



# In-akustik NF-204 Micro Air

Once in the vanguard of the late '70s hi-fi cable revolution, In-akustik now has a vast catalogue. We test the top Reference/Micro Air interconnect. Review & Lab: **Paul Miller**

Only one issue ago we reviewed an interconnect cable whose core thesis focused on achieving a low capacitance and dielectric loss by utilising an 'air' insulation. That was Kimber's new flagship 'Naked' interconnect – a cool £12,700 per terminated metre [*HFN* Mar '22]. Somewhat more affordable, but also leveraging the 'air dielectric' theme, is the NF-204 Micro Air interconnect from Germany's most prolific cable manufacturer, In-akustik, based in Ballrechten-Dottingen.

Priced at £325 for an RCA-terminated 1m stereo set (or £340 for XLR plugs) the NF-204 Micro Air also adheres to In-akustik's aim of achieving low capacitance – something you may choose to read about, at length, on its website. In practice, the (measured) 61pF/m parallel capacitance is very close to that recorded for Kimber's Naked, as is the 0.65µH/m inductance. Resistance is significantly lower, however, at 49mohm/m, simply as a result of the larger cross-sectional area of the NF-204 Micro Air's conductors.

### PERFECT SYMMETRY

The picture [opposite] clearly illustrates the three concentric bundles of oxygen-free copper strands that form the NF-204 Micro Air's symmetrical signal and return conductors. The individual strands are coated in polyurethane, preventing oxidation and inter-strand conduction. The bundles are clamped in place by a polyethylene sleeve and woven jacket – it's the latter that affords the 'air' between the gently twisted conductor cores, but this is not the pure air dielectric attempted by those more esoteric cables! The cores are screened by a peripheral foil and braid that also forms the 'X' connection when wired in balanced mode with XLR plugs.

There's no disputing the superb build and termination of these cables, and particularly the quality of the

custom, cold-welded connectors with their tellurium/copper contact pins. This is German engineering at its very best!

### TAKE TO THE AIR

Auditioned, as usual, between our resident dCS Vivaldi One player/DAC [*HFN* Feb '18] and Constellation Inspiration monoblock amplifiers [*HFN* Oct '19], the supplied (balanced) set of NF-204 Micro Air interconnects delivered the direct, articulate and essentially very faithful sound that we've come to expect from the brand [*HFN* Jun '14 & Jan '16]. Moreover it will prove a complementary

match with the partnering Reference LS-204 XL Micro Air speaker cable [*HFN* Feb '21] which possesses a little more 'edge' than earlier iterations. By way of illustration, what could be more appropriate than 'Cloudburst Flight' from the 2019 remastering of Tangerine Dream's classic *Force Majeure* [UMC – 00602577478840]?

Here the cables did nothing to blunt Edgar Froese's intense, swirling guitar solo, then sequenced and punctuated by electronic keyboards to thrilling effect. Often judged in the shadow of the title track and '...Metamorphic Rocks', 'Cloudburst...' has always struck me as the most melodic and uplifting quarter of the album, and with the In-akustik cables in tow I was taken back on a musical journey first travelled 40-odd years ago.

### QUANTUM LEAP

The delicious, delicate sound of the Marc van Roon Trio's *Quantum Stories* [Challenge Classics CR73368; DSD64], recorded in a reverberant church acoustic by Bert van der Wolf, was given room to breathe by the system while the cables, perhaps, brought a little added contrast to the piano. If you want 'lush' or 'rose-tinted' then look elsewhere because these 'Micro Air' interconnects are more likely to give it you straight. ☺

### HI-FI NEWS VERDICT

Technically, the low capacitance, low-resistance and low-leakage NF-204 Micro Air is about as broadly compatible an interconnect as any enthusiast might wish for. It also combines a useful flexibility with a very robust standard of construction. All good so far... and the 'sound' is also as balanced and 'non-invasive' as any reasonably neutral audio system would demand. So if you're thinking of blowing the cobwebs from your set-up, In-akustik has the air!

Sound Quality: 88%



**RIGHT:** Not as unwieldy as it looks – each conductor comprises three concentric bundles of fine copper strands, sheathed in a PE tube. Connectors are cold-welded under a pressure of 1.5 tons

