

MIT CVT-1 Home Demo

April 3, 2011

Cables tested:

2 pair CVT-1 Interconnects - 3ft - RCA

1 pair CVT-1 Speaker cables - 8ft - ICONN connections (nanners, spades and flexpin)

Associated equipment:

Classe CDP-10 CD player

Adcom GFP-750 preamp

Pass Labs X-150 amplifier

Polk Lsi-15 speakers

Original cables:

MIT Proline S3 - 4ft - XLR (CD to Preamp)

Audioquest Jaguar - 3ft - XLR (Preamp to Amp)

MIT MH-750 Shotgun - 8ft - Spades

Notes and impressions

I first want to thank MIT, Polk Audio, Jesse, Ricardo, and anybody else that had a hand in organizing this cable demo. It is a fantastic opportunity to be able to test a set of very nice (and expensive) audio cables at nothing more than the cost of shipping to the next person in line (\$33 for me).

Before getting to how these sound, there are a couple of things that should be noted:

1. My previous interconnects were balanced XLR, and the demo CVT's are single-ended (RCA). Given that both my preamp and amp are true balanced designs, it might make this something other than an apples-to-apples comparison.
2. I am nothing more than a regular person who loves good sounding music. I am not a professional reviewer, and I make no claims that I am any kind of an expert in reviewing audio cables/equipment.

Now, on to the cables...

Setup

The build quality of the CVT-1's are impressive, there's no doubt at it.

The IC's are hefty, the locking RCA connectors work perfectly, and they just overall speak quality. That being said, my current set of MIT Proline S3's (with adjustable impedance which the CVT-1's do not have) look and feel almost identical.

The speaker cables are huge, about an inch thick with network boxes almost the size of a loaf of bread.

I absolutely love the ICONN connection system. My amp does not take banana's, so I'm forced to use spades. Because these cables are so heavy and stiff, any movement of the cables can cause the spades to twist right out of the amp connectors unless I'm very diligent about getting the connections just right (I have to use a wrench to get them tight enough to hold). With the ICONN system of the CVT's I used the flexpins, and they worked perfectly! They are flexible enough so that movement in the cable does not put pressure on the connection -- just what I needed in my setup!

For the speaker connections I used nanners, which made a very solid, confident connection (something that I did not get with my previous Audioquest CV-8 36v DBS cables).

Testing

For testing, I replaced all of my cables with the CVT's at the same time, and then listened for about a week. I tend to hear negative differences better than positive improvements, so I wanted to get as comfortable as possible with the new cables, then go back to mine and jot down the differences I heard.

Throughout that first week I listened to my normal selection of music, but for evaluation purposes I chose four CD's that I would use to try and hear differences: Fleetwood Mac (Best Of), The Essential Paul Simon, Johnny Cash at Madison Square Garden, and Moody Blues Gold. These are CD's that I play all the time and know well, so I figured I'd be able to detect any changes more easily on these particular albums.

The Sound

My first impression with all of the new cables installed was that the sound was a little more "thin" than I was used to. But very quickly I realized that what I was hearing was a slight refinement to the bass that let the rest of the music come through cleaner and with more detail than I was used to. Above all else, throughout my two weeks listening to these cables, the one thing that I kept coming back to was this: with my cables the bass is a little mushier, a little softer around the edges, and that seems to bleed into the rest of the music a little bit causing the small spacial details to suffer.

After a week of listening to all of the new cables I put back my original cables back, one pair at a time, and listened for a couple days. I first swapped back the speaker cables, then the CD to Preamp IC's, and then finally the Preamp to Amp IC's.

First swap back - Speaker cables

Immediately after putting my MIT MH-750 speaker cables back into the mix I noticed that the bass had gone back to almost exactly the way it had been before adding the CVT's. The bass lines were a little mushier, and some of the detail and spacial cues were missing. Now, keep in mind that these were NOT glaring, night-and-day difference. In fact, I might even be nitpicking here. But needless to say, with the CVT-1 speaker cables I felt that everything was a little bit smoother, a little bit cleaner, and just a little bit more musical than my current cables.

Second swap back - CD to Preamp IC's

To be perfectly honest, I could not tell any difference whatsoever when I removed the CVT-1's and reinstalled my Proline S3's. For two days I went over and over each of my test songs, and I even put the CVT's back in once or twice just to see if I was missing anything. But in the end I just couldn't hear any differences.

Third swap back - Preamp to amp IC's

Changes with this swap were more subtle than with the speaker cables. In fact, a few times I kept second guessing myself as to what I was hearing. But after a few days listening to all of my original cables once again, I came to a further conclusion that this last IC swap had added back a little bit of (take your pick of the next choice of words) - glare, harshness, forwardness - that wasn't there before. These words are very much too severe however, because my system is none of those things, but nevertheless these are the words that came to mind after hearing the small, delicate (but important) changes that went away with the last cable swap.

Final thoughts

To summarize everything I've been at least *trying* to say in this mini-review, here is a list of things that I liked about the CVT-1's:

- Excellent build quality
- ICONN system is fantastic
- Speaker cables improved bass and detail
- IC's removed a slight bit of glare, forwardness or harshness that is present with my current cables

Thanks again to all parties involved for letting me (and other Polkies) test out these cables!