

Black Rhodium

Sonata VS-1 analogue interconnect

PRICED AT £500 for a 1m pair, the Sonata VS-1 interconnect is positioned as a middling proposition in Black Rhodium's comprehensive stable of cables. Extensive attention to detail appears to have been applied to every element of its design and construction. At its heart are two silver-plated copper cores for positive and negative signal flows. Some audiophiles claim copper cables give more satisfying bass weight and pure silver cables provide subjectively sweeter, more extended treble, but many would agree that, done well, silver-plated copper can deliver the best of both worlds. The cable cores are connected in opposite directions as Black Rhodium claims from extensive listening tests that this provides the lowest noise floor. These cores are also twisted to reduce their surface area and help reject unwanted radio frequency interference (RFI) that congests many households from wi-fi, radio signals and mobile phones.

Taking charge

PTFE insulation is used for its claimed low dielectric loss and low distortion characteristics – “reducing the impact of subtle but detrimental time-smearing of musical signals”. Ambitiously, Black Rhodium has set out to reduce any issues that could be created from friction between internal insulation and the outer screen by the inclusion of a conductive, ‘low microphony’ layer that is designed to dissipate any potential electrical charge that could be generated from the cable being flexed or vibrated, even at a microscopic level.

Black Rhodium has deployed one more weapon against distortion. The VS part of the product name stands for ‘vibration stabiliser’, which is performed through the addition of hefty, polished weights that securely clamp to the cable half way along. These act as extra mass to increase the inertia of each cable. This stability is intended to reduce the distortion caused by cables being vibrated by components or



airborne sound waves. The stabilisers can be loosened and repositioned to increase effectiveness and convenience (the cable needs to be protected at any new weight position to ensure the clamping grub screw doesn't damage the screening).

After running the cables in, the immediate impression from playing a lossless rip of Wild Beast's *Wanderlust* is a very clean delivery with highly extended treble and firm, well-defined bass. The opening snare drum shimmers with high-frequency detail, while the synth bass line has great depth and a juicy, snarling menace from sharply defined leading edges. Backing vocals build beautifully in transparent silky layers as Hayden Thorpe's voice leaps forward in the soundstage. Imaging is extremely stable and deep and I sense this is from so much of Black Rhodium's anti-distortion know-how being combined into one cable.

Switching to The Staves *Black and White* on CD reveals real purity in delivering the close harmonies of these talented sisters. Some competitive cables would appear to have more fulsome warmth around vocal frequencies, but the cleanliness of this midband is very compelling and almost certainly more accurate.

Playing a superb HDCD recording of Tatiana Troyanos singing *L'amour Est*

Un Oiseau Rebelle from *Carmen* demonstrates just how well the Sonata deals with large swings in musical dynamics. The intimate vocals rise softly out of an inky black soundstage. Quiet, yearning emotional nuances are conveyed with real subtlety and increasing intensity, but the full dynamics of the London Philharmonic Orchestra are effortlessly expressed in a way that can deceive you to the large dynamic range you are listening to.

Feature comforts

The Sonata VS-1 is fully loaded with features and should bring positive virtues to almost any system. It's rather tempting to think a £500 interconnect is only appropriate for higher-end systems, but more modest systems can be lifted as convincingly as upgrading a source component or amplifier. Both RCA and XLR terminations deliver similar high-quality results. The vibration stabilising weights are beneficial, but may need finessing to fit your system layout. Refined, extended treble, firm, deep bass and a beautifully coherent and communicative midband seamlessly flowing from very dark silences demonstrates that Black Rhodium has successfully addressed distortion. Thoroughly recommended. **CW**

DETAILS

PRICE
£500 for 1m pair
(RCA or XLR)

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OUR VERDICT

