

VAN DEN HUL CS - 122 HYBRID

Smooth operator

Here we go again, speaking about cables. We all know that, (a) cables make no difference to the sound of a system, and that those that hear a difference are deluding themselves or, (b) cables can and do make a difference and that those people that can't hear the difference are cloth-eared and should stick to looking at measurement devices and not listen to music.

Now after stirring things up a bit by stating both sides of the cable argument, I should - I suppose - tell you that my cable belief falls somewhere between the two extremes. When talking specifically about speaker cables, much of the differences heard have as much to do with the amplifiers and speakers they're connected to than the cables themselves.

For example, I used to use huge 1000 watt mono block monster amplifiers that had huge current and voltage reserves - not to mention heat reserves. On these amplifiers, the differences between the most expensive cables I used (Rand 120K+) and the cheapest (common OFC type cable) was negligible.

It was there but it wasn't mind blowingly different. Some even suggested that the difference was in my mind.

At the other end of the scale, when I listened to a 3 watt per channel valve amplifier, which barely had enough power to blow out a candle, cables made a huge difference.

This naturally brings us to my current system which has more than enough power and current reserves, but not as much as the kilowatt monsters, and is affected by cables, but not nearly as much as the tiny valve amp.

It also brings us to the subject of this review, the Van den Hul CS - 122 HYBRID speaker cables, which were supplied for review in two four metre sections.

As I didn't quite need four metres per side, I was going to chop a metre off each cable, but thought that A&E consultants might be just a little upset if I did this. What I did however do was to strip a couple of centimetres off each end of the cables so that I could attach alternately good quality banana plugs or cheaper banana plugs to the cables. This naturally was done so that I could hook the cables up to speakers and amplifier.

I also used the cables without plugs, but more on this a little later.



Van den Hul describe the CS - 122 HYBRID as being a twin lead version of the CS - 12 HF. This means that the two conductors are constructed out of 147 strands of 0.16 mm diameter high purity Matched Crystal OFC with a very dense pure silver coating.

In addition to this, each conductor is covered in a layer of Linear Structured Carbon[®]. This is said to improve the sonic performance of the cables and to transform the radiated magnetic field into an audio signal again.

Of particular interest to those who have space problems is the fact that the cable jacket is made of HULLIFLEX[®] 3. This helps make the cable far more flexible than you would think possible from a cable as thick as the CS - 122 HYBRID is.

As per usual, the cable was given more than adequate time to run in before listening began.

My initial listening was done not so much to the cables, but rather to try and ascertain what differences (if any) the different plugs would make. I started with some pretty basic banana plugs attached to the cables. With these, the cables sounded warm, yet still quite detailed, and not at all as bright as silver cables typically do.

When switching to better quality plugs, the sound stage opened up to a fair degree, and whilst still retaining the signature warmth, detail and resolution improved. When using no plugs at all - bare stripped wire directly into binding posts - the sound changed and opened again, if only ever so slightly. The moral here is use the best quality connectors you can (*).

(*) Remark: Next to being sold without connectors, The CS - 122 HYBRID is also standardly available factory mounted with top quality van den Hul Bus type Universal Speaker Connectors. —A.J. van den Hul B.V.



Ultimately, particularly when being compared to silver-plated cables and to more conventional copper cables, the CS - 122 HYBRID proved to deliver the best qualities of both, with a few extra ones thrown in.

As already stated, the cables sounded far smoother than typical silver, yet retained the high frequency detail silver cables are known for. The mid band was full bodied and pace was good.

Low frequency detail was also good, and whilst low notes did sound possibly a little slow, they were never ponderous, and detail yet again was there in abundance.

I found that recordings that typically sound hard and edgy with other cables were simply better sounding with the CS - 122 HYBRIDs hooked into my system. Recordings that usually sound a little more restrained still sounded good and lost little of their overall balance.

Some have dubbed the Van den Hul cables Van Den Dull, and after listening to the CS - 122 HYBRID cables I have to disagree.

Yes they aren't quite as forward and in your face as some competitors' wares, but they do transmit far more information than you may initially think they do, and importantly, they do so with a subtlety that invites one to listen for long periods of time.

Joel Kopping

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VERDICT

The Van den Hul CS - 122 HYBRID is a smooth sounding speaker cable that manages to combine the qualities of silver and carbon into an affordable package.

PRICE

135 Rand per metre

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