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INAKUSTIK
MAKES
**CABLE
MAGIC**

INAKUSTIK CABLES

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Distributor: Audio Marketing

My new Inakustik cables remind me of a Seinfeld episode.

The one where Jerry buys an economy class ticket for a flight, but insinuates himself in a first-class seat.

I still laugh as I recall the flight attendant berating Jerry and insisting he return to cattle-class. But Jerry wails that he can't, and he won't go back.

And since my acquisition of Inakustik speaker, interconnect, tone arm cables and cable risers, I can't and won't go back to any of my previous cables.

Which is not to say that new cables just around the corner won't induce a cable switch, again. Audiophiles are a fickle lot and speaking personally, I've lost count of the innumerable times I've decided a cable or piece of gear is a keeper, and it wasn't.

My last cables were keepers. Now they're gone. So I'm taking a different approach to my Inakustiks, and I now describe them to my buddies as "end gamers thanks to my accountant."

Hand on my heart and an eye on my bank account suggests this may be the truth. For a long while at least.

The build quality and performance of the Inakustik cables I've tried thus far and this includes affordable as well as pricey models, is so outstanding I never tire of recommending them.





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“I can't and won't go back
to any of my previous cables”



Until recently, I had no idea Inakustik existed. To say I stumbled across them is something of an understatement. Which is odd, since Inakustik has been manufacturing audio cables, accessories and electronics in Germany since 1977. Duh!

My search began the day we reconfigured the listening room. My five metre speaker cables were too long for my system and I figured 3-metre lengths would be ample.

And yes, whilst I was content with my existing speaker cables, I did want to explore something different. As for my interconnects, these were a hotch-potch of different brands and I've always had the hunch that wiring an audio system with one brand of cables pays sonic dividends, big time.

Precisely what transpired.

My hunt for new cables involved all the usual suspects and I trialed Nordost, Transparent, Shunyata, MIT and a dozen other brands.

None offered more than I already had. But I'm an optimist and kept searching.

I'd about given up when in a bit of serendipitous fortune, I called Len Wallis, owner of Len Wallis Audio, to inquire about a trade-in pair of speaker cables he'd advertised.

"Not for you," Len said. "You'd be going backwards. But I do suggest you give an ear to a brand we've been using on a number of systems in the store over the last couple of months. In every system from mid-fi to hi-end, we've heard a transformative quality. The brand's German and it's called Inakustik."

A large package arrived a couple of days later, and inside was a 3-metre pair of Inakustik Referenz LS1603 cables. And the rest as they say, is audio history.

It took about 3 days to burn the new cables in but after an initial period of brightness, they settled in. First impressions were of abundant detail from top to bottom frequencies,

“Inakustik has been manufacturing audio cables, accessories and electronics in Germany since 1977”



moreover detail emerging from a deep, black silent background.

The later quality a clue that this was a cable that got out of the way for better or worse. The Inakustik was transparent in a way few cables better, and not at the price of \$2999 for a 3-metre pair.

There was such rightness to the sound of my system that I felt compelled to get in some of the brand's Referenz LS1203 RCA interconnects. With them installed, I heard even more transparency, inner detail and again that dead silent background wherein performers and instruments were relayed in my room with a palpable realistic presence.

So... I ordered the tone arm cable called the Referenz 2404 and 10 cable risers. The tone arm cable was a revelation! Without it my SME V sounded foggy. Musical, but foggy. With it, layers of detail were apparent from recordings I didn't know were there. Transparent, lucid

and again, the feeling the 2404 was getting out of the way.

My existing cables were soon sold and I placed an order with Len Wallis Audio for all the cables he'd so kindly sent me.

Weeks passed and the Inakustik cables' qualities grew with daily use. I suspect total burn in will take hundreds of hours, but the sound is already deeply satisfying.

So, I felt compelled to arrange a review of some of the more affordable of the Inakustik cables and share my findings with other music lovers.

For anyone who hasn't a clue who Inakustik is allow me to share how they're in business in Germany, in a big way. How big? Big enough to import raw copper ore from mines, ship it to Germany where it is liquefied in smelting pots. It's then placed in an electrolysis bath to create the purest possible, most conductive copper.

Inakustik selects only the purest batches for its Referenz range and then the copper is drawn to the required diameter in a number of stages after which it's stranded with air-filled PE tubes in a German cable plant. The cables are then crafted by hand in a spotless laboratory by skilled employees at the plant in Ballrechten-Dottingen.

Inakustik approaches everything it makes ranging from audio-video cables and accessories to CDs and LPs, headphone and smartphone cables, headphone amps and a range of hi-fi and multi-media accessories with a Teutonic Thoroughness that has to be admired, but can't be replicated by anyone else.

Ask Inakustik's research division that is clearly large and well funded about cables and you'll be told cables and connections are ultra sensitive objects. And that physical phenomena that arise during the transmission of signals can only be controlled with technical finesse and the best materials.

So technical expertise and research is a given with Inakustik. But what about sound? No sweat. Inakustik has this covered in a way unrivalled by any other cable brand.

It has its very own CD and LP recording facility and it manufactures both formats. The brand's artistic catalogue is huge and covers just about every category and style of music. So it's a serious cable manufacturer that clearly has a huge handle on good sound.

My acquisition of Inakustik audio cables and my research into their design and manufacture serves another purpose. It puts other cable brands into perspective. Many rely on snake oil and salesmanship to get the punters to open their wallets.

I ought to know. I've spent a squillion on dodgy cables over the decades and most likely, so have you.

So you'll forgive me when I say my purchase of Inakustik cables gives me a warm and fuzzy feeling. My cables do not engender smugness, but they contribute to a feeling I've made a sensible audio investment, for once.

My compliment of cables comprises the Referenz LS1603 and NF1203 RCAs, Referenz 2404 Phono cable and a pack of affordable cable riser/insulators. Referenz NF1203 XLRs are in my sights, when I'm more financial.



“The very best cables are the handmade models in the Referenz range”

But a word about Inakustik's labelling of its cables. The very best cables are the handmade models in the Referenz range.

Just below these, sit cables in the Reference range. Confusing, but there must be a German logic in substituting a "Z" with and "C" that I've missed.

Audio Marketing, Inakustik's Australian distributor had virtually sold out its entire stock of cables. But it managed to send me for what's intended to be a capsule or snapshot review of a range of Inakustik cables.

If I had to encapsulate what makes all my review samples so special I could do no better than share Inakustik's cable mantra with you of which is simply "physics instead of voodoo". But I'd also add the company's credo that the very best cables are the ones that least interfere with the reproduction

quality of our hi-fi or video gear. And the very best will transmit the original signal with minimal loss.

This is a way of confirming all cables colour our audio gear, and all will shed some detail as the original signal moves from signal source to our speakers or display screen. That's what I call Teutonic honesty and I harbour a wish it was shared by many more cable purveyors.

The review system comprised an SME20/11 turntable, SME V tone arm, Koetsu Rosewood Signature Cartridge, Audio Research Reference 7 MK2 CD player, Elektra Pynx valve preamplifier, Elektra HD stereo amplifier, Conrad Johnson MV55 valve amplifier and Wilson Sasha and Dynaudio Contour 1.3 speakers,



INAKUSTIK SPEAKER CABLES

Referenz LS1603 3-metre

(\$2995 RRP)

With stereotypical German attention to detail each reference series model is shipped in a large crush-proof carton. Inside, the cable ends are covered in a soft black cloth pouch and glory be, each model is bundled with a pair of soft, black gloves.

The reference series is handmade in Germany to the same design construction differing only in the number of strands of copper weaved around hollow, circular vibration isolating tubes before each bundle of strands is inserted into a complex isolating sheaf.

It follows that as you dip into the models below the LS1603, they present as having a thinner diameter. The models above are also thicker. Apart from the number of strands each cable model follows the same design construction and gives a clue why they each have the signature Inakustik non-sound profile.

From the moment the LS1603 was inserted into my system, there was a "rightness" to the sound and a sense of sonic satisfaction unequalled by any previous speaker cable.

The overriding impression was one of a richness of detail both overt and subtle and high frequencies populated by air, depth, width and height.

This extended to the midrange that now had body and a 3D soundstage populated by performers and instruments that were arraying in my room with lifelike accuracy.

Bass frequencies were fast, detailed and most of all informative providing a front row seat where drums and percussion instruments arrived with unnerving clout. I had the feeling I was hearing what my Sashas could deliver, if the components and cables upstream were good enough.

As to the overall character of the LS1603 cable, what can be said is it's transparent and neutral and quiet with detail emerging from a dead silent background. But one feature stands out: homogeneity. Everything hung together with no frequency given extra emphasis over the others.

Playing **Alan Taylor's** *Beat Hotel* from an XRCD was nothing short of revelatory with Taylor's vocals now grounded in a human body that occupied a defined space in the vast soundstage.

A soundstage where performers and instruments were arrayed with startling vividness and the detail they produced was effortless and full of tonal subtlety.

The Beatle's *Across The Universe* on vinyl was now more transparent and neutral and the musical message flowed with greater ease but with startling intensity.

Van Morrison's *Ballerina* on vinyl was always going to be make or break time for the LS1203 and whether I bought it, or not. One of my fave tracks of all time from a much cherished album of all time, *Ballerina* is a ruthless component arbiter and many a piece of gear has been returned for failing to provide the tension, intensity and sheer musical flow of this track.

A third of the way into *Ballerina* and as the rhythm and lead guitars, keyboard, remerged from a dead silent background, bass and vocals introduced the pulsating bursts of mandolin. But with a never heard before, grin inducing clarity and tonal rightness I hadn't heard from any other cable. I reached for my credit card. Decision made.

The Inakustik Referenz LS1603 was like Jerry, it was never going back.





“a sense of
sonic satisfaction
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previous speaker cable”

Referenz LS1203 Speaker Cable 3.0m

(\$2195 RRP)

All of the above applies but with a smidgeon less at the frequency extremes. The Beat Hotel's moveable feast of high frequency detail and tumultuous bass lost a little amount of detail. But not by much.

Across The Universe's musical message remained intact and the flow of lyrics and instruments had marginally less impact, but the enjoyment factor remained high and the Inakustik cable hallmarks of homogeneity, tonal naturalness and immense detail could be clearly heard.

Ballerina via the LS1203 was so close to the version I'd heard with the LS1603, I began to wonder if I could save money and buy this instead. But hearing the mandolin riffs

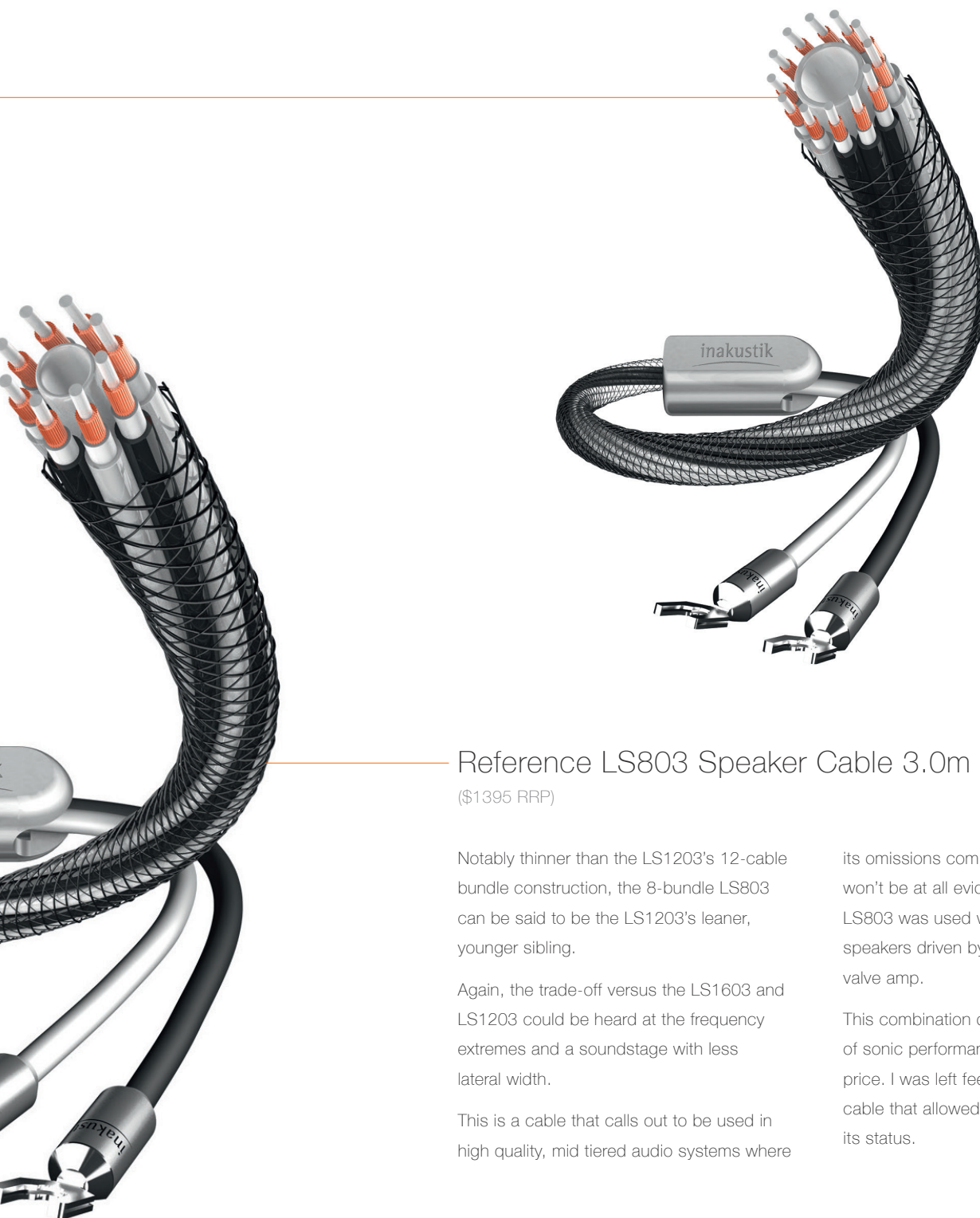
with less clarity and intensity convinced me otherwise, even if the law of diminishing returns was making me feel somewhat foolish.

This leads to the realisation the LS1203 may be the biggest bargain in Inakustik's speaker cable range.

It delivers almost the same amount of treble detail, almost equals the 1603 in the midrange and while it doesn't delve quite as deep in the lowest frequencies or climb as high in the treble, bass is still fast, taut and informative.

The LS1203 also exhibits the same dead quiet background, where the music is projected with immense detail and presented with abundant levels of micro and macro dynamics.





Reference LS803 Speaker Cable 3.0m

(\$1395 RRP)

Notably thinner than the LS1203's 12-cable bundle construction, the 8-bundle LS803 can be said to be the LS1203's leaner, younger sibling.

Again, the trade-off versus the LS1603 and LS1203 could be heard at the frequency extremes and a soundstage with less lateral width.

This is a cable that calls out to be used in high quality, mid tiered audio systems where

its omissions compared to the costlier cables won't be at all evident. To test this theory, the LS803 was used with Dynaudio Contour 1.3 speakers driven by a Conrad Johnson MV55 valve amp.

This combination delivered audiophile levels of sonic performance that belies the system price. I was left feeling it was the LS803 cable that allowed this system to rise above its status.

Referenz 2404 Phono Cable

(\$1699 RRP)

The replacement of my SME V factory cable with the Inakustik 2404 was a revelatory experience.

For the first time, I could hear the separate strands to the backing vocals of Across The Universe on my vinyl copy. As for the soundstage, this was vast with tremendous depth height and lateral spread.

Moving on to Ballerina provided the same auditory sensation and the experience of being up close to Morrison counting the fingers on his hands. Like the LS1603 speaker cable the 2404 phono lead was not going back.

Clinching the deal was the 2404's build quality. So thick you could moor a ship with it. But light and flexible as well.

Reference Cable Base Risers

\$599 RRP (Pack of Ten)

The cable bases are easy to sum up. With ten of these isolating the LS1603 or LS1203 speaker cables from my wooden floorboards, the sound snapped into focus, revealing more detail.

With them removed, performers and instruments on Across The Universe lost their previously sharp outer edges. The Beat Hotel's vocals and guitars also lost all the leading edges from notes that should have been sharper and more raucous.

Morrison's voice was more grating with the risers installed than without them. The lesson here is cable isolators are the icing on the

audio cake once the equipment racks and cables have been sorted.

Inakustik says its cable risers are made to shield cables from mechanical and capacitive effects. They are suitable for cables with 10 to 25 mm diameters, have hi-tech isolating gel pads on the base and suspend the cables on natural rubber strips.



Referenz NF1203 RCA 0.75m (\$749 RRP) (1.5m \$949)

NF1203 XLR 1.5m (\$1099 RRP) (0.75m \$849 RRP)

The RCAs and XLR were installed between the Audio Research CD player to the preamp so I could switch between single ended and balanced. The second RCA linked the pre to power amp.

Within a few bars of The Beat Hotel as Taylor's lyrics washed over me and the powerful bass driving the song shook my room, Inakustik's design logic became crystal clear.

Playing Across The Universe confirmed my theory as the tonal subtleties revealed by the LS1603 and LS1203 speaker cables were arrayed in my listening room.

I reached for Ballerina and waited for the mandolin. Sure enough I was hearing the same sonic features that I'd previously heard via the speaker cables only this time with the entire system wired by Inakustik there was integrity to the sound of the system that I hadn't previously enjoyed.

The NF1203 RCA and XLR cables were sonic clones of the speaker cables. Using this logic the NF1203s would lose out to the dearer NF1603 that should in theory have a little more at the frequency extremes. But the dearer cables were not in stock so this comparison will have to wait.





Conclusion

My experience with the Inakustik cables and risers was one of those moments on my audio journey where I knew with perfect clarity, that what I was hearing was audibly superior to what I had before.

But don't take my word for it because the truth or lack of, in any audio review rests on a personal audition. Not in any audio store but one done in comfort over a week or more in your own listening room.

For those that take this route, all I can say is ENJOY.

WORDS: Peter Familiar

