

EQUIPMENT REVIEW

Origin Live Linear Flow 2 cables

By Alan Sircom

Origin Live is best known for its turntables and tonearms, but for the longest time, it's also made a range of inexpensive interconnects and speaker cables. We looked at the top Linear Flow 2 loudspeaker cable and matching shielded version of the phono-phono interconnect cables.

Starting with the interconnect, it's made of good quality copper conductors, twisted together to reduce inductance, set in a balanced configuration (even though this cable is terminated in single-ended Eichmann Bullet phono plugs, XLRs are an option) and shielded with a nickel-plated copper braid. A rarity among interconnects, the Linear Flow 2 has a flying earth wire, which could help hum, RF or lower the noise floor (although in my system, it did nothing at all).

The loudspeaker cable has a similar construction, making it a true Litz wire design (so no using it with Naim amps from the 1980s) again using high-purity copper in place of silver-plated or even pure silver conductors for the quality of sound. Curiously, although Origin Live will supply the cables terminated with banana plugs if you so desire, the company prefers to ship cables with wire ends tinned with solder (it does not supply the cable 'off the reel'). In addition to the interconnect and speaker cable ranges, Origin Live also (naturally) makes a tonearm cable in the Linear Flow 2 design, but it doesn't make a power cord of any description.

Unlike cables that take a family approach (swap one cable out of the system and the whole house of cards comes tumbling down) these are very much standalone, no fuss wires. There's no special synergy that makes the use of one pointless without the other, even though their sonic signatures are near identical in reality. Linear Flow 2 is far too down-to-earth to rely on ideology.

Both types of Linear Flow 2 excel at getting out of the way. It sounds like faint praise, but these are fundamentally 'characterless' cables, not adding their own identity to the sound and not masking the personality of the devices the Origin Live wires connect with. This might make them hard to demonstrate, because many will go for the biggest bang for the buck; but there's more to music than fireworks, and the Linear Flow 2 cables both make a less dramatic, but no less significant, influence on the sound.

The absence of character means they can fight above their weight. While some systems are (in some cases unconsciously) optimised for top-line cables, there are other extremely high-end systems that need no such special treatment and it is these systems that would benefit from the Linear Flow 2 approach. It shines in those no-fuss, no-nonsense systems that use old-school Brit-fi components; the perfect cable to wire an Audiolab or a Musical Fidelity to a pair of Monitor Audio or Spondors, for example.

This is down to both cables inherent sense of balance and poise. They don't give music a zing, a sense of rhythm or a bloom; they play it straight, and such a straight shooter is rare these days. Origin Live talks about an absence of ringing in the system when Linear Flow 2 is in place; I have to admit, my system doesn't seem plagued by ringing whether the cable is in place or not, but the overall sound (between Lyngdorf CD-1, Sugden A21SE and Avalon NP2.0) lost that glare that sometimes besets CD sound, and that doesn't happen too often.





Of the two, I felt the loudspeaker cable was the stronger of the two, but really not by much. Both have an unfatiguing sense of naturalness and integrity to the sound, and place absolutely no emphasis on any aspect of the overall performance. The loudspeaker cables, however, do get out of the way even more than the interconnects, especially at the frequency extremes; it brings out the texture and feel of bass notes and the sense of urgency high treble can bring to a piece of music. The interconnect did this too – and perhaps just as well – but there was just a

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Prices: Linear Flow 2 'screened'

interconnect: £388/1m pair

Linear Flow 2 loudspeaker cable:

£30/mono metre

Loudspeaker cable termination fee:

£30 per cable

Banana Plugs: £35 per cable

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hint of enhancement to the bass and a slight sheen to the top that was not noticeable in the loudspeaker wire. As said though, the difference was minor.

Hi-Fi+ can sometimes have a rarified approach to cables. We stress cables used as a component in the system, insist people use a front-to-back one-brand solution and can get myopic and wonder why the world and his wife aren't spending thousands on cable systems. But in the real world, despite our entreaties, people don't behave like that. They still buy cables piecemeal, hoping that $A+B=C$. What Linear Flow 2 represents is the best solution if you are buying piecemeal, because it sounds consistent and good and is neutral enough not to upset the cable neighbours. But Linear Flow 2's effects are cumulative, and the more you bring your system into Origin Live line, the more consistent and good and neutral it will sound. OK, so it's not going to win over that many listeners who have a £20,000 cable solution, but it is an extremely 'right' sounding at a price that doesn't leave people gasping for air. Very strongly recommended as a loudspeaker wire, and highly recommended as an interconnect cable. +