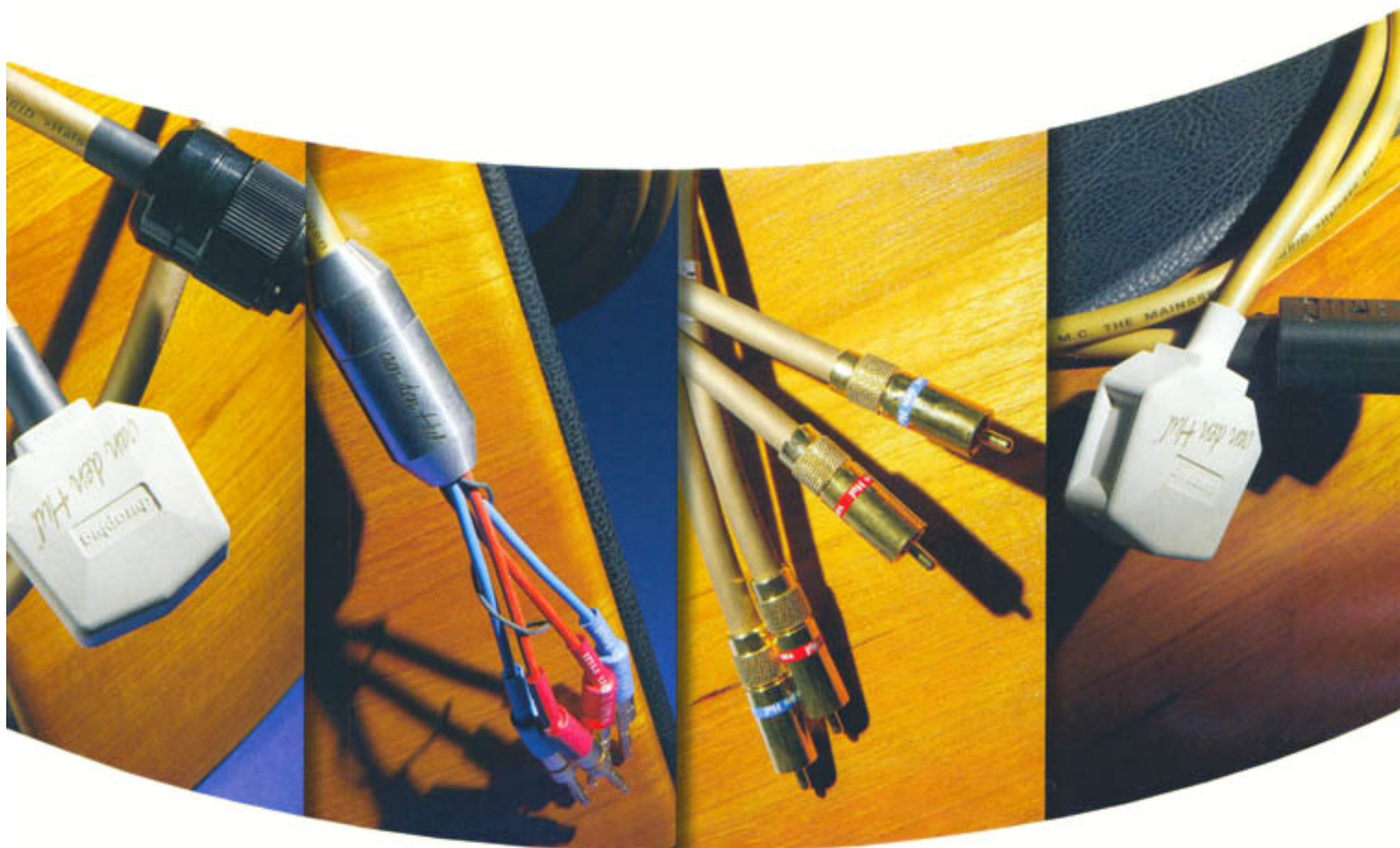


Taking a lead...

Van den Hul's Fusion range of interconnects and speaker cables is based around an alloy of copper, silver and zinc.

Tony Bolton finds inspiration...



Van den Hul is a Dutch company whose name is synonymous with good quality cables and pick-up cartridges. On test here is its latest range of cables, two of which using what is called 'Fusion Technology' in their construction (see 'Alloy, alloy...' panel).

The models under discussion are the Mainsstream and Mainsserver power cables, the Integration interconnect and the Inspiration speaker cable (latter two using 'Fusion Technology').

CURRENT CAPABILITY

The Mainsstream has a current capability of 16 Amperes, which at 230V gives a continuous power capability of 3.7 kW. Internally it has three blue (neutral) and three brown (hot) conductors. The ground has a separate conductor made of 84 strands. Termination, in this case, was with an IEC plug at one end and VdH's own version of the UK 13A plug at the other. (Terminations to suit wall sockets in other countries can be supplied). The Mainsstream's baby sibling is the Mainsserver power cable. This is intended for source components and pre-amps, and is similar to the Mainsstream in its construction except that it uses thinner leads for each set of conductors. This cable is rated at 6 Amperes (or 1.4 kW at 230V). Both items have high-purity dense silver-coated stranded shield and inner conductors.

The Integration interconnect is made of four stranded conductors arranged in a 'star quad' configuration. The triple screening has 180 cores. Polyethylene foam is used for insulation.

Completing the loom is the Inspiration speaker cable. This again uses the 'star quad' configuration of the signal lines. Running down the centre of this is an earth lead made up of seven strands, a length of which is left exposed at either end of the cable. This is intended to be connected between the dedicated ground terminals of your amp and loudspeakers, assuming they are suitably equipped. My speakers are not so

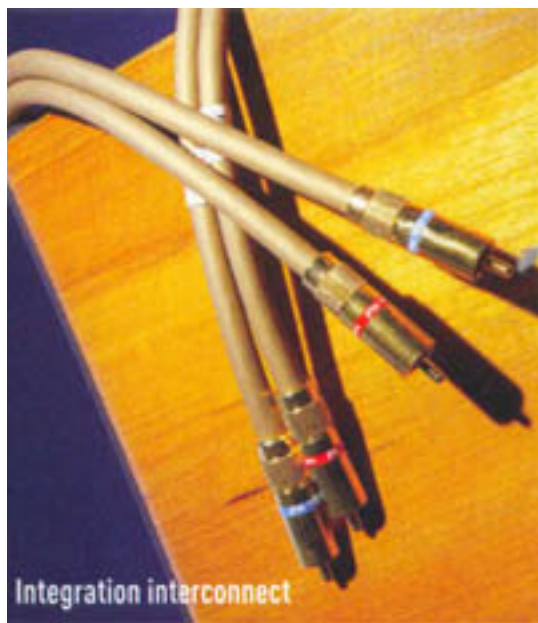


Mainsstream power cable



Mainsserver power cable





equipped so I am unable to comment on any sonic benefits this connection yields.

The screen is made of 252 strands braided around the main cable and is terminated outside the amp end of the cable's Hulliflex sheathing, allowing connection to a suitable earth point on the amplifier. If this is not possible, VdH recommends attaching the screen grounding lead to the negative (black) speaker output binding post on the amp, which is how I wired it for this review.

THE SOUND

The Musical Fidelity A5 amp and matching CD player used for this test had been running with Chord Co. Signature cabling and interconnect, and Kimber mains cables and purification. I replaced all but the latter with the Van den Hul kit and started listening with The Beatles *Help* (Parlophone records PMC 1253). The mono image was placed centrally, taking up about half of the area between the speakers. Its lateral size differed little from that of the Signature, though John, Paul and George seemed to be standing further in front of the speakers, with Ringo sitting a

bit further behind them than before. Separation of the different performers was good, with none of the 'blended' sound that accompanies the playing of mono records with some (usually cheaper) cable sets in place.

Switching to stereo and the Curzon/LSO/Fjeldstad recording of Grieg's Piano Concerto in A Minor (Decca records SXL 2173) I found the soundstage extended to the speaker boundaries, whereas the Chord Co. cables produced a sound that seemed to reach around a metre either side of the cabinets. Again the VdH set produced a deeper soundstage, which seemed to portray the orchestra sitting in the classic horseshoe shape in a more obvious manner than the Chord. Both were very good at reproducing the different textures and tonal colours of instruments, the VdH set leaving me with a perception of slightly brighter spotlighting on the sonic picture.

Looking at the VdH cables individually I felt that the Integration interconnect was the star of the 'value for money' show. While not having the smooth sophistication of the Chord Co. Signature (at over three times the price) it was surprisingly close, with only the truly dark inky black silences and spaces between the artists, and a feeling of a little more weight to voices and vocals separating the performance of the two cables.

The Inspiration speaker cable matched the similarly priced Signature speaker cable in performance terms. The former offered brighter spotlights on stage, the Chord gave a more even spread of light across the instruments.

Comparing the Mainsstream and Mainserver power leads with similarly priced Kimber models revealed equal focus, but a softer approach from the Kimber. The attack of sounds was not quite as pronounced, with the Mainsstream in particular having a weight and authority that seemed to justify the price.

TONES AND TEXTURES

I leave this review feeling very impressed with Van den Hul's new Fusion technology. The smooth, effortless and unforced, but very obvious, detail in the sound, combined with beautifully rendered textures to the tones of instruments, made for a very enjoyable and satisfying listen.

ALLOY, ALLOY...

Fusion Technology sees different materials combined to create a new alloy, says company founder and designer AJ van den Hul (above). Here, extremely high purity copper, zinc and silver are evaporated inside a vacuum which results in a wire with 150 micron diameter. These wires are then fused by ultra high inductive heating, followed within milliseconds by ultra fast cooling which causes the alloy to settle into an amorphous state. The result is a metal alloy with a glass-like atomic structure - a non-crystalline frozen liquid.

Inter-crystalline boundaries are claimed to be responsible for some of the sonic harshness found in other cables, their removal being claimed to result in better resolution and a smoother sound.

After the construction of the required number of strands to form a conductor, it is then coated in Linear Structured Carbon before both the insulation and braiding are attached.

THE REPORT

REVIEW SYSTEM • VERDICT

REVIEW SYSTEM

- Musical Fidelity A5 integrated amplifier
- Musical Fidelity A5 CD player
- Chario Ursa-Major loudspeakers
- Isotek Minisub GII mains conditioner
- Isotek power leads
- VDH mains leads
- Crystal Cloud Isofloat supports

VERDICT

Both power leads and speaker cable offer excellent performance for the price, sounding even, weighty and smooth, but it was the Integration interconnect that proved the true star, performing like something nearer twice its price tag. For a sound that's effortless and unforced, all are highly recommended.

While A.J. van den Hul B.V. provides the information contained in this document to anyone, we retain (joint) copyright and/or publication rights on all text and graphic images. This means that:

You MAY NOT: Modify or re-use the text and graphics, distribute the text and graphics to others, or "mirror" this document's information on another server without the written permission of A.J. van den Hul B.V.

You MAY: Store the document on your own computer for your own personal use, print copies of the information for your own personal use, and refer to it in your own documents or on your website.

A.J. van den Hul B.V. reserves all other rights and is not to be held liable for the contents of this document.

www.vandenhul.com