

Audio

HiFi

Written

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Note

Review

by

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AN-Vz

Magazine

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Everyone knows that a strong and healthy heart is vital for good health and fit body. Apart from the heart, the blood vessels also play an important role in sustaining good health. If any of the blood vessels are blocked, the heart cannot maintain blood flow at regular blood pressure and affect the blood circulation to other organs which in turn adversely affect the functioning of the human body. The importance of blood vessels to human body serves as a useful analogy to the function of interconnects in the transmission of musical information within an audio system.

I have auditioned or listened to many makes of interconnects in my audio life but I still spend thousands of money on the couples of expensive Audio Note silver cables. Since my ears have adapted to the performance of Audio Note silver interconnects, it is almost impossible for me to turn to other audio cables. I have not under-estimated the importance of the compatibility between different components within the entire system, particularly the speakers. The silver speaker cable AN-SPx (which worth \$25,000 for an 8-foot pair) may be compatible to my Avalon Radian HC and the B&W M802S3 of Winson Ng, or any other model of Audio Note speakers, yet it may not be the case for Dynaudio, Thiel or Venture speakers. This is a matter of tonal balance between the highs, midrange and bass. AN-SPx is superb for speakers with rich bass extension. I still have not come across any other speaker cable (of whatever price) which is more superior than AN-SPx in terms of speed, resolution and expression of liveliness. Speaker cables are passive conductors - the ultra-high speed and distinctive high resolution of AN-SPx originated from its comparatively low resistance to signal transmission from the source components to the speakers when compared with other speaker cables. The lower the resistance, the higher the transmission speed and thus the less damage to the source signal during its transmission. Silver is amongst the best conductor in non-alloy metal. This is 100% scientific finding, not myth.

Backdating to 6 years ago during my first encounter with AN-V, I became devoted to the Audio Note silver signal cables. With Audio Note, vocals come out with greater clarity and definition. The bowstrings of violins are revealed with greater dynamic accents and fuller vibrancy. The microdynamic detailing become more easily heard. Mr. Robert Ray had once complimented that the ranking of the Audio Note silver cable came parallel with vdH MC Silver (though the depth of the soundstage was still not compatible with the MC Silver). What's more, the price of the AN-V was just \$2,600/pair at that time, really worthy to buy. Quoting the explanation from Mr. Robert Ray, the reason why AN-V do not sound "bright" which are common flaws in most other notorious silver cables is due to the special twin coax design which is a unique feature of all Audio Note cables. Each of the positive and negative poles of AN-V is a 15-wire Litz configuration braid composing of Italian 4N pure silver wire coated with 6 coats of a special polyurethane varnish. Each braid is then coated with a non-eyecatching silvery grey coloured polyurethane sheath containing anti-magnetic substances. The entire manufacturing process from wire drawing, annealing, aging to sheathing are completely hand-made, providing the most excellent protection of the Audio Note interconnect from shockwave generated during the transmission of source signals, thus contributing to the silky-smooth sound brought out by AN-V cable. Although the many advantages of AN-V did not distract my loyalty to the interconnect I was using at that time, it certainly accounts for my later switch to the use of AN-Vx. Despite the fact that AN-Vx just utilize 5 more strands of silver wires for each pole comparing with AN-V (i.e. 33% increase in number of strands), I think the overall performance of AN-Vx have been enhanced for more than 50%! After experiencing the fascinating effect brought out by the two pairs of AN-Vx balanced cables, I am really stuck to it. Although I have not stopped my search on other kind of renowned interconnects after AN-Vx, I can hardly find another substitute with parallel performance as AN-Vx. The delicacy and elegance of AN-Vx, its vividness and precise presentation of reality, its astonishing richness and clarity in microdynamic detailing and articulation, its exceptional treble resolution, its unparalleled tonal refinement and fullness of textured sound, and the sense of liveliness and vitality experienced during its reproduction of stringed instruments or vocals, as well as all other strengths of AN-Vx which are beyond description, together make other similar cables difficult to compete with AN-Vx.

After using AN-Vx for more than 2 years, I decide to upgrade my system by borrowing a pair of AN-Vz balanced cable from the Elephant Holdings Ltd. (Each pair worth \$19,000/m, approximately twice the price of AN-Vx). AN-Vz utilize twice the number of silver strands as in the earlier AN-V, that is, 30-wire

Litz configuration for each pole. (50% more than AN-Vx). After connecting the AN-Vz to my Theta Gen Va D/A Converter, the instant effect was quite scary! From ultra high to ultra low frequency, the full range palette is tremendously raised to nearly twice the original level! It is almost impossible for an audiophile to withstand this explosion from the exceptional high power transmitted by AN-Vz when listening from a short distance from the speakers. The distance from my speaker panels to the perfect listening position is more than 11 feet, the exploded highs, midrange and bass should have reduced by a few dB after travelling 11 feet. Listening at normal volume range, the sense of power from AN-Vz is barely acceptable to me. However, if adjusting to a higher volume range, I am sure I would never be able to withstand such an ultra-high power transmission!

Similar to feeding the sailorman Popeye with spinach, the audible difference in tonal contrast expressed by AN-Vz is so much greater than the earlier AN-Vx. Although the highs still sound bright during the first two weeks, the brightness largely diminish after breaking-in for one month and the cables begin to bring out the best qualities of the system. The overall performance has reached greater heights: drums sound more precise and powerful; piano tones with wider sense of space and vibrancy; classical music with even wider and infinite depth soundstage and the temporal contrast and rhythms of stringed instruments like violin, guitar or pipa transmit more energy than ever. Since the tonal contrast is enhanced, music now becomes more lively and real. Besides, the increase in the all-frequency power also contributes to the clarity of microdynamic details and thus results in greater definition and resolution. Apart from the many improvements brought out by AN-Vz cables as described above, I still cannot think of any drawbacks or deficiencies of these cables. I just wonder how great the effect would be after employing one more pair of AN-Vz into my system.

In order to satisfy my curiosity, I replace the AN-Vx between my Ayre K1/V1 with AN-Vz. Alas! The sounds become so pronounced and intense. Even after breaking-in for two more weeks, it still sounds bright, sharp, unpleasant ... Obviously, it is already out of balance. The conclusion I draw after trial and error is: a pair of AN-Vz + a pair of AN-Vx results in a better tonal balance. After repeated experiments and auditions, the function of AN-Vz is most remarkable in its connection to D/A converter which again prove my acquaintance on the utilization of interconnect with high resolution in transmission of source signals within an audio system.