

In-akustik Reference LS-204 XL Micro Air



One of nine speaker cables in one of five separate ranges, this 'Micro Air' design from In-akustik's Reference series represents a sweet spot. Review & Lab: **Paul Miller**

Once Germany's best-kept cable secret, the In-akustik brand – part of the family-run Braun Group – is nothing if not comprehensive in its offering. Every type of power, analogue, digital and AV cable is included, across multiple ranges, alongside custom-install accessories that extend to ambient LED lighting solutions.

In-akustik's copper is smelted and refined in Germany, the highest quality OFC batches being selected for its flagship 'Reference' range of audio cables, including the LS-204 XL Micro Air we have here. The 'XL' version of this cable features six multicore conductors, grouped as signal and return pairs, that are wound around a polyethylene fibre core. Each conductor comprises multiple, lacquer-coated copper strands, arranged in four concentric layers, and jacketed in a polyethylene sleeve [see pic, below].

In-akustik set out to design a low inductance cable and in the LS-204 XL it has undoubtedly succeeded – the mere 0.23µH/m imposed here being



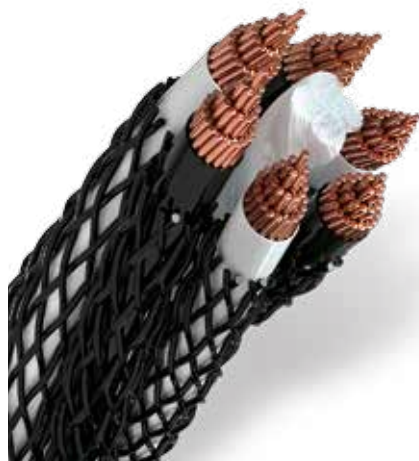
ABOVE: Fitted with a choice of rhodium-plated plugs, the LS-204 XL Micro Air combines physical flexibility with a design that supports long runs

achieved with a helical geometry that also keeps parallel capacitance down to an acceptable 110pF/m. Furthermore, the substantial 7.86mm² (3x2.62mm² per signal/return leg) cross-section of those multi-stranded copper cores keeps the loop resistance down to a fabulously low 4.8mohm/m. Cold-welded to your choice of 'Easy plug', spade or, as here, 4mm BFA-version banana connectors the power loss is just 0.0052dB/m. These cables are tailor-made for long, >5m runs where your amplifier is placed at one end of the room and your speakers at the other!

FEEL THE AIR

To test the idea, I used a 7m set of LS-204 XL Micro Air cables (£1350-1450) and, as heavy-gauge cables typically get the best of amps offering a low output impedance, I auditioned them with Devialet Expert 800, as well as Constellation Inspiration Monos

LEFT: Air is a superior dielectric and In-akustik puts it to good use by spacing its multiple conductors around an 'air rich' fibre core



[HFN Oct '19], with our in-house B&W 800 D3s [HFN Oct '16]. These cables are 'straight down the line' performers, not tone filters, as illustrated by testing material like Sam Smith's *The Thrill Of It All* [Capitol Records 5785574; 48kHz/24-bit]. No less 'thrilling' with the LS-204 XLs in tow, the choral accompaniment on the opener 'Too Good At Goodbyes' burst forth just behind a very close-miked Smith. His voice retained the right amount of 'edge' while the percussion had equal snap, the ensemble maintaining a balance on the civilised side of fierce – a tough ask with these plaintive, slightly sibilant vocals.

The percussive intro to Paul Simon's *In The Blue Light* [Legacy Recordings 19075841442; 96kHz/24-bit] sounded fresher – thankfully – as this 'reimagined' collection of his lesser-known album tracks was revealed in meticulous detail here. The vibrant take on 'Pigs, Sheep And Wolves' enjoyed a good sense of attack, of expectation and excitement too, all the while avoiding sounding too demanding or, heaven forbid, harsh. This cable is a good choice for big, neutral-sounding systems. ⬇

HI-FI NEWS VERDICT

An evolution of In-akustik's 'Air Helix' geometry, the 'Micro Air' construction of its LS-204 XL cable retains the low resistance and inductance of the German brand's costlier cables but with the advantage of lower capacitance, promising a more consistent behaviour with a wider range of amplifiers. There's a lot of hand-made cable here for the money, making it a reliable bet for that first 'big upgrade'.

Sound Quality: 80%

