Allnic Audio ZL-5000 Power Cable

Designer Kang Su Park of Korea's Allnic Audio is an obvious deep thinker and top tinkerer. We recently published a review of his H-1202 tubed phono stage. It was a marvellous piece of design with superb sound. Park also designs cables. When David Beetles from Allnic distributor Hammertone Audio asked Audiophilia to review the H-1202, he slipped into the conversation that a loom of Allnic Audio cables was also available for review. Cables—discussing or writing about them—do not scare me. Some publications won't touch them. Mention of the 'C word' in forums or on Facebook and you're likely to get an earful. For the naysayers, enjoy your Belden wire and lamp cord. For the rest of us confirmed cable fans, please allow us our fun. Either tribe, please read on.

In my last review I wrote of my predilection for one piece of gear/one review and for the component to focus on a single audio task. Here, Beetles presented me with two different power cords (Park calls them Power Cables) and their top of the line speaker cables and interconnects. It crossed my mind to do a full loom review, but my musical instincts nudged me toward my singles preference. With all the Korean wire in place, we're talking north of 10 grand's worth of cables. Before you faint, that's peanuts compared to a full set of some crazy, esoteric cables.

However, if you are charging top dollar for wire, each cable should be judged as a stand alone component. This is how I think of fine audio cables such as the one under review, the ZL-5000 Power Cable. The shortest length of the ZL-5000 Power Cable (1.8m) retails for **$2000**. 'ZL' stands for 'Zero Loss'. The ZL-5000 is Allnic's top of the line power cable (the ZL-3000 Power Cable at $1400 will be reviewed by Audiophilia later this year).

'Zero Loss Technology'

Park aims for no loss of signal by using his proprietary technology to minimize three active cable resistances—linkage, contact and wire. Linkage resistance is ameliorated with hot melt welding at 1000C between the terminations and the wire. Park does not use screws or soldering. He also use 'double blades' for speaker terminals and has proprietary contact methods for each of his cables.

Other technologies used include 'Mu-metal shield' and 'MRCT®. Mid-Range Control Technology'.

Allnic Audio explains:

Mu-metal shield : All other audio cable manufacturers use, without any doubt, copper or silver shield for signal cables which are effective only for electric noise, not for magnetic one.

MRCT®. Mid-Range Control Technology. Allnic considers that protruded midrange is the most formidable obstacle for harmonious signal transfer.

Allnic's MRCT uses metal platings for slight midrange braking and thick wire gauze for encouraging low frequencies, and controls capacitance for ever evading high frequencies.

Key features of ZL-5000 Power cable:

1. Four Surface Contact of IEC receptacle instead of weak line contact.

- Conventional IEC has simple line contact Clip type, which is not suitable to relay big current.
- Four surface contact of beryllium copper

2. Bigger gauge of wire; Nickel plated OFC conducts bigger current.

3. Double shielding insures quieter operation.

- Aluminium and Nickel copper mesh double shielding blocks out all the noises.

4. Six divided beryllium AC plug with inner high elastic rubber minimizes contact resistance.

- Silicon rubber insulation between wires insures high temperature operation and more safety.

My use

Whether or not you are proponents of high end cables, you can read above about the obvious care and technology that Park has included in his cable designs. No doubt, the alloy (Mu-metal), the terminations and materials used all contribute to the Allnic cable 'sound', but Beetles suggests it's the 1000C hot weld that is the real magic behind the sound. The welding machine is so powerful, it dims the lights of a very large factory floor every time it is used!

The Allnic Audio ZL-5000 Power Cable arrived boxed and in a velvet bag. Like many upper echelon cables, it is very solid and unwraps like a

component. It's no unwieldy garden hose, but substantial with real heft and gravitas. The fit and finish is exemplary. All the Allnic Audio cables feel good in the hands and are easy on the eyes.

As I intended to review each cable separately, I asked Beetles which component I should plug in to if using the ZL-5000 only. He responded 'amplifier' almost immediately. So, into the back of my Jeff Rowland Continuum S2 Integrated Amplifier it went. The beautiful brown/grey metal of the terminations and the blue braided cable looked very lovely attached to the Continuum.

Sound

The differences of sound between very good cables (like my reference Anticables Level 3 Reference Series Power Cord—I have seven in my system @ $330/each in 1.5 metre lengths) and expensive beauties like the ZL-5000 is usually subtle. It takes time to hear differences let alone appreciate the unique qualities of the new cable in your system. The ZL-5000 was just so.

By chance, I was playing the soundtrack to *The Constant Gardner* when I replaced the Anticables power cord with the Allnic. The unique score by Alberto Iglesias (a favourite composer of Almodóvar and a fellow Spaniard) is a masterclass of orchestration subtlety, focussing on instruments that help to express Moorish, Middle Eastern, African and Western musical sensibilities. The recording is TDF! And perfect for reviewing high end audio—imaging, very low bass, and instruments' timbral accuracy. For sure, some of the driving rhythmic elements of the music will impress the listener, but it's the subtlety of instrumental timbre where the ZL-5000 immediately made an impression. Iglesias employs instruments as diverse as the kāwālā (an end blown flute made of cane), the Kenyan nyatiti, an eight-stringed plucked lyre, and a charango, a lute-like instrument from the Andes made with the shell of an armadillo, in concert with traditional Western instruments.

All these instruments were detailed beautifully by the 5000 but it was

something very subtle and way back in the mix that caught my ear, hitherto unheard during many previous hearings. Flatterzunge.

In English, flutter tonguing.

A technique used on many instruments but used widely on the flute by composers such as Richard Strauss, Mahler, Stravinsky, Bartok and a host of others. Many flutists make the mistake of thinking articulation (single tonguing, double, triple and flutter tonguing) is all about the tongue. It's not. It's about a well supported flow of breath, especially as the dynamics get quiet. Think of a golf swing. All good teachers will tell you the ball gets in the way of the swing. Same for articulation on the flute. The tongue gets in the way of a constant, supported air stream.

Very quiet flutter tonguing is very difficult, especially when the conductor is giving you a *ppp* hand sign, a frustrated look and the recording red light is on. During a couple of *The Constant Gardner* tracks, I heard the most delicate and quiet flutter tonguing adding colour to the orchestration. I actually did a double take. It really surprised me.

This may be getting into the weeds. Yet, this is how a listener must approach a cable review or purchase. The differences between my varied in house power cords (Mojo Audio, Cardas, Audioquest, and Anticables) and the Allnic were not minute but they were understated and refined. And exactly what a discerning, patient ear craves. At matched levels, I heard more of the flutes (one player, overdubbed—how's that for a deep dive into the mix?), more tactile strings (pads of fingers manipulating the strings with different pressures for varying dynamics) and a general feeling of cultivated well being with the ZL-5000 in the system.

I expected a quality sound commensurate with Park's design prowess and research but this went beyond my expectations. If you have a very revealing high end system, matched beautifully and setup correctly after years of careful research and curation, why would you not contemplate a **$2000** power cord if it behaves as I report?

That it performed so beautifully plugged into only one component still has me deep thinking. I did not try the cable in other components. Beetles did provide me with two ZL-3000s ($1400 each). I think I'll leave the ZL-5000 in place for a while before I switch. If I weaken, I may throw in the two 3000s—DAC and Server or my phono stage monoblocks. I'm sure the plot will thicken. However, in the here and now, the clarity and sophistication the ZL-5000 adds to my system is very satisfying.

Conclusion

A few months ago I received a text from my buddy Jim after loaning him one of my Level 3 Refs. 'How can one power cord make such a difference?'. As I mentioned previously, Paul Speltz of Anticables was kind enough to send me seven ($2300) to satisfy all my components. With them in my system, the resulting sound was far better than my longtime cord mix and match. Yet, I had an even deeper musical experience with only one Allnic Audio ZL-5000 Power Cable.

Would you spend $2000 on a component that could add such cleansing to your system? Happily, Allnic Audio's worldwide distributor has a 'try and buy' policy. Audiophiles can't ask for better than that. I'm betting if you try one in your system, you're buying. Very highly recommended.

9 Likes