



It's already been explained in the review of the top Hijiri Million Kiwami, but let me remind you just in case that Hijiri is a brand created three years ago, a child of Japanese Combak Corporation, therefore a thing from under the wings of Kazuo Kiuchi. Every audiophile has heard about the older Harmonix brand and its marvelous cables, but the duo Harmonix and cables belong to the past, now it's the time of Hijiri. You could say it's a continuation, but with a huge leap, because the materials are different and the technology has changed. What hasn't changed is that it's still aiming at perfection – the assumption is to create world's best cables in their price range. And these are not just empty words, taking into consideration that Combak Corporation is not only Harmonix (which retained everything that is not a cable or electronics, so all kinds of bases, platforms, stabilizers, tuning devices, etc.) but also less renowned Reimyo and XRCD. First one dealing with equipment, second with discs, and both are well-known to any audiophile – because is there anyone who hasn't heard of the famous Reimyo electronics or hasn't enjoyed the sound of XRCD?

Let me remark also, that Hijiri means “master” or “guide”, whereas the second element of this high-end interconnect's name, Kiwami, means “end” or “arrival”. This time we go back from the end to the beginning; the model under the name Hijiri HCI-R10 is the cheapest interconnect from Hijiri, not equipped with additional features. However, it is both the cheapest and second most expensive, because Hijiri series includes only two items.

And in its cheapness, there is also a mischief, because a meter of RCA version is available at a modest price of PLN 3,790, but with XLR plugs it goes up to PLN 7,590, because it's not just plugs that are different, the whole internal conducting structure is doubled. But let us stick to modesty and use the cheaper RCA version.

Design



The small sticker on the side explains everything to anyone curious.

The cable comes in a cardboard box characterized by Japanese elegance. Attention to every detail to make it enjoyable to the eye is a tradition rooted in Japanese culture for ages, thus the box is covered with satin in stylized flowers and silvery lines. It feels like a parchment to the touch and looks very nice. Even despite the white background, its not at all brash. Inside, wrapped in parchment is the interconnect, marked with manufacturer's certificate with all kinds of contact data like addresses and phone numbers, as well as a short note about its uniqueness, but apart from one explicit remark about highest purity copper, there are only general information, without any specifics. There is, however, very explicit promise of being the best in its price range, based on the best resolution, accurate tonal quality, richness and detailedness. Another explicit thing is the sticker at the side of the box, informing about the length of 1.0 meter and the fact that the content has been manufactured in Japan.

You won't learn more about the construction from anywhere. Long time ago, the manufacturer has adopted a tactic of not revealing too much about technical details, keeping them to himself, whereas the user should be impressed by the sound only, and not by reading some numbers and specifications. So, apart from listening, you can rely on the look, and in this respect you can observe a close analogy to the old Harmonix cables from the lowest shelf, and yet marked by superior quality. The cables are not very thick, thickness won't do them good. But still, they are quite rigid, but fully flexible, covered in shiny, dense braid. In the middle, one has a red band and the other has a black band with arrows pointing the direction and golden "Hijiri" inscriptions. There are also analogically colored heat shrinkable sleeves on the plugs, also with arrows and inscriptions. And the plugs are the only thing that are visibly different from the old products, namely, they are rhodium plated on the outside, with gold plate beneath.



Inside, you find this.

There's a major controversy about rhodium in the audiophile society, for example Polish Albedo – a manufacturer of cables made of crystal silver – claims that its influence dramatically ruins music. Apparently, the Japanese don't know about it and are using rhodium successfully, starting from legendary Sony MDR-R10 headphones with rhodium plated plug. Also Fostex used rhodium in their latest flagship Fostex TH909, and Hijiri embodied by its creator, mister Kazuo Kiushi, also found rhodium plating useful during over two years of quality assurance auditions of the reviewed R10 model. By the way, there is something about the R and ten – they appear in Japanese products so often.

One last remark: in the price range of about three thousand PLN, the strongest opponent that I know of, would be Oyaide AZ-910 reviewed this year, but unfortunately, I didn't have it to make a comparison.

Audition



Revealing rhodium on the plugs.

Therefore, out of necessity, I've used twice as expensive and also fully made of copper (including even the hammered plugs), and much heavier, braided Sulek RCA for comparison. It is because I don't incorporate the principle often found in reviews: let's walk blindly and rely on your memory.

In the first round, the comparison was between interconnects linking Ayon Sigma converter and Ayon HA-3 headphone amp, using Sennheiser HD800 headphones with Tonalium wiring. A few swaps, longer and shorter samples, many different music genres. But the differences were instantly audible, and nothing could hide them. Sulek appeared to be a cable using lower tones and putting greater emphasis on texture. Also on musicality as a smooth, coherent flow with the emphasis on accurate timbre and overall depth of sound. However, I would like to highlight that both these examples of copper usage play very similar, and the mentioned difference are the result of a contrastive analysis, and not conspicuous things that are instantly audible. There were much more similarities than differences, and the differences were only slight, which forces me to say that both these cables are great. It was a real pleasure to listen to both of them, but each had somewhat different qualities. I've already named Sulek's, and what about Hijiri?

Hijiri also played dark and spectacular, but it exposed trebles more, like gleams on a black background. And while using this boost, it was filling the space with them. Because the space is always created by the echoes evoked by trebles, in case anyone didn't know that. Hijiri is not dealing with echoes, echoes are not its thing. Sennheiser HD 800, quite echoey as such, didn't show any coldness or unfamiliarity. Quite the opposite, they showed a trace of warmth and great clearness, but without resorting to reverb aura, both in relation to the near field and far field, almost reaching the horizon. Vibrancy in place of reverb: R-10 was producing sonorant, particularly clear sound, without the use of tizzy treble (luckily). Three-dimensionality – the key element of successful trebles – manifested itself in every high tone, even most extended and was present in overall performance, each sound was three-dimensional. What is more, the space grew noticeably, in a sense that it gained volume, and not that there appeared some tiny grains or swirling particles. The background noise, unlike is the case with up-front trebles, turned out to be hardly noticeable, it wasn't imposing at all. And yet, the detailedness was amazing and the resolution outstanding. Everything was clear, but without any sharp edges or any trace muffling, often appearing in this situation.



Which are gold plated beneath.

It's true that with Sulek, it was more weighty, and trebles were blending more easily with the rest, and as a result the atmosphere was different even in spite of the similarities - it was mostly focusing on musicality and music as a set of sounds rather than spatial objects. With Hijiri R10, it was more universal: music was expressed equally as pure sounds with beautiful timbre and appropriate texture, and as a spatial performance built with their use, evoking, in some sense, a land of milk and honey. It was not just about melodic lines and thick sounds transmitted through them, but also about harmonious constructions of crystalline clarity. Perception of depth and ability to reach out to musical expanse are major factors deciding about the spectacularity of Hijiri interconnect. Especially when they are paired with lack of reverb, friendly, warm tones and overall musicality, and no trace of muffling or edginess, even with such airy trebles. Also there is no exaggerated roughness and details don't get priority over the rest. As a result, we get diversity and a satisfying sensation of complex imaging. Perhaps not as realistic as with the more expensive competitor, not as solid, but visually having more aspects, referring also to spatial forms, and enabling to penetrate them, and not just experiencing them on superficial level.

All this is achieved with one very important factor: filling space with light. Light both in literal sense and in terms of musicality. R10 interconnect creates a mixture of dark atmosphere with intense luminous elements – light is streaming through the depth, intensifying the feeling of spatiality.

In the second round – a high-priced equipment, seemingly no match for the cable. Audio player for more than a hundred thousand, three-stage amp with twelve tubes in total, an expensive power strip and expensive power cables, bases, a ground box, exceptional audiophile stand. And between the preamp and power amplifier, I've put the tested interconnect, working interchangeably with the much thicker, shielded, made of crystal silver and costing over ten thousand euro in the 1.5 m version used here, so twelve times as expensive interconnect.



Not silver at all on the top.

Before the test I was like: “In a moment, we will see what differences will come up, in which areas the cheaper Hijiri will be able to keep up and where will it give up”. Perhaps I'm exaggerating, because since it was able to stand up to Sulek, it couldn't fail badly, however it seemed the result was a foregone conclusion. And it was, but in the opposite way. With a remark that you should look from the right perspective, looking at the axis of realism-coloration.

There are those who like coloration, for whom the “Wow!” factor is above everything else, and where it comes from doesn't matter. Be it as weird as it may, as long as there is “Wow!”.

Following this principle, some movie stars have become monsters, turning themselves into laughing stock, and the expensive interconnect from the comparison maybe wasn't a clown, but it explicitly colored trebles. In a sense it was positive, because it increased the space, but it was explicitly by means of treble coloration. And also to add reverb to sounds – give them aura. Both these things have aesthetic value, stimulating imagination. Especially since the colored trebles turned out to be of very high quality in this case – they were not brittle, spitty, but rather radiant and building up space. Also, their role was to intensify the delicacy. Everything delicate gained more crisp, become an object demanding more attention and care. With these qualities, the performance had a specific character, some kind of extraordinariness. Here great delicacy, there seismic bass, and everything surrounded by treble aura creating vast space. Great clarity, but with silverish accents of that aura, with simultaneous, increasing sensation of warmth, not cold. (Because usually trebles tend to cool everything down.) Therefore we get silverish trebles mixed with golden warmth and these silvery-golden sounds bring you to seventh heaven. And despite crispiness so crisp, there is enough of texture and there is no unpleasantness related to trebles, so as a whole it was a captivating and phenomenal performance. The silvery-golden magic casts a spell on you and makes you feel enchanted. However, the spell is broken when put to a test with ordinary speech: it turned out

to be saturated with trebles to such extent that it was unacceptable. The effect was the same with tap test – only clicks, nothing more.

More about sound



The cable is not heavy, but it has some rigidity and toughness.

Therefore, evidently it was not realism, but rather particular colorations, and you can lose yourself in them, they are marvelous, but in general, I wasn't pleased with the result. It was digestible, quite good even – it goes without saying. What's more, it was interesting – original and intriguing – especially considering steely treble and yet lack of cold or unfamiliarity. But in comparison, all the magic was gone, especially with vocals or any other sounds that can show the true value of trebles and reflect their spatial distribution, that is three-dimensionality. In this respect, Hijiri HCI-R10 was definitely better, even drastically. The difference in realism of reproducing voices was undeniably in its favor.

But keeping balance of trebles when it comes to quantity is one thing, and giving high tones proper quality is a different pair of shoes. Making them smooth and at the same time adding some coarseness to the texture, pouring warm sweetness to the voices and making them flexible, connecting sounds with reverb, so that they compose a beautiful whole, and providing appropriate volume to all this, so that the beauty is complete. The cheaper Hijiri was able to do all this and add the volume factor to the whole. Just like in the case of computer source, there was incessant feeling of space in the performance and it wasn't achieved by moving the horizon far back, but with the sensation of volume. And it wasn't pumped or performed with high-pressure or much effort, the volume was filled just right, like a sphere. After all, music is pressure, acoustic pressure, so when you hear sounds too faint to do anything more than just to irritate the eardrum, then they are not real.

The cheaper Hijiri is not the best when it comes to pressure, but still, it has quite some pressure. And it has realism, volume and enough pressure so that the volume and realism don't float in emptiness. It is far more spectacular than artificially enhanced trebles and their fake spaces.

Audio architecture, a range of audiophile qualities, includes many factors, but I dare say that appropriate trebles are the most important one, both in relation to realism and beauty. And this most important feature is well developed in Hijiri HCI-R10, which positions it high among the competitors. Dealing with the problem of trebles and doing it so spectacularly, is much more than only half of success, because treble defines the midrange and also bass, to quite

some extent. Trebles constitute a forming factor, they are like sculptor's hands. And in the Japanese copper, selected and ennobled by Kazuo Kiuchi, these hands are the hands of a master. This interconnect has them, while most of the other don't, and if they do, then its not the same. They are not able to give all the finishing touches to the sounds or shape them so fine. Make them realistic and mystic at the same time, extract a perceivable spatial form out of sound and pressure only – a form that is dynamic and characterized by fascinating shapes that instantly recall realism.



Finally it was put to the use, because earlier it was just lying useless.

The rest are just supplements. Of course, with all that, there is an appropriate dose of individualism, an appropriate dose of imaging harmony, balanced temperature with a pleasant breeze of warmth and mandatory black background, so that the light can be contrasted against it. But I'm fully aware that there are people specializing in deep bass who can't wait to hear the news. Well, bass isn't as good as treble, it turned out to be more normal. Nevertheless, it possesses well-shaped contour and great volume. It is definitely better than average, but compared to flagship Hijiri "Million" Kiwami and other top class competitors, it doesn't have that much ability to transfer energy – it is energetically standard.

There are three major differences between the cheaper and more expensive Hijiri: the latter conveys more micro details, it has better radiance and transmits more energy. So you have to pay three times more to make the audio construction a complete whole, so that high-end is exhaustive and using its full potential. (Of course on condition that rest of the equipment is alike.) Nevertheless, the compromise offered by the cheaper version also carries beauty and its music is captivating. I was really impressed, I can even say stunned, by this whole comparison. Audiphilism is also an adventure: maybe it's not the same as catching a big fish, alpinism or car racing, but it provides adrenaline as well.

Summary



There exist very good interconnects that don't cost a fortune. There is Acoustic Zen Matrix Reference II, there is Oyaide AZ-910, and there is Hijiri HCI-R10. All of them are of superior quality and the quality is well-paired with the price, so the price to quality ratio is similar in all three of them. Acoustic Zen costs under three thousands, Oyaide a bit over three thousands and Hijiri well over three thousands. And they offer a proportionally vast range of strengths, while having no weaknesses.

And the latter is very important, because for example a cheaper Entreqa interconnect offers amazing realism, but bass is extremely lean. Apart from that, it's more expensive than the three mentioned above, so it's a lost cause. To have major strengths while having no major weaknesses is a key to success. It may seem obvious, but so what, if manufacturers miss this obvious point? The market is full of seemingly good interconnects, but when you actually test them, you can see their weaknesses right away. It's not difficult to have a strength (usually it is detailedness based on enhanced treble, or the opposite: extensive low range based on enhanced bass), if other things are neglected.

What is difficult is to have superior or even extraordinary strengths while having no weaknesses at all. It's really a thing and it's worth paying for. And with great satisfaction, I can say it about Hijiri interconnect, and this time about the cheaper one. Reportedly, the master has spent two and a half year, making several prototypes based on different conductors. At the time, he was listening mostly to classical music, making it a point of reference. Reference with respect to timbre, texture of sound and its spatial form. You can definitely hear it in Hijiri HCI-R10, however unmelodic its digital nomenclature may sound. Music doesn't just go through it, it flows and pours into your ears with wide stream of beauty. Full of waves, volume, smooth, individualized and crystal clear. With magical light, atmosphere and full range of colors. Tangible, fully present, appealing, not "just" played back. Going to a higher level costs twice as much, which is quite normal in the audiophile world, but that doesn't make it any more affordable.

Point by point summary:

Pros

- Beautiful realism – and therefore realistic beauty.
- Highly melodic.
- Beautiful timbre.
- A rare thing – vast space created without enhancing treble.
- In addition, you can feel the pressure constantly filling the space.

- The latter is a quality in itself, which makes the interconnect stand out among competitors.
- Crystal clarity.
- Dark backgrounds and atmospheric light.
- Detailedness.
- Dynamics.
- Speed.
- Expansion.
- Holography.
- 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 alleged problems with rhodium, which is supposed to ruin melody, didn't occur at all, whereas copper performed very well.
- Cable is light, not fluid, but flexible enough, not prone to damage.
- 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.

Hijiri HCI-R10 technical details:

- Analogue interconnect with RCA or XLR plugs.
- Available lengths: 0.75, 1.0 and 1.5 m.
- Conductor: oxygen-free copper of highest quality.
- Plugs: gold and double rhodium plated.
- Packaging: decorative cardboard box.

Prices for RCA versions:

- 0.75 m PLN 3,590
- 1.0 m PLN 3,790
- 1.5 m PLN 4,390

Prices for XLR versions:

- 0.75 m PLN 7,390
- 1.0 m PLN 7,590
- 1.5 m PLN 7,990

System:

- Sources: PC, dCS Rossini.
- Converter: Ayon Sigma.
- Preamplifier: ASL Twin-Head.
- Power amplifier: Croft Polestar1.
- Headphone amplifier: Ayon HA-3.
- Headphones: AudioQuest NightHawk, Beyerdynamic T1, Sennheiser HD 800.
- Columns: Audioform 304, Divaldi.
- Interconnects: Hijiri HCI-R10, Siltech Empress Crown, Sulek Audio & Sulek 6×9.
- Speaker cable: Sulek 6×9.
- USB cable: iFi iUSB3.0 with Gemini and iDefender cables.
- Coaxial cable: Tellurium Q Black Diamond.
- Converter: iFi One.
- 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 strips: Power Base High End, Sulek.
- 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”.