

Driade Flow 405 loudspeaker cable



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Review component supplied by Driade
Retail Prices in the Netherlands (incl 21% VAT):
2x3m (as reviewed): 800 euro
2x4m: 900 euro

Over the years, manufacturers have claimed the most outrageous things for their cables. Arnold Driade, normally known for being utterly level-headed, went above and beyond by talking of a Zen-copper mine blessed by monks that yields 121.99% pure copper which is drawn to litze wires over a beechwood fire and subsequently submerged in a herbal tea mix to end up as wires carefully twisted in Shin-tang manner, then wound in natural silk to finally be used in a hermetically-sealed outer sleeve that is filled with Himalaya-air. Of course, Arnold was only joking.



What he is not joking about is that his cable is seriously different and seriously good. So what differentiates this cable from the majority of other cables on the market? In a word, Quantum Mechanics. The main focus here has not been on the conductor material, the overall geometry or on isolation as is normally the case but on researching how electrons actually behave within magnetic fields. The objective here is to minimize eddy currents as induced by the varying magnetic field as a result of the interaction between AC and DC.

The "405" in the cable's name indicates the number of litz wires. These individual 99.9% pure OFC wires are braided in such a manner that they are all exactly the same length to avoid phase issues. This seems only logical but is actually not the case with regular braiding techniques and takes special attention to achieve. The wires are kept together with a natural silk wrapping surrounded by air as the dielectric inside a hollow tube that is infused with metal particles. This all sounds very technical but in the end, all that Arnold is aiming for is a natural and undistorted sound.



The connectors are not standard, either. Because Arnold is allergic to unnecessary mass, especially in connections, a new connector had to be devised with a minimal conducting mass but maximum contact surface which resulted in the “Flow Copper G” hollow bananas. The wires are not simply soldered to the connectors but to a hollow shaft that is then inserted into the banana under high pressure.

Personal experience confirms that there is real validity in minimizing the contact mass in signal transitions, but to be honest, the subject of Quantum Mechanics goes well above my hat. Ultimately, of course, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. So let’s dig in!

Test Setup

I will be listening to this cable using the Magico S1 MkII's. The system that drives the speakers consists of the Antipodes CX directly music server connected via ethernet cable to the CH Precision C1 DAC that drives the CH Precision A1.5 power amplifier via CH Precision Balanced Link XLR cables.

I got the Magicos as a second pair next to the Martin Logan ESL15A's for their even purer and more honest sound. Whereas the Logans can tend to make lesser recordings still sound nice to some extent, the Magico's are more ruthless and that's exactly what I need as a reviewer. As I was surprised to learn after I got them, they are actually sweeter than I often heard them being demoed at shows but still, they are very revealing. That's why I like to use them when I really want to get to the bottom of how a product sounds rather than finding out if it works synergistically with my system.



Listening

When I substituted the Jorma Trinity speaker cables for the Driade Flow 405 with zero hours on its imaginary counter I was greeted with a smoother and more relaxed sound with a fuller and richer bass. But although this normally goes hand in hand with a loss in precision this was not the case here. The bass was still every bit as articulate and well-defined, just fuller and richer and I could still precisely follow the bass lines and all their harmonics. Along with this came a midrange that, like the bass, carried more richness and better induced a sense of body. The midrange also had a hugely natural and organic quality that made the Jorma sound a little technical.

While the pacing seems initially to be slightly slower than with the Jorma, the latter may well be a little fast. Within minutes of the first track I was already used to the slightly slower pace and I realized that it is actually precisely right. It is not metronome-like constant pacing but rather a speed that adjusts with the music. The cable can be fast and it can be mellow, just as the recording requires. This is not a blurring or smoothing as it can happen with less well-designed cables, rather, it feels like the absence of restraints. The soundstage is also quite different, freer in the depth plane and more possessing of a 3D image.

Compared to the Jorma I do feel that the uppermost treble is slightly soft and gently rolled-off. It's not at all a dark sound and all the air is there but the treble just has a little less "bite". Opponents would argue that the Jorma is probably overly bright and some people may actually experience it that way but if the cables that I used are anything to go by then I would not say that is the case. In any event, we can safely say that the Driade Flow has a smooth and very natural treble.

You could say that the Driade Flow was overall less snappy than the Jorma but whereas that would usually result in a sound that lacks expression and impact, the Driade Flow was actually every bit as dynamic as it needed to be but only if it was in the recording.

When asked to roar, the cable absolutely delivered. It sounds seductive and sweet with Bebel Gilberto but it also absolutely screams in a super bold and dynamic fashion when playing Depeche Mode's The Dead of Night. This cable may appear sweet but it sure is not holding back.

As I stopped the playback to go write down my experiences I felt that the Driade Flow cable has the kind of delivery that makes one forget about technicalities and makes one enjoy the performances, even those that are not recorded flawlessly. As it turns out, the Driade Flow cable has some very special qualities and also happens to work very synergistically with the Magicos.



Driade Flow 405 with NuPrime ST10

Running in

Even though the cable sounds fabulous right from the first minute I allowed it 2 weeks of running in using music played for over 8 hours a day just to be sure that it performed to the best of its abilities. For this, I used the NuPrime ST10 Class-D amp which I continued to use for some extra testing that would follow.

From the moment that I connected the ST10, I noticed that the Driade Flow matched very well. This amp has a solid, bouncy and energetic delivery and all of its energy sure comes across with the Driade Flow. The ST10 does not, however, have as much refinement as the CH A1.5. It is quite dry and rough and with the Jorma that is always very clear. With the Driade Flow, I can still hear this just as well but the effect is somehow less severe and the end result more musical for it.



Driade Flow 405 with CH Precision A1.5.

During the two weeks of running in, I did not notice any changes. Maybe they were too subtle or the progress went too slowly? In order to better assess the changes, I went back to the CH Precision A1.5 and first used the Jorma and then the Driade Flow, still with the Magicos. Indeed, the treble with the Jorma was still a little fresher and the overall transient behavior spicier but the presentation was quite a bit flatter and nowhere near as involving as the Driade Flow. And I really could not say that the Jorma unveiled any more detail.

The differences between the Driade Flow and the Jorma seemed to be the same as before the running in. If the extra hours had any effect then I could not be sure to have picked up on this. Maybe, just maybe, the soundstage moved even more freely and perhaps it had become even freer in its capacity to deliver bursts of energy on demand. Its overall balance, however, I feel, was unchanged.



Further Comparisons

To further put the Driade cable's performance in perspective I also compared it to the Audio Note Lexus LX. This cable has a remarkably refined and smooth yet transparent sound with a wide-open yet silky and airy treble. Compared with the ultra-refined presentation of the Lexus LX, the Driade Flow seems to be less stereotypically audiophile. But that's the thing – airiness and silkiness aside, and musically speaking, the LX's sound is not very involving. This cable seems to have traded its super-polished presentation for a reduction in texture, dynamic impact and spatial dimensionality, fields in which the Driade Flow excels.



Audio Note LX

Maybe the LX will work well with shouty horn speakers but in my system, it is so very smooth that it seems like the musicians are on Prozac. Going back to the Driade Flow is like a fresh breath of air. The performance again expansive and free-breathing and so much more involving, as if the musicians have revitalized and are again playing at full strength.



Driade Flow 405 with Martin Logan ESL15A

I also used the Driade Flow with the Martin Logans and while I feel that the match is more synergistic with the Magicos, here, too, they work entirely predictably, that is, a little less tight in the bass and a little softer in the treble but more organic, more free-flowing and more involving. And, as with the Magicos, within the first minutes of the first track, I got used to the altered presentation, the higher involvement factor took over and I simply relaxed into the music.



Conclusion

This cable truly is something else. It has a smooth, free-flowing, organic and highly involving delivery that, quite unusually, does not come along with a lack of focus or a reduction in dynamic slam. This cable can be ever so seductive and alluring but it also roars in a super-bold and expressive fashion just as the music requires.

Associated Equipment: www.hifi-advice.com/blog/associated-equipment/

Manufacturer: www.driadesystems.nl

Flow website: www.theflowcable.com

Distributor for the Benelux: www.driadesystems.nl