



Text by: Marek Dyba | Photos by AV

## Pure, refined musical joy

**All previous experiences with the works of the Japanese Master were behind the huge expectations I had when beginning the assessment of the Hijiri H-SLC „Million”.**

For many years cables offered by Combak Corporation were known under the „Harmonix” brand. Let me remind you that JVC Studios responsible for the XRCD releases, used these cables for years (although it is not the key element of the whole process). When the current top analog interconnect Hijiri Million (today sold as KIWAMI), that I have been using for years, the word Hijiri („maestro”, „great leader”) became the name of Mr. Kazuo Kiuchi’s new audio cable brand. The people responsible for the release of XRCDs at JVC (Kiuchi-san is only one of them) recognized the Hijiri Million line as worthy of replacing the Harmonix cables they had been using for years.

It is an elegant, albeit cardboard, box, and the cables inside are wrapped in special paper. The cables are quite thick and stiff, yet the separated, flexible endings make connecting them easy. Hijiri H-SLC features a three-color sleeve: dark blue, red, and black. Each run of the cables features wooden elements with logos. Kiuchi-san is known for tuning his products using elements made of meticulously chosen wood and metal elements.

All that we know about its design is that it features high-purity copper conductors and that it uses a proprietary geometry. It’s worth mentioning that H-SLC „Million” was developed as the last one in the line following an interconnect and a power cable.

As we can read in the press release, the development process of the speaker cable took three years and that it shares several features with the X-DC Studio Master Million Maestro power cable.

H-SLC are made by hand and, just as is the case with several other Japanese manufacturers (Kondo first comes to mind), each pair is built by a single person from start to finish.

The direction the user should follow when connecting the cables is placed on the heat-shrink sleeves at the point where the cables split into the positive and negative strands. The spades are made of silver-plated PCOOC copper. Standard offered lengths are: 1,5, 2, 2,5 and 3 m; others are available upon order.

The manufacturer claims that the longer one uses the H-SLC, the more musical its presentation becomes. The distributor is more precise in his claim and talks about 400 hours of use before the Hijiri fully spreads its wings.

### (EFFECTS ON) SOUND QUALITY

I took these comments to heart, and during my listening sessions, I probably reached the recommended break-in period. For the test, I used my own Hijiri Kiwami “Million” RCA analog interconnect as the seemingly best match to the speaker cable from the same series.

It quickly became clear that the Hijiri is full of apparent contradictions. Early on in my listening sessions, three terms kept popping up in my notes: density, smoothness, and flow. Even at this stage, in my opinion, these were qualities on a level surpassing probably any competition I had had the opportunity to test. In practice, this meant that the standout part of the frequency range was the midrange — velvety, yet rich in detail, open, and nuanced. The abundance of details served here to build larger wholes, rather than to impress the listener. When necessary, the music sounded ferocious, though even then it was a ferocity lined with velvet—an apparent contradiction, but only until you hear it. Is that velvety quality a warming of the sound? During the initial listening phase, I had that impression, but over time, when (to my ears) the sound stopped changing—and the role of both ends of the frequency range increased—that impression faded. It’s not so much a warmed-up sound as it is simply a natural one.

Because the upper part of the frequency range, which beautifully opened up and took in a lot of air, also became more vibrant.

### DESIGN

The box these cables are delivered in is typical for the brand and „very Japanese”:

It had that “tube-like” refinement (in my opinion, it’s the best tube devices that reproduce treble the best), but when the trumpet, violin, or even the vocals had to sound sharp, that’s exactly what happened—another apparent contradiction.

In the lower end of the frequency range, which initially seemed a bit rounded, there was now a tightness appropriate for the recording, combined, however, with excellent richness. So when I played tracks with a heavy electric bass played by Wooten, Clarke, or Miller, they had the proper drive, and I could feel the lowest frequencies in my bones. Apart from the deep extension, there was also proper dryness and hardness of the leading edge. When, on the other hand, Clarke or McBright reached for double basses, there wasn’t a hint of artificial hardening of the attack with the Hijiri, but rather an appropriate softness combined with tightness (yes, another contradiction). The Japanese cable perfectly conveyed a long, full sustain, with the right balance between the strings and the body, superbly capturing both the tone and texture of the instruments, as well as the mastery of the musicians playing them.

I listened to various genres of music, and I greatly enjoyed even those somewhat less-than-perfectly recorded rock or blues albums. On the one hand, the Hijiri conveyed a vast amount of information, yet it managed to weave it into an exceptionally coherent and fluid whole without fixating on details or production flaws. That is precisely why such non-audiophile recordings were a real pleasure to listen to.

There were certainly flaws in that sound, but unlike the still-common „audiophile” school of sound, they weren’t emphasized. Imperfections were treated as an element of the music or the performance; sometimes even lending the music a certain character, for even U2, after all, recorded many of their albums intentionally with a “dirty” sound. The H-SLC demonstrated such features well, leaving no doubt that they were an artistic choice rather than an unintended flaw or result of a careless production.

Quality recordings best showcased the potential of Japanese cables. Although I haven’t done so much lately, when I eventually turned to the classics—primarily opera and symphonic music—I couldn’t stop for days because the Hijiri had everything needed to render this kind of music in an incredibly compelling way.



According to the manufacturer, spades were made of silver-plated PCOCC.

The volume and scale of the sound depend to a greater extent on the speakers, the amplifier, and the room acoustics, but the Hijiri seemed to enhance this aspect of the sound. My system now produced a large, wide soundstage, and the depth was almost on par with the Soyaton, which is absolutely exceptional in this regard.

The Hijiri effortlessly conveyed the complexity of orchestral music, once again delivering an exceptionally coherent and fluid performance. At the same time, whenever the need arose, they were able to bring out the relevant element from the background without overexposing it—whether it was a solo instrument, a group of instruments, or vocals. I should add that the latter were absolutely exceptional with the tested cables. Timbre, texture, emotion, and individual vocal styles—all of this was presented in an amazingly convincing manner. Importantly, the H-SLC did not push the voices forward at all, nor did it contour them unnaturally. Here, too, it focused on mass, richness, and natural tone—and it is precisely these qualities that do all the work.

**DISTRIBUTOR:**  
Audio Atelier, www.audioatelier.pl  
**PRICE:** 35 990 PLN (2x2,5 m)

**RANK A HIGH-END**



**CATEGORY A**

### REFERENCE SETUP

- **ROOM:** 24 m<sup>2</sup>, with partial acoustic treatment using Rogoz Audio and AudioForm panels
- **DIGITAL SOURCE:** LampizatOr Poseidon, Custom WIN10 64-bit-based server, Room, Fidelizer PRO, JCAT XE EVO USB + JCAT MASTER OCXO CLOCK UPGRADE + JCAT OPTIMO NANO, Ferrum Hypsos Signature& KECES P8 (mono) power supplies
- **ANALOG SOURCE:** J.Sikora Standard Max deck, J.Sikora KV12 arm with AirTight PC3
- **PHONO STAGE:** ESE Lab Nibiru V.5, GrandiNote Celio mk IV
- **AMPLIFIER:** GrandiNote Shinai, Circle Labs P300+M200
- **SPEAKERS:** GrandiNote MACH4
- **SIGNAL CABLES:** Hijiri Kiwami Million RCA, Bastanis Imperial RCA, DL Custom Audio Akoya USB
- **SPEAKER CABLES:** Soyaton Benchmark MK2
- **POWER:** DL Custom Audio 3DR-S-AC, LessLoss DFPC Signature, Gigawatt LC-3, Gigawatt PF-2 MK2 & Gigawatt PC-3 SE Evo+; separate power line from junction box with Gigawatt LC-Y; Gigawatt G-044 Schuko & Furutech FT-SWS-D (R) outlets

What about the dynamics? Admittedly, there are a few cables that demonstrate it more impressively on a macro scale. On the other hand, on a micro scale—that is, when it comes to revealing subtle contrasts (both dynamic and tonal)—only a handful—and those are much more expensive—could compete with the H-SLC. At the end of the day, regardless of the type of music, the Hijiri appeal primarily to the listener’s emotions, and that is, after all, the quintessence of all music, as well as the element that is the hardest to convey properly.

### IN OUR OPINION

The definition of “high-end” is by no means clear-cut today, but the Hijiri H-SLC Million certainly falls into this category—and not just because of the price. I dare say they will win everyone over because, although they convey a vast amount of information from the amplifier to the speakers, they do not treat that by itself as a priority. These are merely means to an end, which is to offer a highly enjoyable and immersive musical experience—even if the recordings aren’t perfect. In this respect, the Hijiri H-SLC cables surpass every other speaker cable I know of. ■