

ARTE EM REPRODUÇÃO ELETRÔNICA

## SUBLIME SONORIDADE

CAIXAS ACÚSTICAS ESTELON FORZA

### E MAIS

#### TESTE DE ÁUDIO

CABO USB DYNAMIQUE AUDIO APEX

#### OPINIÃO

LEIGO AVALIANDO AUDIOFILIA PARA  
OUTRO LEIGO

MEMÓRIAS SONORAS

#### ENTREVISTA

ENTREVISTA COM JONATHAN GULLMAN  
DA MSB TECHNOLOGY

## COMPETÊNCIA E AUTORIDADE

AMPLIFICADOR INTEGRADO ATOLL IN400SE



AUDIO  
**3**  
TEST



# DYNAMIQUE AUDIO APEX USB CABLE



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Here comes Fernando Andrette with another digital cable!

For those who believe that well-made cables all sound the same - and if they don't, they are 'defective' - then it will be a waste of time to read another USB cable review.

Now, if you are that reader who is trying to set-up your streamer, and get the most out of this platform, and you have already invested in a good network cable, chosen the best DAC within your budget, but you are still missing the last important link - that is the USB cable - I think you've come to the right page.

And I have two very interesting proposals, with very different prices, from the same manufacturer, to present to you.

Two USB cables so good, it would be an injustice not to present them separately, so take note: in our September issue, I will publish the Dynamique Audio Shadow 2 USB test, and I'll warn you that what separates it from the top USB cable from this manufacturer, is

just the degree of refinement and the finishing in the way of presenting the musical event. They share the same central principle from Dynamique Audio, which is the degree of neutrality sought by all their series, which in my view is essential for the streamer to advance, since it is still further behind the physical media.

I know it bothers many of you readers, me remembering that the streamer isn't there yet, but I haven't turned my back on this 'reality', and I look for solutions in every way possible, to fill these gaps that still exist in its performance - so much so, that I'm upgrading my streamer and hoping that my new choice takes me a little further.

And in this sincere search, nothing is cooler than being able to share consistent discoveries that make my current streamer sound better, and observing specific characteristics that usually bother me - such as the shallow soundstage depth and thin harmonic body, that takes me back to the 90s in their CD-Players and DACs, and its voices and instruments that sound in front of me like 'individual pizzas'. ►



Streamers with better harmonic body and more 3D planes are not cheap at all, and the entry-level ones lack something essential in high fidelity: an excellent tonal balance, so that textures can appear more natural, their transients more precise and with macro-dynamics, all at the same time - a little closer to the CD-Player!

Many people get upset when I joke that entry-level streamers are like the cassette tapes from the 80s. Of course I'm being sarcastic, but I just want you, dear reader, to ask yourself: does the choice really have to be practicality over quality?

We already made this mistake with the 'silver disk', and it took us 20 years to discover that the problem was not in the media or in the famed 16-bit/44khz sampling. The problem was precisely where there should have been no limitations: in the reader and converter!

And now, where is the limitation that makes the streamer sound so unrealistic?

I have no doubt that the first cause lies in the platforms and their codecs, then in the software that reproduces to music (which runs inside the streamers, and which used to run in the computers that were used as streamers), then in the streamer devices themselves in terms of its hardware and power supply and, finally, the USB cables - or even S/PDIF cables in simpler streamers.

And I assure everyone who is searching for the best adjustment and best sound definition for their high-quality streamers, that the USB cable is vitally important in the communication between your streamer and your DAC.

Obviously, I'm not talking about streamers and entry-level DACs costing up to 500 dollars, idolized by many 'influencers', who repeat like a mantra that 'bits are bits' and that, therefore, there is no difference between a 500 dollars streamer and a 10 thousand dollars one!

And if there is no difference between well-built DACs, how about digital cables that can cost from 20 dollars? And some USB cables that can cost more than 5 thousand dollars? This seems outrageous and beyond any 'objectivity'.

Just today, before sitting down to write this test, I watched a video on YouTube in which the theme was to prove that CD Transports cannot and should not sound different. And to prove his point, the guy showed three songs in a 100 dollar Transport, and in a 7000 dollar one. His conclusion was that the differences, if they exist, are 'in-

audible'! Therefore, it would be proven that Transports make no difference! I would like to see this guy say this to those who participated in all sessions of our Workshop, last April in São Paulo, and heard the 'audible' differences between CD-Players, Transports and DACs.

And I'm not talking about superlative systems for hearing the countless differences, as they were crystal clear in all the setups used.

What we need to notice the differences is, first, to know what to look for, and second, to use recordings that express what we need to hear effectively!

It's as simple as peeling a banana, believe me!

If you have the right musical example to show what you want the listener to notice attentively, they will understand it for themselves. This was expressed on the faces of everyone who was there.

I will give just two examples: macro-dynamics and planes (with presentation of cutout, focus and ambience) in which I used a Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man* recording that only asked for the participants to note the position of the timpani, cymbals and brass. And they also concentrated on listening to the displacement of air from the timpani, and its decay.

Then, with each new audio setup, I asked them to tell me in the same example if the distances between the musicians, the focus, cutout and fortissimo were the same, and if there was any change in the presentation of the size of the room.

And, finally, I asked how, as the systems rose in level every two points, how did the harmonic body of the percussion instruments and the brass sections sounded?

Objective and direct questions - and also objective and very conclusive answers.

The second example was the much-desired materialization of the musical event in front of us - Organicity - and nothing better than a recording of guitar and voice well captured and well mixed, in which the singer, in the most refined systems, in addition to the sensation of physical materialization the system allowed us to hear the details of the voice's inflection and subtle details in the guitarist's typing, giving us the 'intentionality' that I say is the pinnacle of the Texture quality of a genuine hi-end system. ►

Formulate the right question, using a consistent example, and you will have answers so powerful that the fallacy that 'everyone hears differently' will fall apart, which would have made it impossible for a group of audiophiles to reach the same conclusions!

And I described all these facts because, to achieve such a consistent result, in the Workshop's three most refined systems, I used a complete set of Dynamique Audio cables, sometimes using Zenith with Hallo 2, and sometimes adding an Apex, to maintain the sound signature of each system, as they are the only cables I know and use that have this degree of Neutrality so essential to demonstrate everything I needed to present to the participants.

They didn't realize the effort made to present each set of the six presented systems, and the weeks of rehearsal, of choosing the ideal recordings so that each example was assimilated without doubt and, now, I can tell you the 'magic' of the central element of this success: Dynamique Audio cables.

Without them, I would have entered an endless maze, as each cable has a sonic signature, and this signature, however subtle it may be, interferes with the final result.

And the central idea of the Workshop was precisely to show the importance of seeking the best tonal balance possible, so I couldn't give up using cables that would interfere as little as possible with the chosen setups.

As I didn't use a streamer at the Workshop, I just wasn't able to show the two Dynamique USB cables, which I now present to you first-hand, in the world!

And the Apex USB made me rethink many questions about the limitations of the streamer, because with its inherent neutrality, the qualities and defects of my current streamer became much more evident.

But before describing my sound observations, I asked Daniel Hassany, cable designer at Dynamique, to tell me a little about the construction of the Apex USB. He told me that the conductors are gold-plated pure silver core (4N), palladium-plated pure silver solid core (4N), and silver-plated OFC copper multifilament (6N). The insulation is air spaced Teflon PTFE and Teflon FEP. The construction is by twisted pair, and like all Dynamique cables, the resonance filter is also braided from copper with carbon. The plug is made of anodized aluminum, with gold-plated pins.

Its construction and finish are among the best USB cables I've owned, heard and tested.

Like the entire Apex line, they are very malleable and easy to handle - they will not bend the terminals with excessive weight and they

are not thick, that would prevent bends or make handling difficult in tight, poorly lit spaces.

The fit is always smooth and perfect!

And the performance? I would say it's kind of out of my current streamer league, which is called Innuos ZENmini Mk3. Because when you place a cable with this degree of Neutrality, on a good level streamer, but below the cable's potential, all the limitations of your streamer will become absolutely explicit!

Because the limitations I mentioned at the beginning of the test are relentlessly exposed! With it, bad recordings show in detail what made them bad or technically limited. On the other hand, the good ones gain vitality.

And you know my opinion about purging bad records we love. I've done this a lot in the past, and today I don't allow myself to repeat that mistake.

So the Apex USB led me to make the decision that it was time to upgrade my streamer, and I'm on my way to achieving that goal.

If I could cheat on my principles, and only listen to the best recordings technically on the streamer, then I could even give an extended living to my current streamer - which did a brilliant job by helping me produce the Playlist section every month. Or I could keep my reference USBs from Kubala Sosna (still the most palatable and best of all for this Innuos streamer), or the one from Sunrise Lab, the one from Virtual Reality, and even one that I rarely mention but that remains a find - which I like to show to everyone who wants a good USB cable: a Japanese SAEC that cost just 180 dollars.

As you can see, I always tried to have an arsenal of USB cables for all testing situations. But none of my collection has this clear attribute of Neutrality - and it's difficult to evaluate a cable where you can't 'detect' its sonic characteristics - because it doesn't have them!

However, when it enters at the right time with its best 'peers', it becomes mandatory.

I keep thinking about the overwhelming majority of audiophiles, who have been searching for decades for cables that give their systems an extra 'spice', that correct small defects in tonal balance, how frustrating it must be to listen to this Dynamique Apex - which, instead of mitigating a limitation, open it!

And the more I think about this reality, the more admiration I have for Daniel Hassany, for his courage in walking such an arduous and lonely path!

But as more audiophiles experience and hear the benefits of Neutral wiring in well-tuned systems, I guarantee they won't go back. Because they will realize that they have freed themselves from the



trap of trying to solve with cables what their systems have not solved, what they have that is deficient.

When I presented three systems, all with Dynamique cables, at our Hi-End Show Workshop, the participants, without knowing or even thinking about which cables I was using in these three setups, were able to focus only on the music and the quality that each of those equipment were providing them.

And this 'effect', believe me, my friend: it is the merit of a system connected to Neutral cables! Neutrality makes everything fit together harmoniously, without edges, without protagonists, it is how live music behaves.

You are there exposed to the musical event, and the degree of emotional involvement increases until there is no room for anything else.

Psychology calls this moment Catharsis, a release of emotions or tensions. I like the term and I think it is suitable for trying to explain to you - who were not at our Workshop - what happened collectively to its participants.

And the central element of this 'communion' was Neutrality.

With Dynamique cables, I managed to make each system show its sonic DNA, in which all equipment converged in the same direction. Some call it luck, I call it practical knowledge.

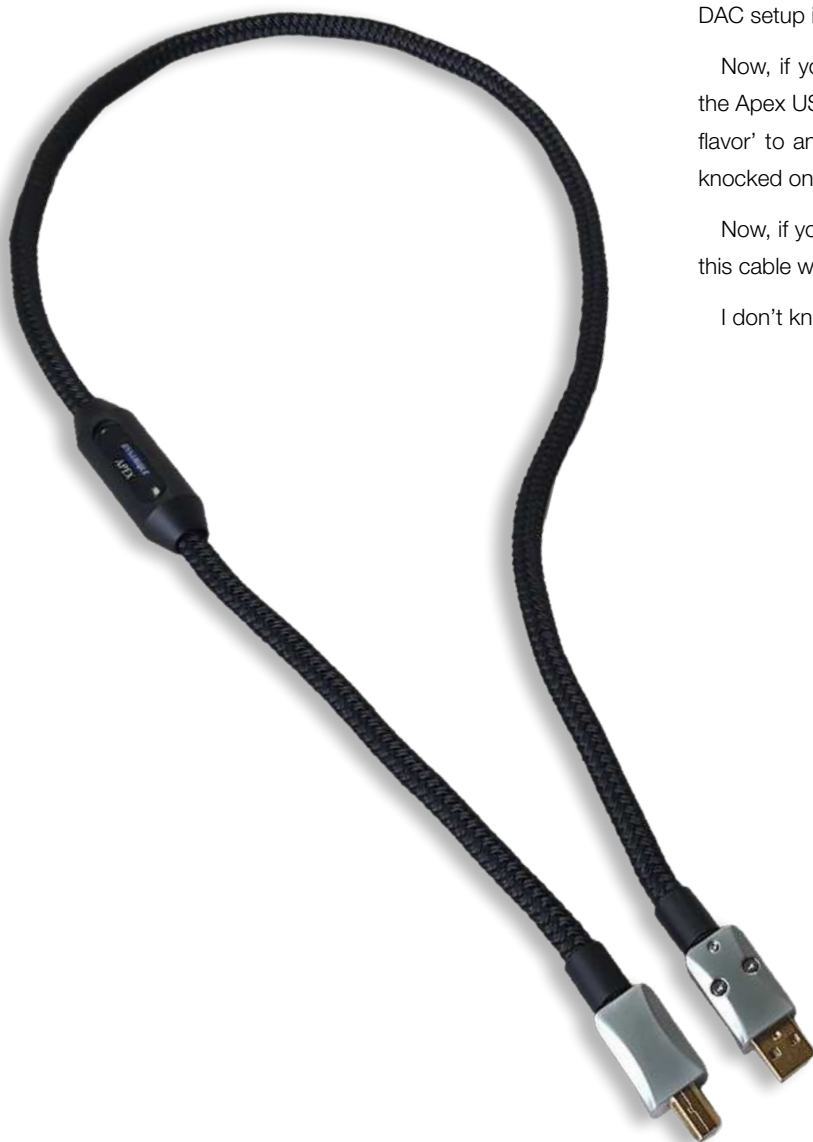
I won't dare break down the Apex USB cable item by item in our Methodology, because with its neutrality, it takes over the 'harmonic body' of the equipment that is connected. So what I can tell you, is: if you've invested a lot in your streamer and consider it a superlative product, connect it with a Dynamique Audio Apex USB.

It will make an accurate sound 'x-ray' of what level your streamer/DAC setup is in.

Now, if you are disappointed with the result, please don't blame the Apex USB, as it has no intention of 'spice up' or give a 'different flavor' to any system - if this is what you are looking for, you have knocked on the wrong door.

Now, if your system really is of a superlative level, the Neutrality of this cable will only enhance all its inherent qualities.

I don't know of any other cable that is so Neutral, and so fair! ■



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