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HiDiamond D2 balanced and HiDiamond D7 single-ended interconnects

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Advertisements

Specifications:

Model Number: Diamond 7 RCAs Diamond 2 XLRs

Price: \$ 900/m \$ 1,000/m

Additional Meter: \$ 450/m \$ 500/m

External Jacket Diameter: 8mm (both RCA & XLR)

Number of Conductors: 2 (HiDiamond 7), 3 (Diamond 2)

Conductor Materials: Graphite / Copper (4VRC) (Diamond 7), Copper (4VRC) (HiDiamond 2)

Capacitance: 120 nf/km (HiDiamond 7), 50 Pf/m (HiDiamond 2)

Resistance: 37 Ω /km (HiDiamond 7), 45 Ω /km (HiDiamond 2)

Shield Resistance: 20 Ω /km (HiDiamond 7), 20 Ω /km (HiDiamond 2)

MSRP: \$900/m (\$450 additional meter) (HiDiamond 7), \$1,000/m (\$500 additional meter) (HiDiamond 2)

North American Distributor:

Worldwide Wholesales

Tel. 519-619-9924

URL: www.worldwidewholesales.com

Writing about cables is a risky undertaking for an audio reviewer. I am not sure if I'll be able to explain all the reasons, but I'll at least identify a couple of them to show my reluctance for writing cable reviews. There is a large number of individuals who will scoff at the notion of discernible audible differences between cables, so as soon as one recommend something which cost more than Home Depot wires, one runs the risk of being categorized as a member of Dr. Evil's snake oil marketing scheme. Then there are those who will label us as victims of bias-induced placebo-effect, audible differences if any are nothing but a self-induced imaginary response to justify our lavish spending. And then there are witty comments from my non-

audiophile friends which usually bring silence to the dinner table: “You mean you actually write articles telling people how you spent hours going back and forth between two wires?”

Then there is the real reason for my reluctance to do cable reviews, the fear of damages to my piggy bank. What if it does sound better than what I have now? My main system uses six pairs of interconnects, fourteen power cables and one pair of speaker cables. When I priced out a complete set of Siltech cables for my entire system, it came to just about the same price as a souped-up 911 Turbo. The suffering I endured when I had to return the Siltech cables to Edward Ku of Element-Acoustics was too painful to bear. The Siltechs sounded absolutely fantastic, but my kids do have to go to college. In the past two months, I have already succumbed to two temptations by buying two excellent sounding phono stages so my piggy bank surely is not ready for another blow.

Robert Neill of Worldwide Distributions, North American distributor of HiDiamond cables, is a very persistent, and kind, man. He kept bringing to me these beautiful-looking Hi Diamond cables from Italy, telling me they are “the best” cables he has ever heard. For a couple of weeks, I tried very hard to ignore the two cables which he had left with me, the Diamond D7 RCA interconnects, and the Diamond D2 XLR Balanced cables. They sat in my living room for weeks, and I resisted the temptations to try them out. I do not believe in the concept of “the best” of anything so I was hoping to just return them to Rob without trying them.

Leaving fancy audio components in the hands of an audiophile is like leaving drugs in the hands of an addict; just give them enough time and eventually they will yield to the temptation. Resistance is futile. Fortunately, these cables are not as expensive as the Siltechs, though they are not chump change either. The Diamond D2 XLR retails for \$1,000 for a meter-pair, and the Diamond D7 RCAs for \$900 for a meter-pair.

On a late Friday night in early February, I could resist the temptations no longer and the time was ripe to pamper my five senses to the fullest. Over a glass of 1988 Argiano Brunello di Montalcino, I plugged the D7 RCAs in between my phono stage and the preamp, and the D2 XLRs in between my preamp and the power amp. Fine Italian cables and fine Italian wine, what a combination! The nose of the Argiano was packed with dark fruit, cherry, and spice. Despite being twenty-four years old, the wine had body to it, yet the age has done away with all the tannins, so that it had no hard edges to speak of. The impact of the HiDiamond cables on my system was as intensive as the jolt from the first sip of the wine. It was as if someone had taken the frequency curve and lifted both ends of the spectrum. The cables added ambience and top end extension, but not at the expense of sounding analytical or edgy. Usually when the bottle is half emptied, everything will sound better so I knew better than to tell Rob that I was keeping the cables until they could be evaluated without the influence of properly aged Brunello di Montalcino.

What happened in between the time from that evening onwards, to the time of my eventual phone call to Robert Neill telling him that I was buying the review samples, is what I am going to tell you for the rest of this article. So let’s not call it a review but a snap shot of my personal encounter with the HiDiamond cables as an audiophile. It is not my intention to proclaim that I have discovered yet another “best sounding cable I have ever heard”. I just want to tell readers about the sonic characteristics of these two cables with reference to the cables I have on hand, so that it may help them to determine for themselves whether it may be suitable for their own system.



HiDiamond

cables

HiDiamond is an Italian high end cable manufacturer started by Filippelli Salvatore in 2000. It is one of only a handful of cable companies which uses alloy as conductor material, rather than just copper, silver, or gold conductors, or plated combinations of such sourced from OEM manufacturers. Other manufacturers which employ alloys include Siltech, Purist and Stealth. According to Filippelli, the conductor materials employed in HiDiamond cables are custom made to their exact specification in Italy. Depending on the model, they may consist of a combination of copper, graphite, and in some models, gold and silver. Detailed technical information as well as the construction process of the cables can be found on [HiDiamond's website](#).

When Robert Neill contacted me about the possibility of a review, I did not have a particular model in mind so he offered me cables which sit at the upper range of the model lineup (Diamond 9 RCAs, \$2,300/m). He also offered to fit my system completely with HiDiamond cables from interconnects to power cords. I had to decline both offers for several reasons. First, I did not want to review cables which I cannot afford in case I liked them. Robert probably wasn't aware of the number of cables my system required; just for power cords alone, I would need fourteen of them. Last but not least, I am more interested in knowing about the

incremental sonic changes by changing just one cable. This way I can identify the sonic characteristics of this cable relative to what I have on hand. A complete system of Hi Diamond cable would not allow me to determine where the changes, if any, were coming from. At the end, we settled on a 2.5 meter pair of HiDiamond D2 XLRs and D7 RCA interconnects.

The D7 RCA is in the middle of the HiDiamond's RCA lineup, which ranges from the entry level Diamond 1 (\$80/m) to the Diamond 9 (\$2,300/m). The D2 XLR sits in the middle of three XLR cables which HiDiamond makes, the Diamond 1, 2 and 3.

It is interesting to note that the model numbers for HiDiamond's RCA cables do not correspond to the model numbers of the XLR cable. In fact, there is no XLR version of any of the RCA cables. The D2 XLR is a different cable from the HiDiamond 2 RCA, despite having the same model number. They also differ in price substantially. Although the D7 RCA is closer in price to the Diamond D2 XLR, they are two different models as well.

HiDiamond publishes the technical information for each cable on their website. As you go up in the model line, you will see that the higher models offer lower capacitance and resistance.

The two cables looked almost exactly the same as both are housed in a reflective tech flex jacket. Both cables are 8mm in diameter, and are reasonably flexible but are incapable of flexing 90 degree turns. The Diamond D2 XLR has Neutrik silver connectors, and the Diamond D7 RCA has locking RCA connectors which look very similar to Furutech's Carbon locking RCA connector with carbon lined housing. The solder used for the joints is 4.2% silver solder. Upon verification with Filippelli Salvatore, I was told these are not Furutech connectors, but rather custom made Rhodium plated locking RCAs housed in a carbon graphite jacket. They are exquisite to feel and touch. Each of the RCAs and the XLRs has a black colored directional indicator with the HiDiamond logo printed on them. They slide back and forth and probably serve no purpose other than aesthetics.



The first cables which went into my system were the Diamond D2 XLR interconnects. They went in between the McIntosh C1000 preamp and the MC2KW power amplifier. This exercise was repeated for the Diamond D7 RCA cable in the exact same location, followed by using both cables together from the phono stage to the preamp, and from the preamp to the power amp.

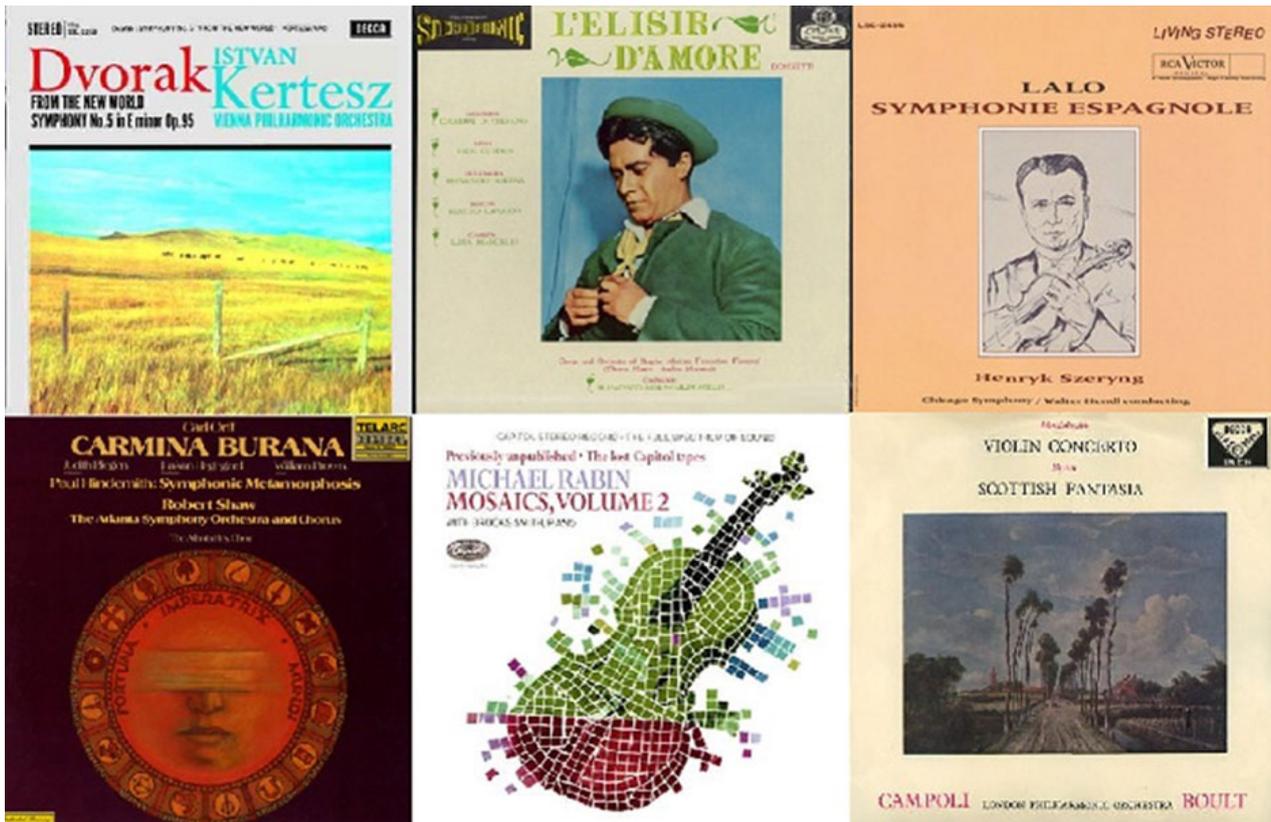
The cables which the HiDiamond cables replaced are all Purist Aqueous Aureus XLR interconnect of the same length, which by the way have been the cable of choice for my system in the past few years. Amongst the 25+ pair of interconnects I have tried, I will not go so far as to say that they are "the best" cable for the money, because I do not believe in such a concept. The Aqueous Aureus delivers a tonality and sonic characteristics which achieve a high level of synergy with my system at

a price point which I can afford. They are my favourite cables for the money because they suit my personal preference. Therefore, the Purist Aqueous Aureus is my point of reference for this exercise.

Nearly all cable manufacturers will claim to have the design goal of wanting to present music as true to live music as possible. I have not found a single manufacturer with a marketing slogan which says “Our cables will add coloration” to the sound. The reality is that nearly all cables will have their own distinctive sonic characteristics. When properly matched they can be used to complement the sonic traits of a particular system. If there is such a thing as a neutral sounding cable, the word neutral must be taken within the context of a particular system. What sounds neutral in a single ended system driving high efficiency speakers, may become thin, aggressive and bright in a high powered solid state all-digital setup. Neutrality is therefore a relative and not an absolute term in my book. Therefore, I do not believe there is such a thing as a “better” cable in a sense that the word “better” should be replaced with the word “more suitable.” A better cable in a system is only better because it is more suitable for the person’s preference criteria for that particular system.

Even though I listened to lots of music during the course of writing this article, I did go back and forth between a handful of LPs repeatedly. They are recordings I am very familiar with:

- Dvořák Symphony No. 9 in E Minor, From the New World, Op. 95. Istvan Kertesz conducting the London Symphony Orchestra. [DECCA SXL 2289, ED2]
- Bruch, Scottish Fantasy in E-flat major. Alfred Campoli. Boult conducting the London Philharmonic Orchestra. [DECCA SXL 2026, ED1]
- “Mosaics”, the Lost Capital Tapes. Michael Rabin accompanied by Brook Smith on Piano. [EMI Testament Reissue, TSP 8801]
- Carl Orff, Carmina Burana. Robert Shaw conducting the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Chorus. [Telarc Digital, DG 10056/57, 1981 Telarc Records]
- Donizetti, L’elisir d’amore, Francesco Molinari-Pradelli conducting the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, [London OSA 1311 ED1]
- Lalo, Symphonie Espagnole, Henryk Szeryng. Walter Hendl conducting the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. [RCA Victor LSC-2456 Shaded Dog]
- Meyer Records Vol. 1, No. 150. [Distributed by Clearaudio] (Courtesy of Bernard Li of Charisma Audio)
- Joan Baez, Diamond and Rust in the Bullring. [Gold Castle Records, VGC-



The first word which comes to mind when the system was played with the HiDiamond D2 XLR, is “unrestricted.” By unrestricted, I mean the sonic presentation appears to carry more ambience and extension across the entire frequency spectrum versus the Purist cable which I have on hand. This is very noticeable on violin strings, soprano notes, and high piano keys. The effect is similar to the increase in ambience upon walking into a grand cathedral or walking out of a highly dampened recording studio. It was as if the LPs carried more air and groove noise all of a sudden. This characteristic reminds me of the XLO Unlimited RCA interconnect or the Kimber Select Hyper Silver Interconnects, yet the holographic image is not as sharp, and the pace not as fast sounding as either of these. A cable with the opposite effect would be the Cardas Hexlink 5C, where ambience and top end extension were reduced to the minimum. Yet, the sense of openness associated with the HiDiamond cables did not translate into a sound which was analytical, bright or hard sounding.

The second characteristic of the Diamond D2 cables is an increase in frequency extension at both ends of the frequency spectrum, almost as if someone has physically lifted the part of the frequency curve which rolled off at the extremes. Depending on the sonic trait of your system, this can be an advantage as well as a nuisance. On both the Carmina Burana and the Lalo Symphonie Espagnole recording, in which I find the frequency extremes to be slightly rolled off, the D2 complemented them nicely. It added a touch of top end extension on Szeryng’s violin, and tightened up the double bass of the orchestra, as well as the bass drum on the Carmina Burana recording. But on Dvorak’s New World Symphony, where the frequency extension is already over the top, the effect of the D2 accentuated the already high dynamic contrast of Decca recording even more, the entire presentation became more forward, immediate and direct. The rise time was faster, and the attack more prominent, most evident with percussive instruments. It became too lively for my taste on this particular recording.

The HiDiamond D2 XLRs gave a holographic image with a dramatic extension of three-dimensional space, as if my room became noticeably larger. Each instrument was well defined in

space with distinct spatial separation. The edges were sharper, but not to the point of being the most vivid. In quantitative terms, imagine the sharpness setting on your television set, if 5 is the neutral setting then I would rank the Purist Aqueous Auries at 4, and the Diamond D2 XLRs at 6. Cables which sits at either end of the extreme would be the Cardas Hexlink 5C, at a 1, softer focused, whereas Tara Labs' The One would be closer to an 8 or 9, sharper focused.

The next step was to try something entirely different – vocal presentations. While I was listening to Joan Baez's *Diamond and Rust in the Bull Ring*, as well as the *Meyer Records Vol. 1*, the sonic difference became much more apparent with human voices. The Purist Aqueous XLRs are more full bodied, rounder and carry a softer mid-range presentation. The Diamond D2s are more realistic and accurate, and able to convey Joan Baez's emotions through her voice, while maintaining her famous vibratos with utmost clarity, yet without overemphasizing on the details. The plucking of the guitar strings sounded crisp, clear, and "metallicky." It delivered the good with the bad with unmitigated realism, which is precisely how it was supposed to sound with this recording, I think. This increase in realism did not rob the human voices of emotions, nor did it make the recording sound edgy. Her voice became slightly leaner by comparison, but not to the point of being thinned out.

When I swapped the Diamond D2 XLR with the Diamond D7 RCA, it is remarkable how similarly sounding the two cables are. While they both carried the same sonic characteristics, the D7 seemed to amplify the characteristics of the LR2 by making them even more prominent along the same sonic direction. The sonic difference between Purist Aqueous Auries and the Hi Diamond cables became more apparent with the Diamond D7 RCA. If I had to choose a phrase to describe it, I would call it the HiDiamond D2 XLR on a slight dosage of steroid. The Diamond D7 RCA, on the other hand, felt even more unrestricted, more extended, more realistic, with the holographic image one to two notches sharper than the Diamond D2 XLR.

I have often been told by my friends in our local audiophile club that my sonic preference leans towards a sound which is softer, more musical and rounded than usual; hence my preference for tube amplifiers, analog, and McIntosh equipment. In other words, my reference point for neutrality may translate into something less than neutral for other listeners. This may be the reason why I thought that when I had both the Diamond D2 XLR between preamp and power amp, and the Diamond D7 RCA between phono stage and the preamp, it was a little too lively for my taste. Friends of the Greater Toronto Area Audiophile Club (GTAA) thought the sound was noticeably more realistic and "closer to the real thing," yet most of them encouraged me to keep both cables. At the end, I decided to replace the Purist Aqueous Auries RCAs in between my Audio Research Reference 2 SE phono stage and my preamp with the Diamond D7 RCAs, while leaving the Purist XLRs in place between the preamp and power amp.



A week after I opened the bottle of 1988 Argiano Brunello di Montalcino, I told most of my friends in our audiophile group that I enjoyed the wine as much as I enjoyed the Hi Diamond cables. I managed to arouse enough interest in a couple of Brunello drinkers to seek out this wine, so that we can compare it with two other similar aged bottles, the 1990 Tenuta Caparzo and the 1990 Castello Banfi.

Out of curiosity, we Googled up some tasting notes from the Wine Doctor. The wine was given a score of 16.5 out of 20:

“As for the wine itself, this has a great colour, as although this shows a mature oxblood tinge at the rim there is an absolute stack of red pigment running through the centre of the wine. The nose has an appealing character, mature but in no way soft or gentle; this is clearly not a wine intent on simply fading away. Instead it has a rather firm character, with dusty fruit, softly toned but with a slightly woody undercurrent. An attractively plump flesh at the start, showing good substance backed up by typically Tuscan acidity and a building sense of savoury, meaty fruit which becomes almost mouth-watering towards the finish. An impressive wine, holding up well, with substance and mouth-pleasing body, and for that it deserves credit. Where it falls down is lack of complexity, or perfume, the more fragrant and elegant components that we seek in a mature wine. All the same, a good mouthful.”

When I showed the tasting notes on the wine to a couple of non-drinkers, they said they have absolutely no clue what the writer was talking about. They also said it sounded like my cable review article. I asked them whether they thought the wine reviewer is engaging in some form of market ploy to lure unsuspecting buyers into overpaying for the wine; their answer was “Probably not, we

probably just don't know enough about wine to appreciate the difference." Of the three Brunello di Montalcinos, you can probably blind test me and I will still be able to pick out my favourite, yet to the ordinary individual the wine review represents nothing other than verbal gymnastics. I believe the same applies to the HiDiamond cables in my system.

The HiDiamond cables instilled onto my system some very admirable sonic characteristics which would otherwise be less prominent. The ambience, the clarity, the realism, and the frequency extension are qualities which I would rather have than be without. After I have experienced it in my system, it was very difficult to let it go. Just like the Argiano Brunello di Montalcino, the HiDiamond D7 RCA interconnects have become a permanent part of my collection.

Associated Equipment

Turntable No. 1: TW Raven AC
Cartridge No.1 : LYRA Olympos
Arm No. 1: Schroeder Reference 12" with Ebony Armwand
Phono Stage No.1: Audio Research Reference 2 SE
Cartridge No. 2: Lyra Atlas
Arm No. 2: Artemis Labs TA-1 12" with Ebony Armwand (Currently under review)
Phono Stage No. 2: Burmester PH100
Turntable No. 2: JC Verdirer La Platine Vintage
Turntable Motor: Teres Reference Motor
Cartridge No. 3: Kondo IO-M
Step Up: Kondo KSL-SFz
Phono Stage no. 3: Kondo M7
Arm No. 3: DaVinci Grandezza 12" Ebony Armwand
Cartridge No. 4: My Sonic Lab Ultra Eminent BC
Arm No. 4: Reed 2P 12" Ebony Armwand
Phono Stage No. 4: FM Acoustics FM-122 Mk II
Cables from Phono to Preamp: Purist Aqueous Aureus
CD Player: McIntosh MCD500
Cables from CD to Preamp: Purist Aqueous Aureus
Preamp: McIntosh C1000C + C1000T
Cables from Preamp to Power Amp: Purist Aqueous Aureus XLR
Power Amp No. 1: McIntosh MC2KW Monoblocks
Power Amp No. 2: McIntosh MC3500 Tube Monoblocks
Speaker Cables: Purist Venustas
Speakers: Dynaudio Temptations

North American Distributor's comment:

HiDiamond SLR would like to thank Dagogo for their honest and thorough review of our signal cable Diamond D7 and our D2 balanced cable.

We enjoy the review and appreciate the amount of time Rick took to complete the review. We also believe that Rick's comments were very accurate although it will vary slightly from system to system.

In our research we have always tried new approaches when possible and our goal since HiDiamond was founded is to make the best cables in their price range. We believe our top models will surpass many other cables at that same price point because of our unique design and building techniques.

As Mr. Mak stated, every time we plan a new product we want to transmit emotion, dynamics and speed in to our cables without ever making that cable unattainable cost wise by the average person.

Again many thanks to Mr. Mak and Dagogo.

Robert Neil, president
Worldwide Wholesale