

# Tweek Geek Speek

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## Sometimes You Know Immediately... Review of High Fidelity's CT-1 Ultimate XLR Interconnects.

I had a customer order a pair of the new [High Fidelity CT-1 Ultimate XLR interconnects](#) recently, and before I delivered them, I had the opportunity to audition them in my own system.

Rick Schultz, owner of HFC and idea man behind their patented [magnetic conduction technology](#), took more than a year to perfect the balanced version of his interconnects. The trick was getting the magnetic wave stabilizers to be powerful enough and small enough to fit inside a custom made balanced connector. He finally perfected the design earlier this year and recently moved the balanced cables into production. Rick told me "The performance is beyond my expectations".

The 20lb. (!) package from High Fidelity Cables arrived the other day with 2 sets of one meter interconnects, each in it's own foam lined Pelican style hard case. The cables themselves were substantial, mostly because of the two magnetic wave stabilizers that were situated in the middle of each cable.



Pictured above: The Magnetic Wave Stabilizer that resides in the center of the CT-1 Ultimate balanced interconnect.

The connectors themselves were slightly larger than standard balanced connectors, but not heavy like the wave stabilizers. They should not interfere with standard spaced balanced input or output connectors.

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About Me



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I am the founder and owner of [TweekGeek.com](#). I serve audio geeks and music freaks along the front range of Colorado's Rocky Mountains personally, and the rest of the world virtually through [TweekGeek.com](#).

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The custom made connectors for the CT-1 Ultimate interconnects took over a year to develop.

### A Word To The Wise

When ordering a set of these, be sure to account for the center placed wave stabilizers. There is a 99% chance that they will need to rest on something, or you risk damaging the connectors, or pulling your gear off of it's position. Be that on a shelf, on cones, whatever, the wave stabilizers are heavy enough to warrant their own space on a shelf. It would probably be best to order a long enough run to allow you some flexibility. A more budget conscious approach may be to simply move your components closer together...

Fortunately my components sit on one long bench-like table that sits very low to the ground. I have my components fairly close together, and the shelf is low enough to the ground that the wave stabilizers sat close to the floor, propped up by some Agora Acoustics MagicHexas.



Agora Acoustics MagicHexas.

I've been on a bit of a minimalist kick with my audio system lately. I had only three components in the signal chain at the time of this review. A Lumin S1 music streamer which served as the source, DAC and preamp, connected to a pair of Acoustic Imagery Atsah 1200 monoblock amplifiers. There is a purity in simplicity that is more difficult (and expensive) to achieve with a more elaborate setup. The tradeoffs in this case being the removal of a component (preamp), and additional cables vs. the volume control on the Lumin being "lossy". Listening to both led me to choose the less component, lossy volume control combo. Fewer components & connections equalled less signal loss in this instance. This combination has allowed me to evaluate subtle changes I make to my system very, very well.

For additional tweaks not in the signal path, I had the Lumin connected to an Entreq Olympus ground box, and also had an Entreq Silver Minimus connected to the dedicated circuit's ground. I also have the Stein Harmonizer system (2) with Blue Suns, and last the Bybee Quantum Plugs.

Other cables in the system were the Audience AU24 SX speaker cables ( perhaps the best *value* in audio cables today) and the power cables were a new Tweek Geek product that has yet to be named or released, but definitely up to the task of letting the music through.

### Sometimes It Takes Only A Second

As soon as I inserted the High Fidelity Ultimates, I knew they were worth the asking price. The room felt as if it had just doubled in size, and the speakers disappeared, leaving a very wide, tall, deep and convincing soundstage. Balance was exquisite, and the bandwidth was extremely wide. There was deep, tuneful and thunderous bass emanating from the 4-12 inch powered subwoofers

like I hadn't heard before, and the midrange had such detail and texture, again a first for my ears. The highs did not disappoint either. They had extension, clarity and ease. In fact the whole musical presentation had relaxed and decompressed from the room. The music was now in it's own space/time continuum. Spooky in a very good way.

Yes, all of that was extremely good, the best I have heard. But I have had other cables in my system come close enough to this type of performance to challenge the asking price of the High Fidelity's. What convinced me beyond a doubt that the CT-1 Ultimate cables were the best was the imaging magic that they performed. Many cables can throw a wide soundstage, but what usually is compromised is image placement and specificity. They trade focus for a wide, enveloping soundstage. The High Fidelity Ultimates did not. They maintained the image focus, and extremely good placement while creating one of the widest, most enveloping soundstages I have ever heard.

This tells me two things. The High Fidelity Ultimate XLR cables have a very low noise floor, and very good phase coherency.

#### **Cables That Cost More Than The Components?**

At this point I decided to try something a little unorthodox. I swapped the moderately expensive source and amps I had been using for much less expensive ones. I inserted the Lumin D1 Streamer/DAC/Pre (\$2450 with Sbooster power supply) in place of the S1, and replaced the Acousticmagery Atsah 1200 amps (\$9995 MSRP/Pair) for the Atsah 500's that retail for \$2000 per pair. So less than \$5000 in source and amplification cost, connected via a \$7800 interconnect.

Sonically, with this combination I lost a bit of texture and resolution, but I could live with that. I still had the ease, the soundstage, the imaging, along with more resolution than I had ever heard coming out of these budget components ever before. All for about the MSRP of the Lumin S1.

This experiment turns the standard protocol for buying a system on it's head and begs the question, are we really getting the most out of our electronics when a relatively inexpensive audio system using uber expensive cable can produce sound equivalent in listener satisfaction than a system with expensive components using moderately priced cables?

What it proved to me and my ears is that there are more ways to audio nirvana than one typically thinks.

#### **Conclusion**

To my ears, and in my system, the High Fidelity XLR interconnects, specifically the CT-1 Ultimates, are the cables to beat for those looking for the absolute best listening experience regardless of price. There were absolutely no shortcomings. They did everything right, and did it like no other cable I have ever heard before. I could just sit, listen, relax and lose myself in the music. That is worth quite a lot to me, because I know all too well that when my audio system doesn't sound right, my whole world is affected. Music is my therapy, my catharsis, my escape. It makes me a bit of a freak, I know, but that is my reality. I need music, and I need really good sound in order to relax fully and get the "therapy" I need. What is that worth to me? It is worth having these cables. These are a component, no doubt. They had that much of a positive impact on my listening experience. Can one come close to the performance of the CT-1 Ultimate for less? Probably, I can think of a few cables that come close, do cost less and could give one 80% of the satisfaction that the High Fidelity Cables deliver. But for those looking for the best listening experience, the CT-1 Ultimates will not disappoint, and definitely cost less than component upgrades, tweaks and a therapist.

Posted by [Michael Garner](#) at 11:56 AM



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