

Stereo Times

The Complete Audiophile Magazine

Dynamique Audio Zenith 2 and Halo 2 cables



Christmas arrived earlier than expected this year, thanks to an email request I received from audio designer Daniel Hassany. Hassany offered ST writers a chance to listen to products from his relatively new cable company Dynamique Audio of Great Britain. Always rooting for the new guy, I welcomed the opportunity and included Greg Voth in this venture.

First, a little background. I found that Dynamique Audio is manufactured in Great Britain, and has been in business since 2009. As far as I'm concerned, that still qualifies as new when it comes to breaking into this highly competitive market. After an extended listening

session with their Zenith 2 speaker cables and Zenith (one meter) digital RCA, a pair of Halo 2 interconnects and AC cords, I am quite adamant this reference class cable is going to be around for years to come. Hassany's background is in IT, but he shifted to more an industrial engineering approach once gaining experience in materials science, metallurgy and industrial processes, such as manual and CNC machining, anodizing, electroplating, etc. Unhappy with the cables on the market at the time, he decided to build his own. Imagine that!

Prior to 2009, Hassany's early homemade efforts proved very popular in Great Britain, giving birth to commercial aspirations. Before long, Hassany was approached to act as an OEM for more established brands; his next step was invariably formalizing his own cable designs under the Dynamique Audio label. An avid audiophile, Hassany had owned cables from pretty much every cable brand available and admits there are some great designs out there, though few delivered the performance Hassany desired over the entire frequency range... most have a character and some form of coloration. Some are clearly fast while others (especially the ones with network boxes), according to Hassany, offer attractive yet colored bass. Some are both musical and honest but simply "a poor value" (meaning expensive). Hassany thought he could offer more.

Dynamique Audio's ethos is simple as stated by Hassany here: "every cable in our range needs a reason to exist. No redundant, overlapping models. Once we establish the performance level targeted, we consider the best design methodology and never intentionally cripple a product to make the model above it look better, so PTFE Teflon and silver-plated copper [are included] on even our more affordable cables, for example. From there, we benchmark against our closest competition. We see many cable brands concerned more with inventive marketing or providing solutions to non-existent problems. We aim to be as BS-free as possible. If you look closely at the technical specifications of many cables brands (the ones who provide this – there is a worrying trend for many to omit any technical details entirely...), you will often see many use inferior materials – PVC or silicon dielectrics, poor grade copper conductors, brass-based connectors with high metal mass. We design most of the connectors we use in-house, rather than use off-the-shelf parts as many others do, so our power connectors, speaker connectors, interconnect plugs etc are all designed to our own specs. This control in the production process allows us to produce the cable we[wish] to design, rather than [settling] for the best compromise available. This means that the listener is assured that every model in our range will have a 'house' sound, which is tonal neutrality, stable and clear vocals,

strong low-level resolution, and as our name implies – wide dynamic range, and, as they progress up our range, this balance will not shift – each cable only brings more of these qualities to the table."



The Dynamique Audio cables for review arrived via TNT international just a few days after being shipped. Upon opening the package, I found the cables presented in very well-made boxes, each foil stamped with the Dynamic Audio logo, and marked with the model number for each individual cable. The cables themselves are attractive in their interwoven black mesh outer-sleeves and none are designed super thick, stiff or heavy. The Dynamique Audio Zenith 2, Zenith 2 digital and Halo 2 interconnects are super flexible and lightweight when compared to the Absolve cables in my downstairs setup or the many others I have reviewed over the years. We all are well aware that a cable's weight and build should not be indicative of its performance... perhaps the many designs out there as thick as a reticulated python do so to in an attempt to justify their asking price.



Installing the Zenith 2 speaker cables on the Tekton Double Impact SE loudspeakers, Zenith 2 digital, Halo 2 interconnects and AC power cord onto the Laufer Teknik Memory Player connecting to the new Struss Audio Dual Mono 250 (\$9k), integrated from Poland, made most of the auditioning a breeze. As beloved as the Grandinote electronics of Italy have become around here of late, it was shocking to hear the beauty living inside this minimalist Polish integrated amplifier (review in the works).

I should mention that my previous cables in this system were the Absolute TIM Reference, of which our own Ed Van Winkle wrote so glowingly in these pages... and for good reason, as these French cables are certainly not cheap at nearly \$12k a pair. There's a unique quality about them and their ultra-refined and natural tonality is hypnotizing. If I had to qualify them, as compared to the DA Zenith and Halo 2's, I would say they may be ever-so slightly French: romantic and beguiling.

Heck, no apologies needed for sounding so sweet. Duly noted, the Absolute TIM series are also extremely transparent and as wide and open as the outdoors, too. Installing the DA Zenith and Halo 2's proved interesting... at almost a third the price of the Absolute TIM asking price, the Dynamique Audio Zenith 2 cables retail price of \$4k. The Halo 2 AC cords retail for \$1440 each, compared to the Absolute Versailles AC cord asking price of \$3k. Why don't I have less expensive cables to compare? Good question. I've heard a lot of great cables, but unfortunately, the better they are, the more they usually cost. Nowadays, \$4k is considered "affordable," as other top-tier cable

manufacturers ask as much as \$50k for a speaker cable. The Dynamique Audio brand makes far less expensive cables too, such as their Tempest 2 series, which our own Greg Voth reviewed (here) - and now regards as his new reference. It didn't seem to matter that the brand cable he referenced them against was also far more expensive as well. The hauntingly beautiful "Present Past" from the late-great Canadian trumpeter Kenny Wheeler's "Angle Song" 1996 release (ECM 1607), featuring Lee Konitz (alto sax), Dave Holland (bass), Bill Frisell (electric guitar) still amazes me. I purchased the CD back in '96 and, to this day, it's still in rotation, both for its remarkable sound quality and incredible musicianship. What's so great about this recording is, this is the first time these artists played together, the trio features no drummer and the sense of space provided by each solo is mesmerizing. With the DA Zenith 2 and Halo 2's, you get the impression the space is both airier and more spot-lit. Kenny's trumpet, for example, has more spit and grit coming through its valves. For some strange reason the sound of the trumpet appears tighter, faster and better focused, revealing neither edges nor hot spots. Bill Frisell's electric guitar possesses even more electric twang and resounding reverb, which gives this song its broad sense of individuality, scale and height. In this regard, I would have to assume the Dynamique Audio's Zenith and Halo 2's are built on transparency, speed and detail first because they simply get out of the way and allow the music to come through with little or no editorializing. Impressive is an understatement.

At first blush, the DA Zenith and Halo 2's infused the music with more pace and verve, especially my older, more revered reference jazz recordings. Tuning up John Coltrane's "Wise One," from his legendary 1964 Impulse studio recording "Crescent," is perhaps the most inspiring recordings I've personally encountered (as it's one of the very first songs that introduced me to the brilliance of John Coltrane). Using his traditional quartet that included McCoy Tyner (piano), Elvin Jones (drums) and Jimmy Garrison (bass), I've come to know this disc quite well... it is among my all-time favorites. Listening through the DA Zenith and Halo 2's offered new perspectives as to what made Coltrane's tenor sound so regal. It's not a sound of his saxophone that simply resonates into the room: this is a sound that resonates within the soul of the listener, reminiscent of an old '60's Alabama preacher speaking to his congregation about the harsh inequities of the era. Coltrane was remarkable, with his ability to translate social consciousness through his music. The DA Zenith and Halo 2's displayed this heavily panned recording with a level of authenticity that easily exceeded my expectations.

Back in the early '60's, musicians were mic'd into the far corners during the recording session. It was the technique of the time and used to take full advantage of the new "stereo" recordings that had just come on the scene. However, there's significance in this too. For one, Coltrane's saxophone was not so alone in that corner of the room anymore as I remembered. I was able to detect the space better than I remembered amid his powerful gesticulations through his instrument. Through the DA Zenith and Halo 2's, the overall sound of the recording's space was greater resolved as though a different light shown on it and McCoy Tyner's piano sounded distant but better defined and more dynamically tactile. Garrison's bass was surer afoot and dynamically charged while Elvin Jones was, how can I put this...more "Elvin-ny," casting a greater light into his polyrhythmic skills. Strikes on the cymbals were weightier and yet possessed even more sheen; I was able to greater appreciate why Coltrane valued Elvin's play so much during those historic recording sessions.

Listening to this recording for the first time through the Dynamique Audio Zenith 2 and Halo 2 cables had me thinking that this cable serves more as an extension of the microphone, imparting very little of its own voice. This made more sense to me on this legendary historic recording than any other more modern recording. Another thing I noticed about the Dynamique Audio Zenith 2 and Halo 2 cables is there is how little there is to reference as to what it does in the frequency extremes. When strapped to the Tekton Double Impact SE, Laufer Teknik Memory Player and Struss Audio DM250, the sound was so harmonically intact that the search for adjectives for parts of the sound as compared to how good the music sounds is was a challenge and important to note. There exists a wholesomeness to the overall picture where you are concentrating more on the music than the source. I found myself caught up into the era and the artistic expression rather than treble and/or bass extension. The humanity in the music is delivered by subtraction rather than addition.



When the gang comes over for a listening session, there's the system and then there's the music. Surprisingly, through the DA Zenith and Halo 2's, the discussions are more aimed towards the music than the sound, which is quite the usual when super mega-priced cables are in place. Yet, everyone commented on the music and how alluring it sounded. There's a level of truth to the source these cables bare out the longer you listen to them - or forget that you are. You find yourself listening and enjoying the music more than dissecting the system it's playing through. Not sure how that translates in your quest for the cable that could make the Bucket List but, for me, it's remarkable to think that list that much closer to realize in terms of affordability. In a world where \$400k loudspeakers, \$50k tone-arms and \$25k audio racks are increasingly becoming the norm, it's rewarding to know that folks are still making excellent products at realistic asking prices.

If you're looking for that wonderful audio gift at this holiday time, consider Dynamique Audio Zenith 2 and Halo 2 cables. They are among the most neutral and see-through cables I've heard and but seldom have encountered at this asking price. No, they're not cheap, but to finally be able to experience a product that qualifies as a reference caliber that many others will be judged against someday makes this a really smart purchase. I'm smitten by their performance so much they've earned my Publisher's Choice Most Wanted Component Award for 2019! and are hereby, highly recommended.

Clement Perry



Specifications:

**Dynamique Audio Zenith 2 speaker cable,
Zenith SP/DIF cable (\$975),**

Halo 2 cables and AC Cords and : A mix of Halo 2 & Zenith 2 series
cables (Halo 2 I/C's ≈ \$1440, Zenith 2 SPK ≈ \$4060, Halo 2 AC ≈ \$1440
at the reference class-level

Website: www.Dynamiqueaudio.com