Big Dawg's in-home demo and review of MIT CVT-1 cables

The reviewed set included an 8' pair of speaker cables and two pairs of 1 meter locking RCA interconnects.

Equipment used in demo:

- **Speakers** – SDA SRS II (1986 blade-blade stock)
- **Amplifier** – Carver M4.0t
- **Preamplifier** – B&K Sonata Pro 10-MC
- **DAC** – Adcom GDA-600
- **Source 1** – Squeezebox Classic connected via CAT 5 to server using lossless FLAC files
- **Source 2** – Onkyo DV-SP504 universal player (I only used Redbook CDs for the demo)
- **Digital Coax cables** – (from each source to DAC) MIT AVt1 Digital cables
- **Speaker Cables replaced in system** – MIT EXp1 10 ft cables
- **Interconnect Cables replaced in system** – Belkin PureAV Silver series 1 3 ft cables

Preliminary comments: The above system has been fairly stable for the past 4-6 months, since my tube preamp started having problems and I re-inserted the B&K. My cables are what I would consider to be quality budget cables, but nothing special. I've actually accumulated enough gear that I'll soon be making substantial upgrades to the system , including TLing my SRS IIs, Anthem Pre 2L & Amp 1, Panamax M-5400 and new power cords, and new (to me) MIT cables. However, I've been holding off on updating my gear since I knew these cables were coming and wanted to have in mind the most stable system image I could.

Unfortunately, I didn't realize that the cables were coming until they were virtually on my doorstep, and ended up inserting them in my system for only 48 hours. However, I did use this time listening very closely to the impact the cables had on my rig.

Thanks very much to Jesse for the major effort he is putting in to ensure that this program runs smoothly, to MIT for graciously allowing us to sample the cables in our own environments, and to those who have come before and blazed the trail allowing such demos, especially Ricardo.

Preconceived Expectations: I would love to say that I approached the demo with a completely open and unbiased mind, but that would be somewhat dishonest. In reality, I expected one of two very different outcomes: either that I would hear no difference (I think it is important to partially expect no change, to help prevent "seeing the emperor's new clothes"); or that I would hear one or more of the following: deeper bass, airier highs, warmer and more liquid mids, wider and deeper soundstage, and more detail and clarity throughout.

Initial Impressions: I was shocked when I first hooked everything up and started listening – I heard NO DIFFERENCE! Although I thought that I was prepared to hear no difference, I can't say that I was truly expecting it, and was at first quite surprised. The highs were not noticeably different, the bass extension was unchanged, and the soundstage hadn't opened up at all. I was a bit disappointed.

But as I continued listening, something funny (funny strange) happened. I began noticing greater detail in the music. The separation of the instruments and the texture of the sound opened up, and I heard elements in the music that I hadn't before.

On James Taylor's "JT," I could hear subtle fingering on the fret board that was previously lost to me. Even more startling was what I heard on Steely Dan's "Gaucho." I've heard this recording hundreds, maybe even thousands of times over the years. I know it so well that I can hear every note when I close my eyes. Nevertheless, it was like I was listening for the first time, as I heard guitar "plucking" that had never before stood out to me.

I continued listening through a series of varied music genres: Dian Krall's "Live in Paris;" Pink Floyd's "Dark Side of the Moon" and "The Wall;" Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons;" King Crimson's "Discipline;" Miles Davis' "Kind of Blue" and "Nefertiti." I flipped through more tunes on the Squeezebox, and pulled out more CD's, than I am able to recall.

My wife, who has occasionally noticed major changes in my system, but rarely notices subtle tweaks, commented that the sound was "clearer," and indeed it was. I wish that my oldest son, who has the best ears in the house, had been around to listen, but he was on the road running sound for a touring acapella group.

Conclusions: My system has lost some of its magic since I sold my 2B-TLs (Face was right) and lost my tube pre. I've been searching for a solution by acquiring new (to me) components with the idea of warming up the mids, improving the highs, and adding detail throughout. I'm pretty happy with the low-end and soundstage as it is. However, although I've been accumulating better cables, I hadn't really considered exactly what to expect from them other than general improvement. What I now know is that better cables, at least the MIT cables in this demo, unquestionably improved the way my rig reproduces music. Although they couldn't make my gear better than it is, they could and did maximize the sound quality of which my gear is capable. The detail and clarity added back some of whatever it is that makes listening to music fun.