

RCA INTERCONNECT RCA + LOUDSPEAKER CABLE

THE CHORD COMPANY
INDIGO PLUS + SIGNATURE PLUSTHE
CHORD™
COMPANY

WOJCIECH PACUŁA

Translation: Krzysztof Kalinkowski



If I am not wrong, this is the first test of the cables from The Chord Company in Poland. At least from a long time. The company, usually wrongly associated with the electronics manufacturer named [Chord Electronics](#), is one of the British companies, which still believe in the audiophile ethos and do not tag their products with stellar prices, but with economically justified ones. However this influences the aesthetics of the cables a bit. They look solid, no problem there, but there is nothing, that could be considered "jewelry". Companies like Oyaide and Acrolink follow a similar path, and those are also engineering oriented. And in the world of cabling this is really something rare.



Because I did not know Chord at all, I decided to look at the most expensive (until today, as there is a more expensive pair in preparation) components, and see what the company can offer. Those are: the interconnect Indigo Plus and the loudspeaker cable Signature Plus. The first one has a characteristic color (indigo) of the plastic sleeve and the plugs, and is made from two separate runs, that connect close to the plugs. And those are made by the company itself, especially for this cable, from acryl. The conductor is from silver plated copper strands, with a separate cable for earth. Signature Plus is made in the form of two separate cables, twisted together and tied together at the ends with two aluminum yokes. The conductor is made from copper strands (9 each), isolated with foamed polyethylene. Both cables look nice, but the competition can do it nicer... And because I use two interconnects in my system – between the CD player and preamplifier and between the latter and the power amp – so I took two pairs of the Indigo Plus for testing.

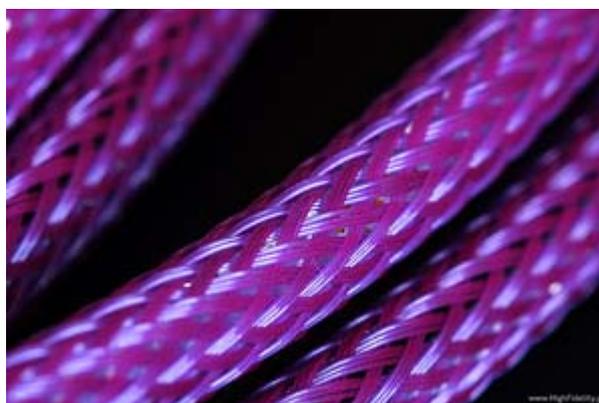
Discs used for the listening tests:



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- Christian Willisohn, *Hold On*, Stockfish, SFR 357.4038.2, SACD/CD; review [HERE](#).
- Danielsson/Dell/Landgren, *Salzau Music On The Water*, ACT Music + Vision, ACT 9445-2, CD review [HERE](#).
- Milt Jackson Sextet, *Invitation*, Riverside/Mobile Fidelity, UDSACD 2031, SACD/CD; review [HERE](#).
- Clora Bryant, *Gal With a Horn*, Mode Records/Muzak, MZCS-1137, CD.
- Kenny Burrell, *Soul Call*, Prestige/JVC, JVCXR-0210-2, XRCD2.
- Bennie Green, *Walkin' & Talkin'*, Blue Note/EMI Music Japan, RVG, TOCJ-7194.
- Frank Sinatra, *Only The Lonely*, Capitol/Mobile Fidelity, UDCD 792; review [HERE](#).

SOUND

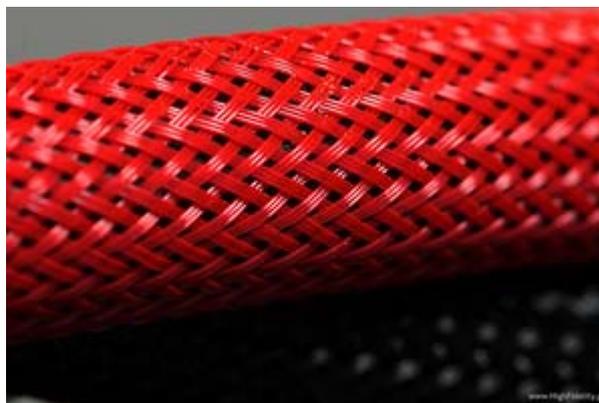


Comparing the Indigo with my [Wireworld Gold Eclipse2](#) was extremely interesting. It turns out, that the Chord is more open with regard to the treble and upper midrange. It seems, that it is also more resolving, in the whole frequency range, besides the lower bass. This is also true when comparing to the [XLO Limited](#). Actually it resembles most the cable 7N-D2500 Acrolink (look [HERE](#) text in Polish). And although the Japanese competition can distinguish timbres better, the sound character of Chord, compared to the two mentioned cables, goes that way. Wireworld is interesting, because it is a silver cable, so – in theory – it should be brighter. But here, similar to the power cables of that company, the silver Gold Electra2 (test in Polish [HERE](#)) sounded much darker, that the less expensive, made from silver plated copper, Silver Electra2, also Gold Eclipse2 sounded darker, as if it would be withdrawn in the treble. But it is about something more with the Indigo Plus – this cable seems to have the midrange below 1kHz shown weaker, in the place, where male voices are located. With the Wireworld and XLO (and also the [Tara Labs ISM The 0.8](#)) the vocal, like Willisohn's from the disc *Hold On* was deeper, smoother, a bit darker, but more velvety. And still it seemed to be worse than with the Chord. Why? I think, that the ability to draw sounds, to define them, pulling them out of the background is better with the Chord, and only the Tara Labs can do that better, keeping the assets of the Wireworld and adding Chord's resolution. And also the Acrolink goes deeper into the recording. At its price the British interconnect offers a unique ability to open-up the system. The beautifully recorded instruments on the disc *Salzau Music On The Water*, where Lars Danielsson plays on the bass, sounded incredibly natural. The instruments, the surroundings, bird sounds, sounds of the wooden platform, the recordings were done on, those were all more alive and more credible with the Indigo. Wireworld and XLO round off the edges, warm the sound, and in addition the Limited "pumps" everything up in the lower midrange. The first one, does that due to the promotion of the midrange and lower midrange. This gives a nice, full stage and smooth sound, but puts the happenings further away from us (but only by comparison with the Chord and Acrolink), not

in the sense of space, because the Chord shows everything a bit nearer, but in the sense of "reality", whatever we understand with that word.



The connection of the preamplifier with the power amplifier, in the electrical sense, should be comparable to the one between the player and preamplifier. They can differ in terms of voltage, but the rest is still depending on the input and output impedances of the individual devices. But in practice different cables behave differently in those places. This is the reason I use the Wireworld or XLO between the CD player and preamplifier, and the Velum NF-G SE between the preamplifier and poweramp. This is an old cable, but it turned out to be better than both mentioned interconnects, and only the Harmonix HS-101GP and the mentioned Tara Labs and Acrolink showed it, that it is time to retire. But due to their price the Velum is still in its place. Comparing with the Chord showed, that the latter, regardless of how it is fantastic, is still limited, and in some places it will not show its potential. Still precise and resolving, it lacked that what Velum gave, the saturation of the lower midrange. It was not regarded as a shortcoming with the CD, because this was evened up with its splendid resolution and "presence" of the instruments in the Indigo Plus. Velum is special in that aspect (not the best, but still impressive), this is why changing to the Chord was not fully justified. The Velum plays also with a stronger, more impressive bass. Anticipating the facts, I will say, that this was the same with the loudspeaker cable. And although the Polish loudspeaker cable LS-G showed some flaws compared with the Signature Plus, the Velum interconnect fared better in direct comparison with the Chord. This does not mean, that the Indigo will not prove itself in the pre- power connection. I am just telling you, that it has its limitations, you should consider. This may not be fair, as the Velum is twice (the interconnect) or four times (the loudspeaker cable) more expensive than the Chord, but I need to compare with something. And it is better to compare with better things. Listening to the Chord together with less expensive products, like the Wireworld Equinox 52 it was clear, that the resolution of the British cable was just splendid, and the slight lack of saturation of the midrange is also characteristic for other cables.



I mentioned the loudspeaker cable Signature Plus. And when the Indigo is quite expensive, at least in absolute categories, while the other cables called upon are much more expensive, the loudspeaker cable is indecently cheap. Taking into account that this is the top Chord cable, and its true value, defined as the price performance ratio. I say even more – even when we depart from the price corset and look on that cable from the top, the side of the best cables we know, there will be only a few aspects that will differ from the most renowned competition. And it was not my favorite – I thought the interconnects were much more interesting. Those were very good, but the Signature Plus kept me in front of the speakers the longest. It was so interesting, that I kept it in testing for two months. It is, most of all, very resolving. The Velum is very good in that aspect, but the midrange and treble show more information with the Chord, the instruments playing there, like the vibraphone from *Salzau...* and *Invitation* Milt Jackson Sextet, and the piano from *Hold On* Willisohn, or even the trombone of Benny Green from his disc *Walkin' & Talkin'* have a strong, palpable sound. The Velum has a rather dark upper midrange (look [HERE](#)), and the treble, although very good for the money, has a better definition in the Chord. The British cable shows what is happening on the stage better, between the instruments, but also the instruments themselves. Except for one thing – the bass. This is splendid in the Polish cable, and a much more expensive cable is needed to repeat its performance. The Chord sounds lighter, without such a good definition of the lower bass. It reminds the Acrolink Mexcel 7N-S9000, which has similar treble and overall character. Only the model 7N-S20000 integrates everything into one, beautiful whole.



And in this way I outsmarted myself, because the last mentioned Acrolink is a dozen times as expensive as the Chord. It would be hard for me to name a loudspeaker cable in this, or similar, price range, that would sound so well. The thinning can be forgiven, when we compensate for that with the character of the devices or interconnect. In a system with Indigo Plus we will get a very precise, full of details and timbres, sound, with a very good definition and pace. The sound stage will also be drawn fantastically. The loudspeaker cable, as I mentioned, can be compared with much more expensive competition, and although we would find some shortcomings here and there, still no shame taken. I got convinced to this sound, and probably also used to it, so much, that I do not want to get back to the Velum, which, while better, has also its flaws. So I would like to have a closer look at the Acrolink Mexcel 7N-S10000, because this is the same philosophy of the sound, and the price much lower than of the top model of the company, I cannot afford. A special characteristic of the Signature Plus, with its all transparency, is vividness. This was confirmed by one of my guests, the winner of the Cover of the Year 2008, whom I gave (finally I managed to!) the awards. This is my first contact with a company so respected by my favorite magazine, the British "Hi-Fi Plus". This turned out to be great fun and a learning experience. The interconnect is splendid, but must be verified in a given system, because in mine, placed between the preamplifier and power amplifier, it fared worse than other similar priced cables. But when we talk about the loudspeaker cable, then I see no competition. Probably it will not be fitting all systems, but it will be the flaw of the system, and not of the cable. It will not warm anything, or make anything heavier. But it will not brighten anything either, or sharpen anything. It will just show a very balanced, true picture of what the amplifier presents. I recommend it!

DESCRIPTION



Like I mentioned, the Indigo Plus interconnect is made from silver plated copper strands, covered with Teflon. Every channel consists of two runs – one contains the signal and ground wire, the other a separate grounding wire. The cables are terminated with special plugs, with an acrylic cover and silver plated contacts. The loudspeaker cable is made from copper strands covered with foamed polyethylene. The company claims, that foaming the dielectric with gas lowers the dielectric constant and assures better consistency in longer runs. Each channel consist of two runs (plus and minus) in black and red color. They are twisted together, what should screen the cable. The cables themselves are also shielded – by a double shield made from foil and copper strands. This allows for shielding on a level of 90dB. On the ends, close to the banana plugs, both runs are tightened together with aluminum clamps. The endings of the cables, made in Great Britain, are made from gold plated banana plugs, not looking very well, but being a good compromise between price and quality.

CHORD INDIGO PLUS + SIGNATURE PLUS

Price: 4629 zł (1 m) + 3750 zł (2 x 3 m)

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