

the absolute sound[®]

MIT EVO One Speaker Cable and Interconnect

Superb Focus and Resolution

Review by Neil Gade



This review is my first of an MIT (Musical Interface Technologies) product since the AVT-1, an entry-level cable my colleague Paul Seydor and I reviewed in a two-part cable survey in Issues 146/147. Suffice it to say, that was a long time ago. The subject of this article, the EVO One, is anything but entry-level, and I'll say it right from the outset: The EVO One is a cable of no small significance.

The EVO Series includes three models from the broader MIT Heritage collection. At the top of the Heritage line are the well-regarded MI-2C3D models. A rung down are EVOs, which evolved using key MIT Magnum and Shotgun technologies modified for size and cost (smaller caps and inductors, for instance). In MIT's words these economies permitted EVO "to hit many of the benchmarks of MIT's Oracle Matrix SHD 120 cable and deliver it in the sub-\$10k range."

MIT tends to be restrained in revealing wire composition and geometry, but allows that EVO construction for both the speaker and interconnect is of a multi-gauge type and uses high-purity six-nines copper conductors. Top-quality polyethylene insulation is also employed to reduce non-linear dielectric-based distortions.

In order to hit EVO's price points some fancy footwork was required, including replacing the expensive, machined-aluminum network enclosures and nixing special tuning options. Other breakthroughs in design and miniaturization, coupled with through-hole PCB assembly rather than point-to-point wiring, helped mitigate costs.

Built upon MIT's patented Multipole Technology, EVO One interfaces offer "50 Poles of Articulation," said to extend performance across a wider bandwidth, and networks that "optimize the musical intervals within each octave." This is the principal reason that MIT chooses to describe its products as "audio interfaces" rather than as more prosaic "cables." EVO prices check in mostly at well under \$4k until you reach the top-tier EVO One speaker or interconnect, which punches the register at as much as \$6k, depending on length.

MIT's reputation in audio circles is inarguable. In the realm of cable and AC products few other designer/manufacturers have stood at the forefront of our hobby like Bruce Brisson, who founded MIT in 1984. For years, questions have swirled around MIT's "mysterious" network enclosures and the Multi-Pole Technology they house. Brisson addressed this issue during his discussion with editor-in-chief Robert Harley in the "Cable Designer Roundtable" in Issue 234. When he was asked about the core beliefs that guide his product development, he replied: "When measuring correctly, using impedance analyzers, one understands that audio cables suffer from at least two resonances. As an example, an eight-to-ten-foot speaker cable will typically possess a series resonance somewhere below 1kHz as well as a parallel resonance somewhere between 150kHz to 250kHz. Using a form of piecewise network analysis, I optimize the cable's resonances via additional networks, hence the network boxes found on all MIT cables. Our best cables possess networks that optimize the cable to function without the series resonance down to a fractional hertz, or just above DC. Looking at the high frequencies in the time domain, our best speaker cables yield a useful transient response of 2.8 microseconds, or ~357kHz."

In sonic character EVO One conveyed a neutral tonal signature with only small hints of a cooler, more forward slant. There were no tonal exaggerations at the frequency extremes. Its dominant trait was that of "control," defining the boundaries of images with the precision of a draftsman wielding a T-square. EVO One was unsurpassed in the way it could find, focus, and lock down images. Like a camera zoom lens with constant, continuous focus from foreground to background, no image was too small or inconsequential for EVO One to sharpen. Even at very low levels, EVO One projected a delicate instrument like a harp, a snare, or a flute, which ordinarily might be overwhelmed by the louder voices in the orchestra surrounding it, distinctly and effortlessly. In addition, every instrument that appeared in the soundspace seemed perfectly timed, much in the way musicians listen to one another during a performance to adjust their timing.

Treble response was unforced and natural, even sweet at times; harmonics were rendered with air and extension. Brass and winds shined and soared; cymbals retained a golden shimmer; violin harmonics rose uncongested. Bass response was equally remarkable. From the moment I cued up the acoustic bass intro to Harry Connick Jr.'s "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square" [We Are in Love], the instrument was reproduced with full-bodied pitch, extended resonances, and loads of grip. Organ notes, acoustic bass, kick drum...all had strikingly firm and fast transients, pitch definition that never wavered, and extended decay times. EVO One may not necessarily go deeper into the bottom octave than other premium wires, but its grip gave it an edge in musicality.



Vocals possessed an energetic, full-bodied, fleshy, and fully realized sense of focus—attributable to EVO One’s stirring and propulsive midrange. The sensitive vocal interplay of Peter Gabriel and Kate Bush during “Don’t Give Up” [So] was never more intimate and immediate. Dynamics were powerful, transients uninhibited, resulting in a liveliness factor that took older recordings and seemingly dropped them into the Fountain of Youth, to be heard again as if for the first time. EVO One is a cable of remarkable tonal color and sensitivity to dynamic contrast—factors that registered in my ears with every drumbeat, tap of a hi-hat, touch of a pianist, and pluck of a flat-pick. Music bounced along on its toes, and was never caught flat-footed.

Transparency was the key observation that kept popping up throughout my listening sessions. Images were spotless and reproduced free of the grainy haze that sometimes envelopes them and causes transients to smear and resonant decays to lack sustain. With each recording I’d cue up, the impression was one of astonishing resolution that extended from the furthest depths of the soundstage clear out to the footlights. This resolving power provided unwavering focus even during the quietest interludes. As I listened to Ivo Pogorelich performing the Mozart Piano Sonatas, his keyboard chord clusters were reproduced with remarkable inner clarity. Hearing the individuation of the component parts of the notes became hypnotizing.

EVO One also sent me back to familiar recordings to have another listen. A favorite is Appalachian Journey with YoYo Ma, Edgar Meyer, and Mark O’Connor. Their virtuoso playing is a handy way to assess system detail recovery, truth to timbre, and resolution of harmonic interplay as these acoustic string instruments maneuver, stab, dip, reel, and soar in and out of each other’s octave ranges. I noted for the first time Edgar Meyer switching from bowing to plucking style. Similarly, while Linda Ronstadt’s performance of “Lose Again” [Hasten Down the Wind] is just a pedestrian pop recording, it was possible even here to glean details that I had otherwise assumed were smudged or covered up in the engineering and mixing. For example, a piano playing in the background during the final verse pops off some aggressively punctuated chords that often sound cloudy and occluded, literally “buried in the mix.” However, with the MIT in the system those heavily punched chords became clearer and more present, specific, and melodic.

Earlier I alluded to the EVO One sense of coolness and forwardness. This comment stems from the fact that EVO doesn't artificially tint or rosy up the sonic picture with warmth where that warmth doesn't exist in the recording. It produces such an explicitly clean and colorless sound. However, our ears may hear this freedom from distortion as akin to coolness or dryness.

As for "forwardness," I use the word advisedly. EVO One's forwardness is certainly not the aggressive "in-your-face" kind that flattens soundstage depth. Neither does it exaggerate spatiality through recessive frequency colorations, suckouts, or phase anomalies. Its sense of dimensionality is actually very good when it comes to the layered, front-to-back seating of a symphony orchestra. Sections are arrayed with clarity. While EVO One may not be at the very top of the class in the three-dimensional imaging of the individual instruments in those orchestral arrays, it's near the top in every other category.

Today's cables, at the entry level and beyond, have a long shelf life and are already good to very, very good. Don't let anyone fool you that they're not. (Read, if you haven't already, Jonathan Valin's recent review of the Synergistic Research Foundation Series, or the Audience Ohno article I wrote a few years back—just to name a couple.) However, upgrading is a fact of audiophile life, and as your rig evolves, cables should follow suit.

While many cable companies, MIT included, can rise into a virtual unobtainium category—that rarefied strata of big big money—and leave most audiophiles on the outside looking in, EVO One speaker and interconnect, though by no means inexpensive, provide an ear-opening experience for those who may have thought the door to such excellence would always remain firmly closed. One of the most musically significant and satisfying, okay, interfaces that I have heard at any price.