

Interconnect Cables

Class 1a Featured Pick:

Legend Audio VI

As you may know from our previous reviews, we're very critical of cables, and we hear (and report) flaws that other reviewers seem to miss entirely in their indiscriminate and unreserved praise for countless cables. Cables do sound very different from one another, so it's easy for a naïve listener to confuse different with better, and think that he's hearing something new (and therefore better) when he plugs in a different cable and is in fact merely hearing something different than the previous cable. Perhaps, for example, the new cable has an artificial coloration peak in the midrange, thereby bringing voices forward with more presence, which misleads a naïve reviewer into gushing, "Gee, I put on a recording of Bon Jovi with this new cable, and wow, like he was right there in the room with me."

The assessment of cables (or any audio product) has to be more analytical, more grounded in objective fact, to be of any scientific value. Thanks to years of detailed analysis of the sound of countless products, our ear/brain has been trained to work like a spectrum analyzer, instantly spotting colorations, distortions, incoherence, fuzziness, etc. Virtually all cables evince these kinds of sonic flaws, so obvious that we easily can instantly target and analyze them. In short, it's very hard to impress us.

Thus, when a cable comes along that does impress us, it's big news, and cause for celebration. This interconnect from Legend Audio is the first interconnect to really impress us since Dave Magnan's still superb cables. The Legend VI is the present top model among Legend Audio's interconnect offerings, and sells for \$975 for a 1 metre pair. It uses top quality WBT plugs, and from its sound we would guess that its internals employ expensive materials, including judicious use of silver and Teflon.

The Legend VI is superbly transparent, articulate, and clean. Fewer than 1% of the audiophile cables out there can even meet these three basic desiderata, these three basic requirements for high fidelity (they are veiled, and/or fuzzy-defocused, and or dirty-grundgy, for at least some portion of the musical spectrum). As we continue to improve the extraordinary resolution of our lab system, we can hear and evaluate every improvement clearly through Legend VI, which means that the intrinsic resolution of this cable is incredible, even higher than that of our very special lab system.

Legend VI has very wide bandwidth, covering both extremes of the spectrum with ease. In handling treble transients, it is very fast, extended, open, articulate, clean, neutral (neither too hard nor too soft), and coherent, with excellent intertransient silence. Treble transients are the most difficult material for almost every product to handle, and are the downfall of most other cables. Most other cables smear or splatter treble transients over

time, sometimes also making them defocused or fuzzy soft and veiled (the veiling arises in part because they smear transient energy over time, thereby obscuring music's temporally succeeding details, and filling in what should be black intertransient silence with time smeared noise).

Legend VI's refusal to smear, and its consequently superior intertransient silence, also enable its superior stereo imaging. That's because the subtle sonic cues that define the most elusive and most prized aspects of stereo imaging, like depth and hall ambience, consist of reflections off the hall walls that are there to be heard only in the momentary silence after the triggering musical transient (whose sound is being reflected a split second later off the walls). And you can't hear these subtle post-transient cues if the cable smears the energy of a musical transient in time, filling in what should be intertransient silence (immediately after the transient) with smeared noise that then obscures those subtle hall reflection cues you need in order to hear great stereo imaging.

At the other end of the spectrum, Legend VI allows music's natural rich warmth to come through, and its bass is strong and well defined. This also endows Legend VI with a very satisfying overall tonal balance, since its rich and strong bottom end effectively counterbalances the very articulate high frequencies, insuring that the latter do not make the cable sound too lean and bright.

Legend VI is very neutral overall, and is superb at letting the character of other links in the chain shine through. If a recording or preamp ahead of a link of Legend VI is liquid, then this cable lets that liquidity shine. Or, if a solid state stage is brittle, then Legend VI lets that quality right through. In other words, Legend VI is neutral in the best audio sense, being a neutral arbiter of whatever sound it is presented with, and letting that sound through, without imposing its own sonic stamp on everything. Of course, this also means that you can't use Legend VI as a euphonic mask to hide ills elsewhere in your system, as you can some other cables (for example, those cables that impose a wooly, warm, soft sound on all music are effective coloration tools for filtering out the hard upper frequency glare imposed by IC chips and/or close miked recordings).

Legend VI tells you the truth about the rest of your system. And it tells you the truth about the music. That's the definition of high fidelity, and that's the highest complement you can pay a cable.