

Hijiri HCI-R10

test 2018-06-11 Arkadiusz Ogrodnik



New Hijiri HCI-R10 interconnect can be considered a benchmark among products at a comparable price level.

In a stereo system, analog interconnects aren't any less important than speaker cables – it is them that take part in transmitting signals from the source (most often a CD player or a turntable) to the amplifier. For this reason, anyone who takes building their dream system seriously, should take special care when choosing appropriate signal cables. Of course, just like with speaker cables, also among popular interconnects, there are many different models of interconnects you can choose from, made by more or less known brands. Top models from the offer of the most renown companies can cost as much as a whole medium-class stereo system. But this doesn't deter the wealthiest audiophiles at all.

One of the brands that is lately gaining popularity and recognition on our market, is Harmonix belonging to Japanese Combak Corporation, having in their portfolio also Reimyo, Bravo!, Enacom and recently also Hijiri. For those who observe the audio market, it was quite a surprise to learn that a completely new brand of cables has been founded. After all, over the years Harmonix has earned appreciation among audiophile society around the world, but apparently mister Kazuo Kiuchi has had his reasons to make such a decision.

By design, Hijiri cables are even more advanced and more expensive products, constituting a more luxurious version of Harmonix cables. Hijiri cables tested by us so far have proved to be one of the best in their categories. Therefore it's not a surprise that the latest products from Hijiri have aroused keen interest in our editorial team. Even more so, when it turned out that

their price is far from what we expected, taking into consideration other items on the price list of this exclusive brand.



Quite recently, I had the occasion to test Hijiri HCS-25 speaker cables, whose sound character was a bit different from the one I got used to over the years of dealing with Harmonix cables. Obviously, many sound qualities typical to this Japanese brand were still there, but the sound of these cables has been enhanced even more through greater detailedness and dynamics. Apart from perfect sound quality known from Harmonix products, these cables are even better at presenting all the acoustic nuances present in music. The unbelievable naturalness and reality is maintained, but if anyone considered Harmonix cables to be too placid, then you should definitely try Hijiri HCS-25 out – the difference in this aspect is readily audible. The situation is similar with the interconnect, which I had the occasion to test both separately and paired with Hijiri HCS-25 speaker cables. When it comes to technical aspects related to the construction of the tested interconnects, once again, the producer provides very limited information, while the rest is kept secret. All we know is that the main conductor is high quality PCOCC copper. Connectors are also made of PCOCC copper, but to make them more durable and wear resistant, they are additionally plated with gold and another layer of rhodium.

The cables are flexible, you can easily place them behind the devices. The workmanship of the connectors is quite impressive, too. They've been made with such a precision, that they go into RCA ports like a hot knife through butter, but at the same time, you can be absolutely certain that the connection is secure, and there's no risk they will accidentally slip out of the socket.

Technical and musical aspects

Hijiri HCI-R10 turned out to be such an interesting interconnect, that I've decided to devote it considerably more attention than I usually do in the case of cables of this type. With signal cables, it is quite easy, because, in a sense, their sound character is the sum of both their own style and the characteristics of the source – during the test, I was using a great CD-10 player from Ayon, version Signature. Whereas the sound character presented by speaker cables, in a sense, will be marked by the speaker set (after all, it is the last and most important element of an audio system) and the amplifier. When analyzing these dependencies, it can be concluded that there are always “two sides of a coin”, and usually when using high quality cables in a poor quality system, you are wasting their potential just like when using poor quality cables in a great quality system.



In the case of signal cables, the situation is similar, because even if you have an amazing amplifier, you can ruin everything with a mediocre CD player or not wisely selected signal cables. All in all, if your goal is to succeed in a search for an audio system that sounds naturally and realistically, then the first step is to evaluate the sound quality offered by the CD player and analogue interconnects. With Hijiri cables, the situation is quite simple, because HCI-R10 model can be considered a benchmark for testing cables at a similar price level.

During listening session, I was using a high quality source in the form of CD-10 model from Austrian Ayon brand, and Accuphase E-270 amplifier, used interchangeably with Hegle H80, feeding two-way floorstanding speakers of my own design, offering great spaciousness, as well as linearity and detailedness, which stand the comparison with the best equipment. Such a system allowed Hijiri cables to show their full potential, and I have to admit, I've never encountered signal cables at this price level that would sound so organic and synergic.

Hijiri HCI-R10 gives you full insight into the acoustic structure of each song – when listening to the subtle sounds, which are in abundance on the hybrid CD/SACD, “Liberia Me” by Lars Danielsson, I could delight in the minutest details (both their location on the stage, and their

sonic attributes), no matter whether they were emphasized more or less with reverberation and energy at the dynamic level in micro scale. I was able to hear every impulse, even microscopic, with ease, whereas the timbre of string instruments, creating the marvelous atmosphere of this fantastic album, has been fantastically recreated. The sound was intense, rich in overtones, brilliant, and most of all, characterized by excellent imaging. I have to emphasize however, that Hijiri HCI-R10 cables don't offer such uncompromising transparency as the high-end Hijiri Million model. They are closer rather to what Harmonix interconnects, positioned a bit lower in the range of Combak Corporation products, present. But still, there's something about them that makes them special, mainly when it comes to reproducing all the nuances corresponding to the timbre of individual instruments and their dynamics. The symbiosis between these two key elements composing the overall sound experience of HCI-R10, reaches the level that stands comparison with the best signal cables of this type, regardless of their price.

Good to know

In my review of Hijiri HCS-25 speaker cables, I've mentioned the importance of burn-in. You really shouldn't downplay the producer's promise that the cables will show their full potential only after they've played in a system for a certain amount of time. In general, you can assume that a complete burn-in process of cables (at least when it comes to HCS-25 cables) takes about two weeks, playing a few hours a day. It's also a good idea to compare the effect before burn-in with the outcome achieved already after a few hours of playing, and then after full period required for a complete burn-in process of cables. The effect, or rather the differences in sound, can be quite surprising. The situation with analogue interconnects was similar, and I performed the burn-in in a separate system, together with the speaker cables.



Compared to speaker cables, the interconnects showed fewer differences in sound without burn-in. This doesn't mean, however, that the differences were not present in HCI-R10, they were audible, but not to such a degree. Still, even a few day's warm-up proved to be helpful in achieving the full potential of these cables – the improvement was audible most of all in the resolution, and what comes with it, the detailedness of sound. Similar can be said about the dynamics, especially in the micro scale, and the bass – the low range has become fuller and tighter.

Summary

Mister Kazuo Kiuchi, the head of Combak Corporation, claims that HCI-R10 offer unrivalled sound quality at this price, and I was able to experimentally confirm the validity of this statement. For me, it's also important that the cables offer complete, and at the same time, unique sound. As a result, the carefully selected stereo systems can achieve even higher level of sonic perfection.

Verdict: Hijiri HCI-R10

- **Sound quality**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

- **Quality / Price**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

- **Look**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

- **Performance**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Pluses: The greatest advantages of these cables are detailedness, perfect tonal balance and spaciousness, which make it possible to hear every sound in its full glory. Among pluses, there is also dynamics, without any trace of compression, but with great freedom and natural pace. What's also noteworthy is the nice finishing touches completing the whole, including the box and other details

Minuses: It's hardly a disadvantage, but you have to remember that in a poorly matched stereo system, you won't be able to hear their excellent sonic attributes

In general: The cables can be considered a benchmark among products at a comparable price level. They will sound the best paired with HCS-25 speaker cables, further improving well matched mid- or high-range stereo systems

Overall evaluation:

★★★★★

PRODUCT

Hijiri HCI-R10

TYPE

Analogue interconnect

PRICE

PLN 3 790 (1m)

WEIGHT

DIMENSIONS (WxHxD)

DISTRIBUTION

Moje Audio

www.mojeaudio.pl

KEY FEATURES

- Directional construction
- Connectors made of high quality PCOCC copper, double plated with gold and rhodium
- Conductors made with PCOCC copper
- Hand crafted