

Atlas Ascent 2.0

TYPE Loudspeaker cable

PRICE £55 per mono metre (unterminated)

CONTACT ☎ 0800 731 1140 🌐 www.atlascables.co.uk

There are, of course, speaker cables that cost a good deal more than Ascent 2.0, but £460 for a terminated 3m set of speaker wires is definitely not mass-market stuff. In fact, it represents the top of the Atlas range. It's possible to buy this cable unterminated and arguably that's better value, but those metal terminators do make for a very neat job and add to the cable's high-end look. Fear not, though: there are no electrical networks in there!

Atlas uses high purity conductors of 'Ohno Continuous Cast' copper, with insulation materials including PTFE and cotton yarn, and the overall construction is flexible for an 8mm cable. The 2.0 in the name refers to the copper cross-sectional area in square mm. Although the fitted plugs don't look as fancy as some terminators, they do give very good contact in sockets. Atlas supplies this cable with a complimentary 'burn-in and demagnetising' CD, which is a nice touch and allows sceptics the chance to try it without admitting anything.

We were at first a little taken aback with the sound, which seemed to be bass-light compared with the sort of performance one expects at this price. After a little while, though, we came to realise that the bass is in fact exceptionally well-controlled and as a result highly detailed, precise and, yes, extended at the instants when it needs to be. This may not be to everyone's taste – you may prefer a richer overall balance – but it's well worth sampling.

What's more, midrange and treble are very open and detailed, and imaging is first-rate and exceptionally stable. Not your average cable, but welcome for just that reason. **HFC**

Richard Black



EDITOR'S CHOICE

HI-FI CHOICE
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VERDICT

CONCLUSION
A highly analytical cable, with more bass extension than at first appears and very fine detail across the board.

HI-FI CHOICE
>>> 90%

IsoTek IEC connector

TYPE Mains connector

PRICE £50

CONTACT ☎ 01635 291357 🌐 www.isoteksystems.co.uk

We're a little shy of reviewing any kind of mains DIY components as mains electricity isn't exactly something one wants to mess with. Still, just putting a plug on a cable is hardly rocket science and one of several reasons why this connector appealed to us is that it is very easy to fit without those embarrassing slip-ups that lead to blue flashes and awkward explanations. All mains cables thicker than 6A flex are a pain to work with, but IsoTek has provided both ample space for any amount of wire and a cable inlet that will accommodate wires as much as 14mm thick.

In fact, cables with up to 20 square mm of copper could comfortably fit in the high-pressure clamps (locked down using a sensible-size screw head), and the overall cable clamp will securely grip anything down to bell wire, making this an IEC for all cables. It uses gold-plated copper and the body is made of tough polycarbonate plastic, which resisted cracking despite our best impression of a ham-fisted electrician in a hurry.

And is it worth the trouble? The answer does rather depend on the cable you're trying to terminate. If it's bog-standard 3A flex than, frankly, no, you'll be hard-pushed to know the difference. If it's super-thick tweaky audiophile wire, you'll not be able to do a comparison with a standard IEC because the latter simply won't fit. But we did manage to find a mid-size specialist mains cable to try, which was enough to convince us that IsoTek's pricey connector (in fairness, the top Wattgate costs more) offers a subtle but worthwhile effect in tightening up the sound, particularly the stereo image. Sceptics may scoff, but the proof, as they say, is in the listening! **HFC**

Richard Black



EDITOR'S CHOICE

HI-FI CHOICE
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VERDICT

CONCLUSION
IsoTek's connector offers real sonic benefits over standard IECs – a great gift for the hi-fi that has everything!

HI-FI CHOICE
>>> 88%