

Review: Hijiri HCS-25



The second Hijiri came along with the first one and I could put them into one review, but I didn't want to mix them, because then searching is more difficult and the picture is less clear. So now a separate text about the cheaper speaker cable from the fresh Hijiri brand, which complicates the lives of audiophiles, because in fact it is the good old Harmonix that has been turned into Hijiri due to some changes. It's true, the changes are fundamental, and concern both materials and technology, but if other companies changed their names on such occasion, then the audiophile market would be quite a mess.

If Combak Corporation wished to turn Harmonix into Hijiri, then it's their problem to promote a new brand from scratch and to deprive a brand already well-known to the public of cables, leaving it with just accessories. If you ask me, I don't really care. The cables can be called Hijiri, or they could be named the old way - Harmonix - it doesn't really matter, the name doesn't change anything. A cable with this or that name or totally nameless plays well or not, it's useful or not. The titular Hijiri HCS-25 is a speaker cable, offered in 2.5 meter version (there are also 1.5 and 3.0 m versions) for PLN 8 690, so it is considerably more expensive than the cheapest Harmonix, but the price increase is not as direct as it may seem. It is because Harmonix had three price levels, and Hijiri has just two. So previously, there were cheap, medium and expensive cables, now there are cheaper and more expensive. So HCS-25 is somewhere between the previous cheapest and medium cable, and the price has been calculated similarly. What's not similar, and definitely not identical, is the conductor, also the insulation is different, just like the sound characteristic, which is allegedly better. All we have is general information, because as you already know, the old Harmonix and new Hijiri are not willing to share technical details. They are not like Oyaide, Siltech or Acrolinik, who put their technology in the spotlight. From the general information provided by Hijiri we can only learn that the cable is made of PCOCC copper (Pure Cooper by Ohno Continuous Casting), that is

single crystal copper of highest purity, whose production process has been invented by professor Hideo Ohno, a world-famous specialist on material and communication technology, currently the head of Spintronics Integrated Systems Center at Tohoku University. Therefore, we are dealing with copper made by Furukawa Electric Co., Ltd. – famous factory producing wires and other copper ware since 1884, because Furukawa is the only supplier of PCOCC copper. What can be said about the copper itself, is that it guarantees conducting with the lowest possible signal distortion.

There is so little to add, that there's no use writing a separate chapter with technical data. Similar as is the case with the interconnect, the cable comes in an elegant box covered in this case with parchment dotted with tiny, blue-gray lumps, quite dark, decorated with stylized dandelion clocks in gold color. The whole of course fits the Japanese style of beautiful objects – it is very pleasant to touch and look at. Inside, in parchment wrapping, there is a cable of definitely blue color, but mat and quite dark. So there's nothing gaudy, the colors are rather calm, but characteristic. And again, on both cables there are bands with name and direction arrows, which are again repeated on the heat shrinkable sleeves near the ends. The cable can have different terminals, I got spades, rhodium plated, judging by the look. Apart from the cable, there is just a note saying that the quality at the price is considerably higher compared to the competition, and emphasizing the PCOCC copper as technical perfection.

Unlike the interconnect, having round cross section, the speaker cable is visibly flattened, but not tape-like. Analogically, the insulation is tough and rigid, with dense braid of synthetic fiber, and the cable itself is much heavier. It also has some flexibility, but it shouldn't be problematic – it won't try to push the amp off the shelf or force you to lay it on the ground in a wide arc.

Audition



If the cable is advertised to be the best in the world at the price level, then I have no choice but to plug it into an expensive set and check if it's true. The lineup included two other cables – a bit cheaper one and considerable more expensive one. Both Polish, but one is already known, the other not yet. The not yet known is Soyaton, which according to estimations is supposed to cost about five-six thousand zlotys for 2 m size, and the more expensive one is the already reviewed Sulek 6×9 for eighteen thousand zlotys, whose designer – let me remind you – has

come to a conclusion (definitive in his opinion) that speaker cables have to be at least four meters long, otherwise they are not able to achieve their maximum sound potential, the music will not properly develop in them.

Let me begin with the cheapest cable, so far a prototype, which after audition was sent back to the designer with remarks about possible improvements. But with a general approval, especially when it comes to trebles. Which in this case were beautifully smooth, very open and at the same time, perfectly separated. Melodiousness, extension and clarity of imaging

were performed perfectly, turning into melodic poetry and satisfaction to the listener. Based on this, the midrange was velvety-smooth, characterized by flexibility and charm, plus variability, whereas the bass unfortunately showed power deficiency and was constricted. So with popular music, the harp, flute, violin or viola, everything was all right, or even better – I was full of admiration, but the cello, piano, organ, drums, timpani, etc. didn't have the right character, and still require some improvement. Without it, it's no use going to the market, because a listener likes the bass and feels bad without it, and that's something to avoid.

So let us move on to the reviewed Hijiri, and I will add a few words about Sulek's contribution at the end.



The cable itself marked by Japanese quality.

To be honest, I've stumbled upon a problem, because the speaker cable has shown practically the same things as the interconnect. The very same qualities in music reproduced the same way, however I have to point out that this time Hijiri interconnect wasn't present in the set, just like during the review of the interconnect, the speaker cable wasn't present, or rather it was, but at the end, just to verify, and it didn't bring anything new to the previous observations.

Let me begin by saying that Hijiri HCS-25 offered strong essence, creating atmospheric, dimmed mood decorated with gloss based on deep and saturated sound with finishing touches in the form of chiaroscuro and substantiveness. And somewhat contrary to that, something most important I guess – the feeling of volume described in detail in the review of the interconnect, both when it comes to the sources of sounds, and areas between them. Each sound was three-dimensional and had appropriate weight, and between them was space, clearly noticeable as distance and at the same time some volume, created by something you could describe as pressure distance imaging, a cubic metrics. The pressure, pleasantly moderate, not one that would lay heavily on your chest, but still perfectly noticeable, precisely as distance and volume, in a way that is inescapable, impossible not to notice.

Perhaps someone who came across this Hijiri and who hasn't read this review would call it different, or wouldn't name it at all, nevertheless the pleasure coming from space recreated this way will definitely be noticed, because it constitutes a true phenomenon that is not observed with other cables. Of course distance will be felt – sometimes better sometimes worse – but without this filling with pressure, without this active space. Or to put it differently: with other cables, the acoustic space is not so imposing, it doesn't reflect the size as well. Saying that I mean cables from this and similar price levels, not all cables in general. Because there are of course better speaker cables, and Hijiri itself has one, but at the price below ten thousand zlotys, you won't get space or scene (whatever you like to call this musical area) reproduced so well with pressure volume.



Spades probably coated with rhodium.

Another important aspect is musicality. The cable plays with thick, well saturated, and at the same time floaty and melodic sound. Spherically formed, without any edges or sharpness other than of the sound itself. Therefore the saxophone has the proper extension and “puffing” liveliness, so that you get the feeling of a real instrument, not a fake one, including its uniqueness, because it wasn’t just for fun and not without spectacular effects that Adolf Sax was designing it for so many years. And the sole fact that the

saxophone is puffing so well, sends a message that the musicality is not limiting, focused on smoothness, but it reproduces also the interior of sound, and penetrates its harmonic structure. And with it, all gets much more interesting, because, let’s be frank – mediocre musicality is useful, but boring. It protects your ears from hurting, but at the same time it kills all the fun. Usually it can be repaired by adding a dynamic aspect, combining speakers or headphones with a dynamic amplifier, but of course it is far more desirable when the sound is not only deprived of unnatural hiss, but is also appropriately complex.

Hijiri offers both complexities – spatial and harmonic. The space is characterized by layered sound planes and very noticeable distance between them, and the music itself not only has smooth external form – external forming of sound according to musicality – but also appropriate internal life, literally eradicating the external layer. This is exactly what makes the saxophone so great, it is represented not by simplifying melodic line, but the whole rush of puffed sound. A true whirlwind of sound, not some zephyr. In fact, the trumpet and saxophone are the best measure of sound complexity, and they change the most depending on the quality of imaging. It also applies to choirs, bells and piano, however, the latter is heard so often from worthless equipment, that a listener not focusing on the quality of sound stops noticing its musical lameness. I’ve experienced it myself many times when listening to a radio in the car. It is similar with vocals – we simply got used to their poor quality.

Audition continued



Internal construction is a secret, you can only admire the look.

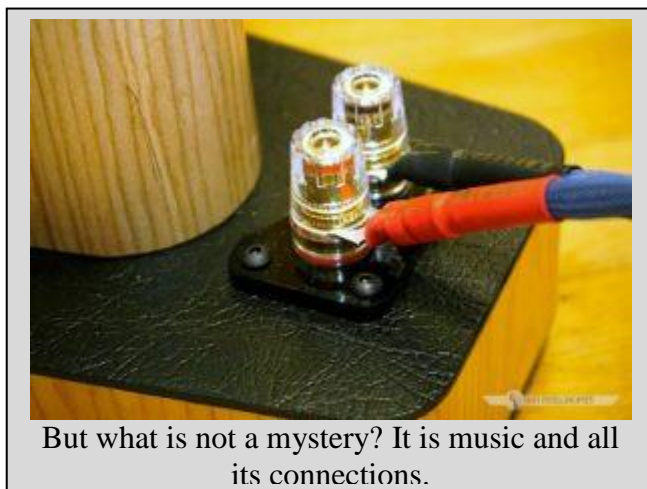
Another asset of Hijiri is the potential of timbre. The cable depicts music not only melodically, with depth and structure, but it can also recreate its individual features, reproduce the character of harmonic spectra with great care. And it’s really unbearable when music becomes uniform, and thus monotonous. Because even when dynamics is not lacking, the lack of individual tastes can spoil all the pleasure. Especially when someone, like a reviewer, out of necessity, pays attention to it. Of course this links to the previous complexity of harmonies, nevertheless

harmonic complexity itself is one thing and its individual character is something else. Many a

time it happens that a system plays complex sound and the saxophone puffs pleasantly, and yet something is missing, the realism is not complete. Polyphony is present, sounds are divided into overlapping layers, but the sounds are not captured accurately and thus the quality is lower. Hijiri doesn't have that problem: it offers both complexity and accuracy. Combined with the qualities of musicality and imaging, it results in a true show of artistry.

All this is accompanied by holography, supplementing the feeling of space with the mentioned multidimensionality. It is not only readily audible and noticeably divided into planes, what also makes it successful is that the line of the horizon is drawn exactly before your eyes, not too low, not too high. At the same time, the readability of background planes turned out to be very good, however in this respect, the cheaper prototype cable was slightly better. It was able to distinguish individual persons from a choir appearing far in the background, whereas the overall picture was more delicate, less saturated and illuminated with brighter light.

Along with delicacy, we arrive at an important, yet often omitted problem of the force of the performance, a factor deciding how dynamic, expressive and most of all high-pressured music a given cable is able to produce at a given volume level. At this point Sulek comes into the battlefield along with massive columns. With Divialdi and Reference 3A speakers, somewhat more difficult to feed, the differences were not very significant when it comes to saturation and dynamics, you'd have to look for them. However, with large four-way Audioform 304 loudspeakers (which BTW have lately undergone significant modifications, including replacement of the wiring), the supremacy of the more expensive cable was clear. Sulek, which puts more emphasis on the bass, was playing even darker, with even stronger saturation and greater thickness, and most of all with greater pressure of sound throughout the whole stage. Even at medium volume, it could easily make appropriate sounds crawl on your skin and bounce off your chest. It could mean only one thing: that it transferred more energy, despite being twice as long. A thick beam of braided wires, according to the rule of physics saying that a signal flows only on the surface of a conductor, had to offer it and it offered exactly that.

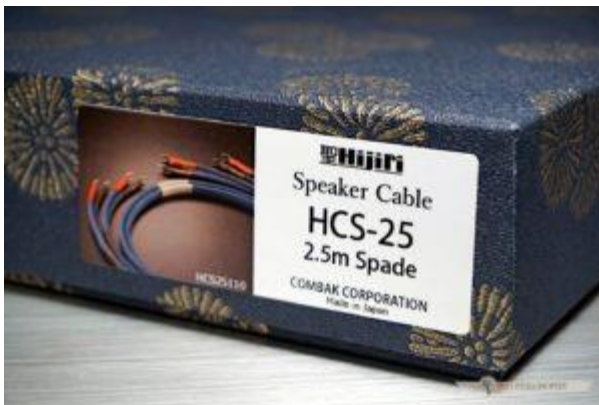


On the other hand, this is what makes the cable twice as expensive, requiring more material and more work hours. Because I haven't mentioned it yet, but all three cables are manufactured by hand, and not machine made. It is because cables, just like clocks, should be manufactured by hand, or the result will not be so good. It's a precise work, requiring knowledge, diligence and care. And although the final effect might not look like it (maybe not in the case of Sulek), this is how it is. And so a longer cable, consisting of more wires will be more expensive, not only

because of the used material. In exchange, it will provide more power, it will transfer more energy. Which will not be that important in the case of "easy" speakers, but with "difficult" ones, it will.

Luckily, the difficult ones are also expensive, so those looking for cheaper solutions will not be particularly affected. With small or medium-size speakers, the power transferred by Hijiri HCS-25 will be more than enough, although of course it is possible to combine such speakers with more effective, and thus much more expensive cables in exchange for boost in loudness, pressure and dynamics. But in this case, you can simply use the potentiometer, whereas in the case of big and difficult speakers, it won't work. I cannot answer the question whether to invest in better cables or speakers, however, one could rightly argue that a better cable will get the best out of worse speakers, and a worse cable will spoil better speakers.

Summary



For the owners of speakers with mentioned characteristics, or to be more general – all speakers that are not particularly demanding, Hijiri speaker cable is a good bargain. Admittedly, it is not cheap, but when compared to other high-end products, it is definitely in plus, and let me again remind you that it is not difficult to be great in some respect or in many respects, when other things, unfortunately, spoil the overall picture. When ether trebles are too muffled or the bass is too lean – then the sound is like

a room without a roof. And the point is to make some things extraordinary, spectacular, while the rest should be at least good not to spoil the effect. Hijiri HCS-25 offers this extraordinariness, and what's important, it is truly astonishing. Because let's be honest – the greatest “Wow!” factor is related to the way space is imagined. The sole word “stereophony”, even though outdated and replaced with enigmatic, not very specific term “high-end”, makes it all clear. High quality of sound, distinguishing the playback capabilities of the new type of equipment, is based most of all on spatial imaging. On the ability to bring the audience to the sound sphere possibly closest to the real ting, so that they feel like they were actually in a concert hall, and not just listened to music. And in this respect Hijiri is outstanding. It doesn't offer just stereophony and natural placement of sources, but it also provides very vivid image of space. A space that is tangible, definite, filling, and magical in its delusion. And that marks its presence in a way that is very rarely seen even in the most expensive systems. And because the sound itself meets all the requirements of musicality and harmonic complexity, and the energy of performance is enough to use the full power of average speakers, the achieved satisfaction is far above average and at a fair price. This is what we call a good quality to price ratio, in this case even very good. Therefore everything is as promised – the result is as it was supposed to be. So again, let me just add that it is possible to get better results, but for at least twice the price, so it is achievable only for few or for a true desperate.

Point by point summary:

Pros

- Amazingly realistic space.
- Backed up with holography.
- And most of all with a feeling of tangible volume.
- Which is a quality in itself, making the cable stand out among competitors.
- All this provides realism.
- Turning into musical beauty.
- A rare thing – vast space created without enhancing treble.
- Highly melodic.
- Beautiful timbre.
- Crystal clarity.
- Dark backgrounds and atmospheric light with a touch of chiaroscuro.
- Great detailedness.
- More than good dynamics.
- Speed.
- Expansion.
- Astonishing reverb control.
- Natural voices reproducing individual features.
- Sweet and flexible voices.
- No trace of sturdiness, edginess or brashness.
- Well reproduced frequency response, somewhat tilted counter-clockwise.
- Slight warmth creating pleasant atmosphere, but it doesn't have much influence on predisposition to create different moods.
- Nicely defined bass with great volume.
- The cable is easy to lay and not too heavy, it won't pull the amp.
- Simple, yet nice packaging.
- Made in Japan.
- Renown manufacturer.
- Great quality to price ratio.

Cons and reservations

- Not for those who prefer lower frequency and bass dominating over treble.
- Not for the enthusiasts of fanciness.
- More expensive (much more) cables are able to transmit more energy and convey more micro details.
- They also disperse sounds in space better and better reproduce background planes.

Prices:

- **2.0 m – PLN 7 190**
- **2.5 m – PLN 8 690**
- **3.0 m – PLN 10 190**

System:

- Sources: Cairn Soft Fog V2, dCS Rossini.
- Preamplifier: ASL Twin-Head.
- Power amplifier: Croft Polestar1.
- Columns: Audioform 304, Divaldi, Reference 3A.
- Interconnects: Hijiri HCI-R10, Siltech Empress Crown, Sulek Audio & Sulek 6×9.
- Speaker cable: Hijiri HCS-25, Soyaton, Sulek 6×9.
- Power supply cables: Acoustic Zen Gargantua II, Acrolink MEXCEL 7N-PC9700, Harmonix X-DC350M2R, Illuminati Power Reference One, Synergistic Research Level 3 High current, Sulek Power.
- Power strip: Power Base High End.
- Stand: Rogoz Audio 6RP2/BBS.
- Ground box: QAR-S15.
- Anti-vibration feet: Avatar Audio Nr1.
- Cable insulators: Acoustic Revive RCI-3H, Rogoz Audio 3T1/BBS.
- Equipment base: Acoustic Revive RIQ-5010, Solid Texh „Disc of Silence”.