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## EQUIPMENT REVIEW

# Audiomica Europa Ultra Reference interconnects and Genimides Ultra Reference loudspeaker cable

by Steve Ditchburn

If we're honest, when we describe a cable as 'very good' or even 'excellent', all we're really saying is that it spoils the performance of the system less than the alternatives. Whether you agree or disagree with that premise, occasionally you may get to hear a product, whether a cable or anything else, which recalibrates your expectations. The Europa and Genimides Ultra Reference products from Audiomica form a part of that recalibration process.

Recalibration on this scale is comparatively rare now; most products are at least 'competent' these days, sometimes even 'decent', OK, so 'good' tends to cost a bit, and 'very good' or 'excellent' are seldom less than expensive. So having a pair of products that redefine what you thought was possible, and which don't require the sale of a kidney, or indenturing your first-born child into slavery, especially in a sector of audio where 'expensive' can mean 'staggeringly expensive', is something to savour.

Even those of us who believe that cables form a fundamental component of a well thought-out system can balk and blanch at the ultra-high-end pricing of some liberables. So, it is refreshing to come across a cable brand that can put a marker down on the outer edges of the performance envelope, at a price obtainable by an audiophile, rather than an oligarch. Audiomica Laboratories is barely known outside its native Poland and has only comparatively recently begun making inroads into export markets. No doubt its location plays a part in the cost equation, but whatever the reason, it is high time the brand crossed more people's radar screens.

The Audiomica range is extensive and the prices are, by and large, at the sensible-to-aspirational end of the market. The Europa and Genimides Ultra Reference cables use pure silver conductors, PEP dielectric material, and the



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designs show great attention to detail in the application of screening and connectors. If you're not a fan of pure silver cables, stay with me because I wasn't either, before I tried these cables in my system. Audiomica appears to eschew directional markings so, having had a quick listen both ways round, I picked one, marked the upstream ends for consistency, then stuck with it for the duration of the review.

The cables sit one notch down from the very top of the Audiomica range; a five pair of Europa Ultra Reference interconnects costs £1,350, while a 3m pair of Genimides Ultra Reference loudspeaker cables is a modest (by high-end standards) £1,800. These prices may put the Audiomica cables in an odd position in the marketplace: too expensive for many to contemplate, yet too cheap to be taken seriously by those in search of the best available. That would be a shame, because these cables are truly remarkable, and capable of delivering a level of performance from a system which I think it would be very hard to exceed, and not just for the price.

Sometimes, you don't realise there is a problem until you hear a product which doesn't have the problem. The Audiomicas are simply better at getting out of the way. They seem to excel at the important stuff, like pitch, timing, and dynamics, largely by not impeding those qualities to any appreciable extent. They do this while also delivering levels of subtlety, texture, and detail, which simply complement those most vital of attributes.

Taking the Europa first, I was struck by the degree of intimacy to music conveyed by this interconnect. Short piano runs in Michiel Donstap's playing on 68 (Michiel Donstap Trio, Challenge Records) stop being mere noodly flourishes and gain a real sense of purpose. Suddenly, you are much more aware what the players are about; music gains in shape and sense of direction. Any given line is deliberate and considered; any emphasis is 'just-so', because that's what was intended. The performance is simply more skilful.

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This is partly down to timing, in its most fundamental sense of when the various bits of the signal reach your ear. There is 'rightness' about the timing, as delivered through the Europa. Percussion, of which there is plenty on 68, suddenly makes much more sense, hitherto random bangs and crashes coalesce into inventive and skilful playing; the trio get together as never before and the effect is a compelling, propulsive performance that carries the listener along with the music-making. The opening bass and sax riff on Jennifer Warren's classic version of 'Famous Blue Raincoat' (Famous Blue Raincoat, RCA) catches your interest and draws you in, and there is a greater sense of storytelling to the vocals. The song goes from very good to great. It was always great, of course, but now it's obviously great.

And so it goes on: the usually ebullient 'Yankee' from Abdullah Ibrahim's *Grape Lodumo* (Tip Toe) is even more joyous and exuberant. From the moment the NDR big band joins the solo flute opening, there is an event taking place in front of you. It's a big and impressive performance, and has been rendered so by many a big and impressive system in its time but which, for all their size and impressiveness, have rarely conveyed the way in which the various different elements combine into something quite as marvellous as this. 'Black and Brown/Charlie' from the same album conveys a real sense of conversation between the piano and the horns. The piece builds in emphasis without becoming strident or over-excited, because the band, piano, and percussion remain locked together.

Interestingly, this sense of heightened lucidity is not in fact imposed on the music from outside. Sometimes when auditioning cables it is hard to escape a feeling that a cable is keeping a lid on things in the interests of coherence. Here, in contrast, you sense that the music is more dramatic and interesting because everything has relaxed into its proper place, any nervousness or edginess has gone, as has any sense of overt 'control', to be replaced by a natural ease and freedom – truly wonderful for conveying a big jazz band at the top of its game.

The Genimides loudspeaker cable behave entirely like the interconnects, suggesting a commonality of design. Dynamics are not simply big and bold, but expressive and decisive: not 'dynamics for dynamics' sake, but part of the essence and vitality of the music. Moreover, there is never any worry that these dynamics will overwhelm proceedings, even when the system is playing at my customary neighbourhood-balling levels, which can occasionally trip up a system. The speaker cable lets timing stay resolutely solid, instruments play together from deepest bass to blizzards of trills, so that it is easy to get into that zone where you lose yourself in the music and stop listening to the sound it makes.

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Donstap's piano articulation is now exquisitely judged and controlled, contributing to the sheer insistence of the music, which defies its sense of forward motion not just from the beat, but from an awareness that each phrase has a destination, a way to carry the listener along to the next line. The countless little dynamic pushes and inflections all add their own unobtrusive little contribution to the whole, and the Audiomica are instrumental in allowing the listener to get all this information into the room, intact.

Tom Waits' voice on 'Georgia Lee' from *Male Relations* (ANTI) is truly affecting. When he sings, 'Why wasn't God watching?' you can sense the heartbreak. Most systems render this as schmalz, but the Audiomica gave me pitiful.

Taken together, the Audiomica interconnects and loudspeaker cables allow the system to breathe freely with little sense of constraint. Yet this isn't a licence to run riot, everything just takes its place and doesn't intrude where it isn't wanted; it's a freedom from amuse, hash, bloom, or other artifacts, which I've rarely heard, and it is very, very beautiful. Yet this isn't a cable which wants you to love it because it sounds lovely. It just is what it is, and if your music is gritty and raucous, a bit of The Bad Plus perhaps, then the Audiomica just present that music a bit gruffer and, er, raucouser.

Going back to *Grape Lodumo* by way of conclusion, as a means to convey the delights of Abdullah Ibrahim's music, the Audiomica cable set is exceptional. That album doesn't just pique my interest, it captures my heart, and if a cable can do that, it's pretty much got it made in my book. Here, there is more sense of three-dimensionality, the big band is bigger, plays tighter with seemingly superior skill, and even more enthusiasm, but also with a greater sense of give and take between the parts. The piano has more bounce, and Ibrahim's playing has more physicality.

This is not simply a big, trash, blowy performance, but a properly thought-through musical event. The chess that is the first third of 'Altoan Market' is now clearly conveying the riotous, joyous, cacophonous defile of a real African market, and when the piece settles into its groove, it is all but impossible not to be carried along. And why would you possibly want to resist? +

#### TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

**Audiomica Europa Ultra Reference interconnect**  
£1,350 (1m RCA termination)

**Audiomica Genimides Ultra Reference loudspeaker cable**  
£1,800 (3m stereo pair)

Manufacturer: Audiomica Laboratory Company  
URL: [www.audiomica.com](http://www.audiomica.com)

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