

Supra Ply 3.4

Finished in Supra's familiar trademark blue colour, Ply 3.4 is a particularly flexible multistrand speaker cable with a figure-of-eight profile. Its PVC insulation has a rubberised feel while each conductor is made of 193x0.15mm strands of tin-plated OFC. Woven tightly into a rectangular profile, each conductor has a cross-sectional area of 3.4mm².

Available terminated or off-the-reel, Ply 3.4 benefits from Supra's catalogue of connectors. Included in the price is a full set of screw-on (or solder) CombiCon connectors, available with either 4mm banana/BFA or spade connector 'tips' that screw into the connectors' barrels, or as a 'kit' containing

both types for only £35 more. While not the last word in audiophile purism, such flexibility is unquestionably a boon – and an investment.

Laid Back

Joni Mitchell's dominant vocal in 'Comes Love' sounded deeper and 'darker' with Ply 3.4 in the system. Where the voice tends to appear too close-miked (or simply too loud, making the backing arrangement hard to concentrate on), this presentation appeared gently laid back. Easy on the ear, it could on occasion sound a little lazy and slow – but with pleasing 'air'.

Even the louder passages of Fleetwood Mac weren't 'in your face'. Bass was fruity and impressively powerful

too. A downside, however, was a softening of fine detail demonstrated in a lack of clear differentiation between cymbal timbres. Deep bass guitar notes and the thump of the kick drum were not as fast and precise as they can be, either.

While a little 'lethargic' sounding, the lack of obvious 'humps' in the tonality meant it worked wonders with the pure recording of Chicago's chamber music ensemble. Thanks to its unsullied recreation of the recording's natural acoustic the system delivered a 'walk-right-into-it' three-dimensional image.

Bearing in mind the very attractive price of Ply 3.4, achieved by saving Supra the cost of final termination, its sound per pound is very high.

£ 105/3m



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HFN SPECIFICATIONS

Series Inductance (3m loop)	1.23µH
Parallel Capacitance	478pF
Series Resistance	38mohm
Loss (over 3m run into 8ohm)	0.04dB
Price (3m pair/per extra 1m)	£105 / £7.50

Sound Quality: 83%



GROUP TEST VERDICT

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Despite covering a wide range of design philosophies and diverse construction methods, none of these cables genuinely 'spoiled' the sound of our test system. However, extensive listening revealed subtle differences in the way each altered the subjective sound balance. If it was your system and you had to choose between them, you'd likely pass over the van den Hul CS-122 Hybrid, TCI Python and DNM Stereo Solid Core.

The latter sounded 'damped' and while not best suited to big-sounding or powerful systems, it's a particularly tidy and low-priced option whose midband clarity might suit the smaller speaker. The vdH cable could be an appropriate choice if a fatiguing system needs taming but in our test system it was rather too smooth and bass heavy. TCI's Python sounded fast and should add zest to a lazy-sounding system with a loose bass that needs tightening, but again it wasn't ideal in our set-up.

PERFORMANCE AND VALUE

QED's Revelation, the Chord Company's Rumour 2 and the Atlas Hyper 2.0 all represent good value, the Chord being especially keenly priced. Its discreet profile makes it living-room friendly too. The Atlas delivered the highest resolution, closely followed by the QED which has a slightly stronger bass, while the Chord proved to be a little leaner. Mind you, it's likely this will be observed only by owners of very large floorstanders.

Of the costliest cables in our test, priced between £200-£250 for a 3m pair, the Black Rhodium Salsa, IXOS XHS756 and Tellurium Q can all be recommended if the budget suits. It's the Tellurium Q that imparts the least character with an even tonal balance, while its flexibility and flat profile make it a highly attractive

proposition for custom installations. The Salsa's the one to choose if you're hankering after a meatier, richer bass performance from a lean-sounding system. Otherwise, the IXOS sounded refined and relaxed, imparting a good sense of spatiality while taming a 'hot' sounding system.

Balancing price with performance, Wireworld's upmarket Solstice 6 justifies its premium over Merlin's C12 Mk2 while Supra's Ply 3.4 emerged as something of a bargain. Both the Merlin and Wireworld fall into the

'enthusiasts-only' camp due to their relative bulk; forget any thoughts of tucking them inconspicuously around the edge of carpets in a family living-room. But if you're dedicated to eliciting the best possible sound from a system, they certainly deliver.

TOP OF THE PILE

The Wireworld sounds extraordinarily clear and focused, highlighting contrasts between recordings in delicious fashion,

but it is unforgiving of compressed recordings. The Merlin might be a better choice if you prefer a more relaxed presentation with silkier high frequencies and a subjectively 'warmer' balance. Meanwhile there's no denying the exceptionally good value of the Supra Ply 3.4. While not as explicit as Wireworld's Solstice 6 or quite as powerful sounding in the bass as the Merlin C12 Mk2

it delivers a great performance at a bargain price. It can 'grow' with your system as well. Should you wish to bi-wire or bi-amp a system as you upgrade, Supra can supply special

heatshrink termination 'trousers' and nylon braid to help keep two runs of Ply cable neat and tidy. ☺

'Supra's Ply 3.4 emerged as something of a bargain'



CLOCKWISE: Outstanding all – Merlin's C12 Mk2; Supra's Ply 3.4 and Wireworld's Solstice 6



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