

JPS Labs Superconductor V and Kaptovator Lite cables review



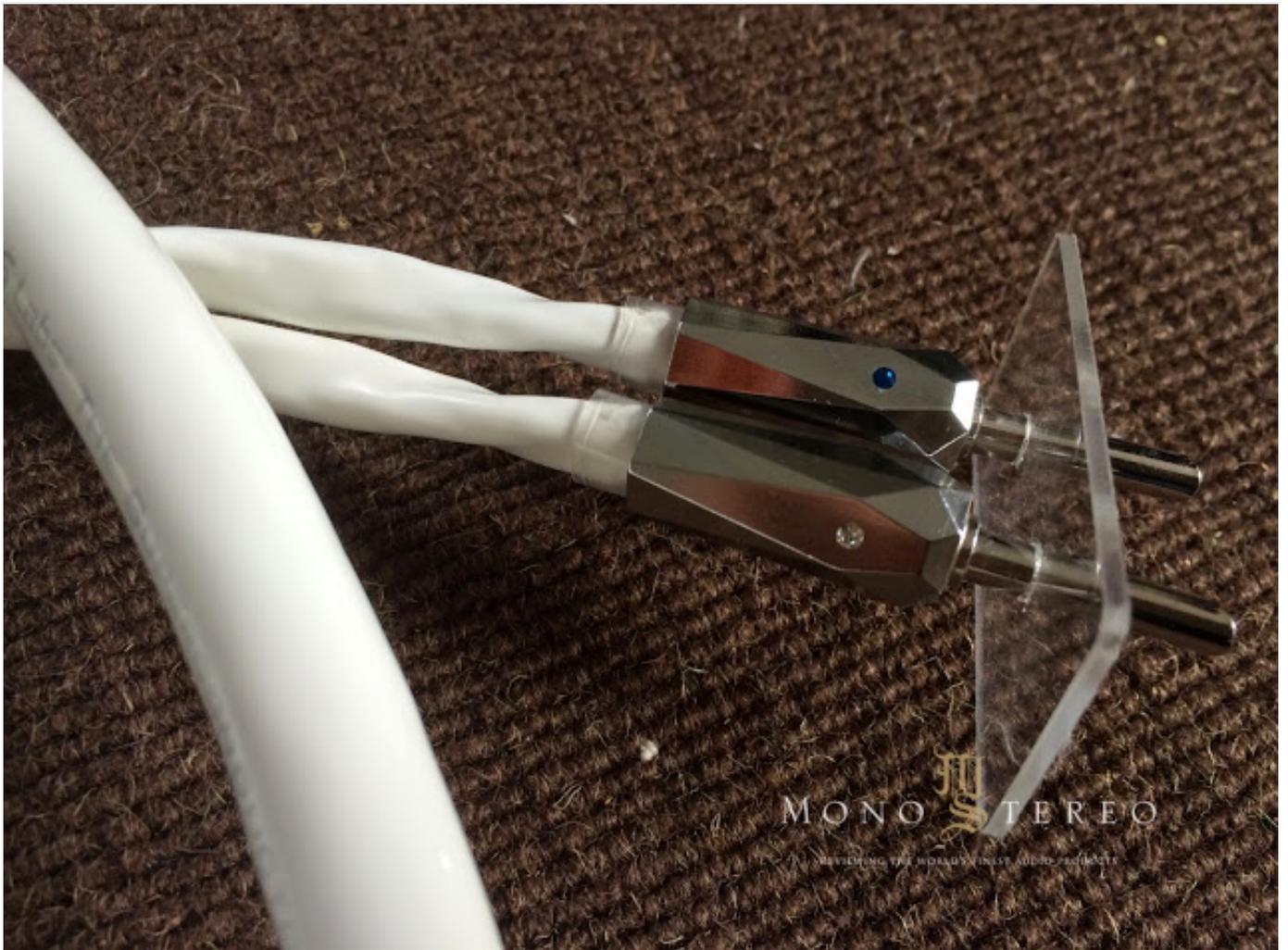
WHITE, CHROME, RHODIUM, AND A TOUCH OF CRYSTAL...

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Swarovski crystals? OK, why not. JPS Labs has been around for quite awhile now, actually, since 1990 so I guess they have accumulated a wealth of knowledge and experience in regard to cables.

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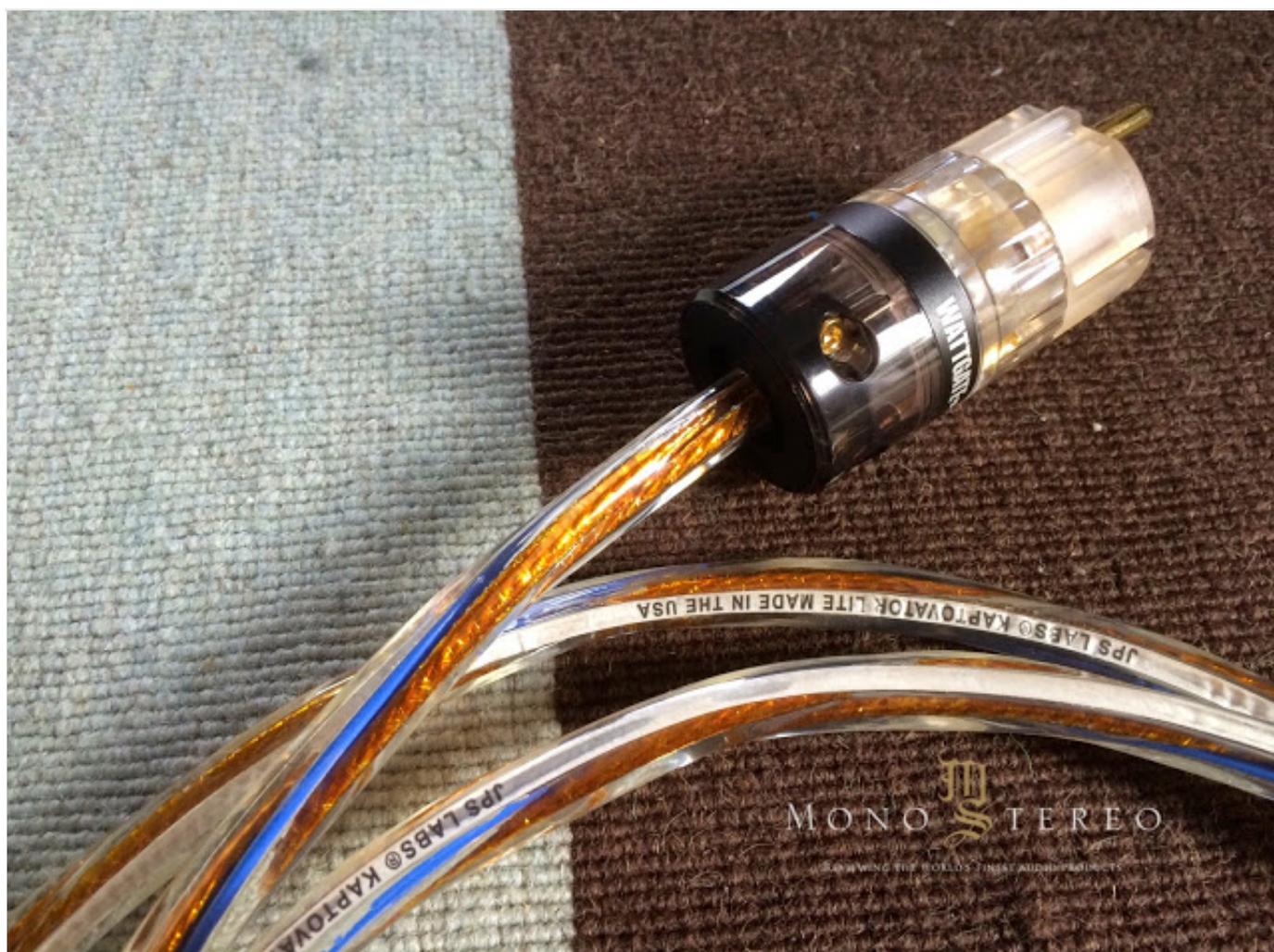
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“Extensive R&D over many years within the areas of metallurgy and materials science combined with a deep understanding of the propagation of energy has allowed us to hone

in on specific methods in creating unique combinations of materials and topologies specifically optimized for high resolution audio.”

Sounds serious to me but what exactly is Alumiloy?

“The wire used in our designs is a proprietary, non-ferromagnetic, solid core composite alloy wire, Alumiloy®. Alumiloy cleanly transfers audio frequencies and up better than any other conductor available. Extensive testing has proven that this proprietary alloy has superior qualities to copper, silver, gold, or any combination of these materials, in terms of bandwidth, dynamic range, and spectral clarity in time. JPS rewrote the book and created a unique conductor to allow for maximum clarity without the veiling even the purest silver and copper conductors have in the mids and highs, and a faster bass region with greater impact than anything you have ever heard. We are the only cable manufacturer in the world who works with their own patent-pending conductor materials. We start from scratch to design from the inside out!”



Since this is a patent-pending composite conductor material, exact specification will

remain a secret but that`s understandable.

JPS Labs labs sent a complete set of cables for the review. Their Superconductor V interconnects, the Superconductor V XLR interconnects, the Superconductor V USB, the Superconductor V Digital, Superconductor V Single wire speaker cables and the Kaptovator Lite power cord. The Superconductor V interconnects looked very elegant and the used RCA connectors were refreshingly different in shape and for the left and right markings Swarovski crystals were used, one in blue colour the other transparent. The Superconductor V Speaker cables were sent in a single wire configuration and with 7.8 mm² / 8.5 AWG x 2 conductors for two terminals.



Although already the Superconductor V interconnects looked great in white, the

Superconductor V speaker cables looked even more impressive being quite thick overall and using rhodium plated bananas, again with Swarovski® crystals marking polarity.

The Kaptovator Lite power cord on the other hand had a clear, transparent outer jacket and used Wattgate EVO connectors (also transparent). Kapton was used as a dielectric.

The Kaptovator's conducting wire is stranded, but wound so tightly that it mimics the construction of a solid-core design. Promising to bring the ultra-high resolution of their reference AC cords to lower power components, raised the bar for the expected performance levels.

THE SOUND

I have started with the Kaptovator Lite power cord, used on the DAC. The first impressions were all highly positive: the Kaptovator Lite sounded very clear, open, smooth and natural. I have noticed a slightly warm effect on the reproduced music but not in the sense of coloration, but rather from the absence of “cold” type of distortion - odd order harmonics. Audio is many times full of those harmonic distortions and many people unconsciously take it for granted, accepting the subjectively “cold” and hard sonic signature and consider it as a sign of “neutrality”. Anyway, the Kaptovator Lite power cord was exactly the opposite of the thin, hard and colourless in its presentation of the music content. A number of power cords, especially the cheaper ones, are able to reproduce only the basic tones without overtones that allow us to distinguish between, say, a nylon stringed guitar and a folk one. There is a big difference in coloured and colourful music reproduction and since music isn't all about frequencies and sound pressure level and tone duration, we should strive for the latter. The Kaptovator Lite power cord on the other hand didn't sound mellow and lifeless, quite on the contrary, the music sounded lively and vibrant, full of details that appeared self evident and unforced. The bass was built on a very solid foundation with excellent control, power and extension and likewise could be said for the ever important and crucial lower midrange area which had weight, control and showed great dynamic abilities.

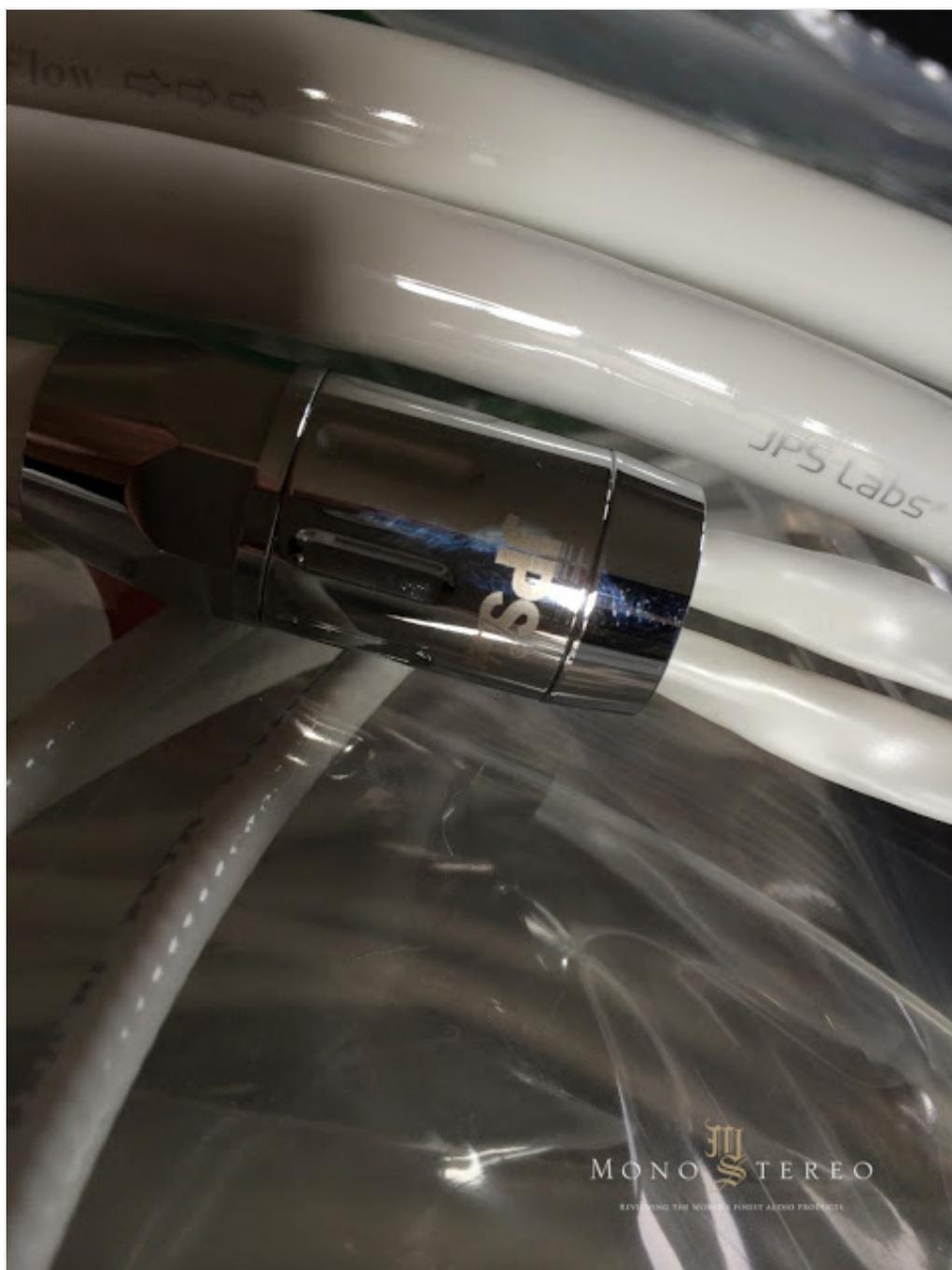


It came as no surprise that the Superconductor V interconnects showed much the same behaviour as the Kaptovator Lite power cord and even went a little further in bringing out the best in recordings. The Superconductor V RCA and XLR interconnects were fully capable of extracting the last ounce of information out of music but still delivering the goods in an analog, stressless way that ensured long listening sessions without any listening fatigue. Neutral and transparent across the whole spectrum, with a level of microscopic like insight that goes beyond its price region with ease, all this made for a very inviting sound experience.

The Superconductor V USB cable made the music sound very fluid but also lively. Like with the rest of the Superconductor V cable line, it succeeded in making the digital source sound very much analog-like. Nothing stood out across the whole spectrum, yet the music still breathed with tons of air and effortlessly delivered details in a very relaxed manner. The timbre/tone was reproduced remarkably well throughout the whole spectrum, which is a direct result of the cable being able to accurately portray the proper harmonic structure of instruments and voices.

Everything I have written for the Superconductor V USB cable could be used to describe

the Superconductor V Digital cable, but somehow I have felt that the coaxial version was even smoother and with further reduced levels of grain.



The Superconductor V speaker cables introduced an enhanced sense of authority into the sonic picture - without losing any of the desirable sonic traits of its siblings. The subjective weight of the instruments like piano or massed strings was delivered in proper proportion with the rest of the spectrum. It's interesting how much the upper frequency regions improve when the lower midrange gains weight, authority, control and behaves dynamically; every musical event sounds far more interesting and believable. The relatively big cross section area of the The Superconductor V speaker cables ensured very good current transfer flow from the amplifier and excellent damping of the speakers' woofer cones. From my experience the speaker cable cross section area plays a BIG role in

the perceived and actual dynamic behaviour, but high current capability and good balance of capacitance and inductance parameters are somewhat difficult to achieve. Here, knowledge and experience of every speaker cable designer are put to test. The Superconductor V speaker cables certainly proved they are excellent all-around performers and could be used in top performing systems, regardless of price.

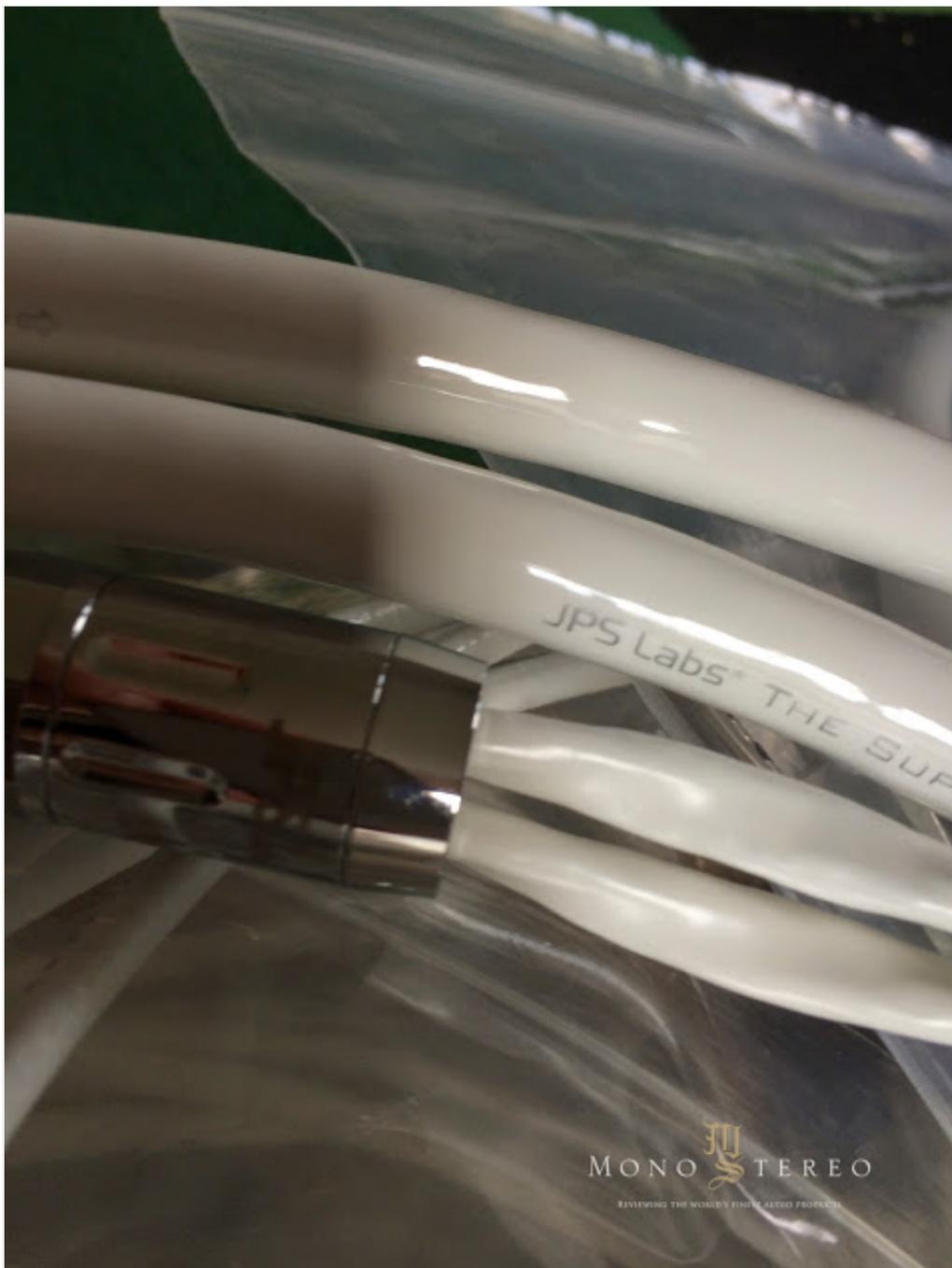
SOME MUSIC

When I listen to the music I seek “time machine” capabilities from the system components, meaning I want to be transported to the original event as much as possible.



Some components fit into that category more than other and they really make all the difference. In my view this has something to do with the component`s ability to bring out the best in the music material, highlighting the good aspects and while not covering up the bad aspects but still rather making them less prominent and annoying. Things like bad mixes, skewed spectral balance, too much compression, etc, can take a back seat in favour of the soul of music to step forward and enchant the listener. I believe every music lover lives for moments like this. So much beautiful music was written long time ago, for

instance, Firefall, the self-titled debut album containing their rendition of "It Doesn't Matter" (written by Chris Hillman, Rick Roberts, Stephen Stills) still brings back fond memories of the musically very fruitful seventies era. Firefall is a rock band that was formed in Boulder, Colorado in 1974. It was founded by Rick Roberts, who had been a member of the Flying Burrito Brothers. The band's biggest hit single, "You Are the Woman" is a silly song but "Cinderella" is a country rock track that sends a shiver up my spine every time I hear it and with the help from the JPS cabling I was able to enjoy it immensely. The recording itself isn't exactly of audiophile quality but hey, it's the music that matters! The soothing vocal harmonies, the acoustic and electric guitar interplay, the rhythmic drive - everything was reproduced effortlessly. The JPS Labs cabling did not try to bring attention to itself with certain aspects of the reproduction that would stand out but rather it served the musical message and make it come out intact and at all times it was more than capable to bring out the best out of the recording.



Alison Krauss is one of my favourite female singers. Her musical history began way before the “Raising Sand” album collaboration with Robert Plant. Alison was born on July 23, 1971 and is probably the most well known American bluegrass singer-songwriter and musician (along with Bela Fleck). She entered the music industry at an early age, winning local contests by the age of ten and recording for the first time at fourteen. She is a top notch Bluegrass fiddle player but her voice truly magical. She has released fourteen albums, appeared on numerous soundtracks, and helped renew interest in Bluegrass music in the United States and all around the world. Wiki says “As of 2012, Alison Krauss has won 27 Grammy Awards from 41 nominations, tying her with Quincy Jones as the most awarded living recipient, second only to the late classical conductor Sir Georg Solti who holds the record for most wins of all time (31). She is the most awarded singer and the

most awarded female artist in Grammy history. “

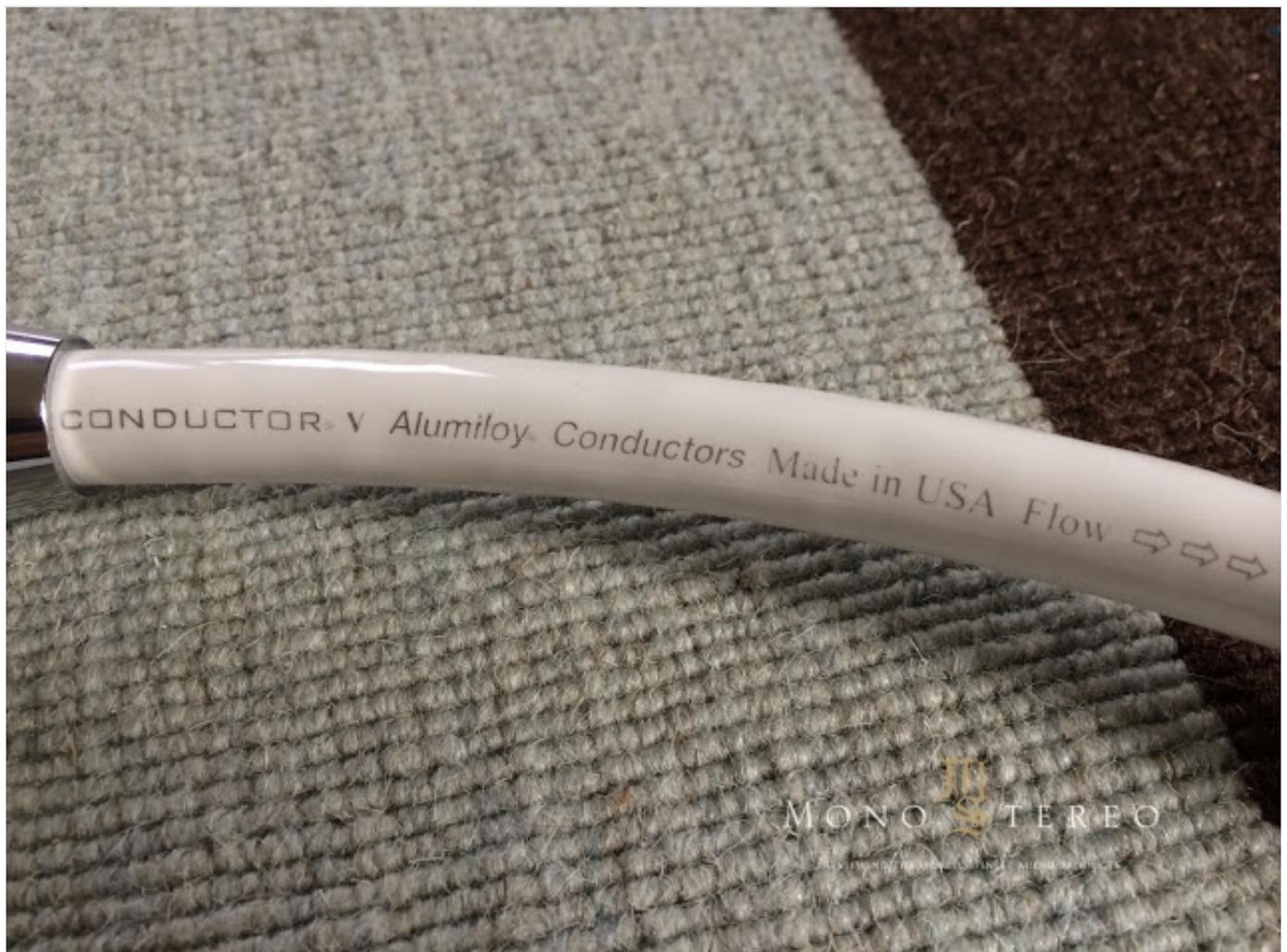


A great example of some contemporary Bluegrass music is absolutely her “So Long So Wrong” album (1997) and the title track which features some fantastic vocal harmonies and driving instrumental work with acoustic guitar, banjo and mandolin. “It Doesn't Matter” is a melancholic song that besides Alison`s angelic voice features some quite strong and deep bass down to around 32 Hz which was reproduced remarkably good through the JPS Labs cabling family. The bass frequencies were impeccably clean, resolved and powerful. The guitars and mandolins were sharply focused on the virtual soundstage and gave a feeling like all veils were lifted. This is a very intimate ballad and all the tiny nuances of Alison`s voice were rendered with uncanny faithfulness and realism. To get a feel what her music is all about follow this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_UCz_qaqGk

The Reference Recordings` HI-FI Spectacular performed by Eiji Oue and Minnesota Orchestra certainly needs no special introduction; it is world famous among audiophiles and music lovers and for a good reason: the sound quality and musical performances are of staggering quality. The first track “Dance Of The Tumblers” was rendered with extreme precision, resolving power and thunderous dynamics, through the JPS Labs Kaptovator and Superconductor V line of cables. The ability to hear a highly layered soundstage with tons of information presented with the highest degree of musicality, was certainly very surprising. I have heard this track countless times and with many different cables but it was rarely reproduced with such fidelity and ease.

The “BabaYaga” is also a very demanding track that was reproduced through JPS combo with extraordinary levels of transparency and at the same time sounding highly refined.



Moving to the realm of Jazz music. I really feel an urge to point out to the excellent McCoy Tyner`s album “Guitars”, which features performances by Tyner accompanied by Ron Carter and Jack DeJohnette with Marc Ribot, John Scofield, Béla Fleck, Derek Trucks, and

Bill Frisell. The opening track "Improvisation 2" (Ribot, Tyner) is a...well, a striking improvisation and the lively quality of the McCoy Tyner`s piano was shown with a stunning sense of immediacy through the JPS Labs cabling family. The magic word here is PRESENCE. Although the whole album, from the beginning to the end is full of musical surprises, let me just mention a few "must hear" tracks like the bebop`ish "Mr. P.C.", the traditional "Greensleaves" or the dreamy "Boubacar" (with Bill Frisell). The JPS Labs cabling reproduced all the fundamental tones and overtones of the McCoy Tyner`s piano without editorializing and it also managed to project its imposing size with all the splendor - likewise could be said for the rest of the instrumentation. The ability to communicate the musical message and soul of the performance was demonstrated in a most overwhelming way.

CONCLUSION

The JPS Labs` Superconductor V line of cables along with their Kaptovator Lite power cord, represent a stunning achievement in many regards. In the past few months I have had the privilege to try many cables, some costing much more than each of the respective JPS Labs cables, but during the whole testing period I have had a feeling they provide performance levels that reach far beyond their respective price points. Listening to the Kaptovator Lite power cord and the Superconductor V line of cables was highly enjoyable and they are true keepers.

Highly recommended!

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