

音響技術

2015年11月號
November 2015

410

音樂與音響



HK\$45
電子版月刊US\$4.99



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NORDOST

美國音樂絲帶線之神話





The Latest Nordost Flagship Cables Odin2

Text | Lee388

Nordost must be one of the state-of-the-art cables in the audiophile world. Since Audiotechnique has adopted Nordost Odin as reference cables, and I have also tried on a set of Nordost Valhalla 2 in my home, I have a thorough understanding of how capable Nordost cables are. Although Nordost makes their cables based on a scientific ground, and they provide detailed specifications, their sounds are by no means mechanical; and the concerns of audiophiles fans are also taken into account, they are indeed high standard products. In May, Nordost officially launched their brand new flagship models in the Munich Hi End Show, the Odin 2. They quickly attracted attentions from audiophiles and the industry. I also met Odin 2 for the first time in this Show and I noticed that they were equipped with the HOLO:PLUG, a silver grey plug developed by Nordost which was very eye-catching and looked cool with the silver white cables. Naturally, I looked forward to a chance to listen to these flagship cables.

A Misconception on Odin

A batch of Nordost Odin 2 was finally delivered to the Audiotechnique in the middle of June. A batch? Yes! There were quite a lot of them: tonearm cables, coaxial and XLR digital cables, interconnects (XLR and RCA), speaker cables and power cords. There were all kinds of Odin 2 cables sufficient to take over all original cables in our audition room. On using cables of the same brand for the whole system, people have different opinions. When a guy saw our all-Nordost combination, he concluded that it was not good before he started listening. His reason was simple. He listened to a system once, in which one of the

cables was Odin, and he found the sound was a bit thin. So he thought the sound should be very thin if the whole system adapted Odin. But after I listened to this set of Odin 2, I have a better understanding of such opinion. Besides listening to them in our audition room, I brought some to my place. I tried them one by one to replace my original cables and found that Odin 2 had their own characteristics, not too strong, but definitely no 'thin' sound. When the whole system was replaced by Odin 2, they collaborated so well, the sound was more well-balanced, and velocity was obviously much higher. Then I realized why Nordost said it would not be a problem to use Odin 2 for the whole system. Back to the experience of the



Nordost Flagship Cables :

- Odin 2 75Ω/110 Ω Digital Cables Retail Price : HK\$90,000 (1.25m) ■ Odin 2 Analogue Interconnects (RCA / XLR) Retail Price : HK\$205,500 (1.5m)
- Odin 2 Tonearm Cable Retail Price : HK\$98,500 (1.25m) ■ Odin 2 Speaker Cable Retail Price : HK\$345,000 (2.5m)
- Odin 2 Power Cords Retail Price : HK\$140,000 (1.25m)

guy I mentioned above, I thought very likely the system he listened to was thin before using Odin. It happened that Odin was the highlight of the visit and that was why he blamed it on Odin.

Technology-based

Let's first examine the technique and construction of Odin 2 cables and see what their improvements are. Odin 2 are still using the patented "Dual Mono-Filament Technology" in which the conductor cores are twisted together with 2 very thin Fluorinated Ethylene Propylene (FEP) threads wrapped on them in double helix, finally they are injected with a FEP jacket. Thus the core materials are in contact only with air and the FEP threads, reducing their contacts with the insulating FEP jacket, resulting in an air dielectric effect. This will improve 'Propagation Delay', so that signals propagation inside Odin 2 are more smooth and reduce any chance of sound contaminations.

The 2nd important technology is TSC (Total Signal Control). Apart from Odin 2 speaker cables, all other Odin 2 cables adapted the TSC screening technology. Through the transparent FEP jacket, we can see clearly the conductors were covered with a silver screen. Unlike conventional screens, this screen is flat, silver-plated OFC. The 'Dual Mono-Filament' conductors are wrapped with the flat screen. They are 100% wrapped, so that all RFI and EMI are isolated, and they would not affect nearby cables. The result is less contamination and more quiet.

The 3rd technology is the HOLO:PLUG designed and made by Nordost. This plug has already been used on Valhalla. Now apart from XLR and RCA plugs use it, the Odin 2 power cord also uses it for the first time. Although the HOLO:PLUG is very light, it is very robust as well. Its aluminium shell also has the function of screening. The conductor inside are gold-plated copper, which can prevent oxidizing, keeping high conductivity for long term use. During the audition, I found the action very smooth when changing interconnects and power cords.

Odin 2 core materials

All Odin 2 cables use the same core material, only of different diameters for different purposes. They are using 8N OFC plated with 85µm silver on Odin 2. While Odin is 7N, Odin 2 is purer, with less impurities. Of course, each core adapted the Dual Mono-Filament Technology, FEP sleeve, and TSC 100% screening.

Power Cords

Each Odin 2 power cord is composed of 7 strands of 14 AWG silver-plated 8N OFC, thicker than Odin which uses 16 AWG wires. 3 of the 7 strands are Line, 3 are Neutral,

and the remaining one is Earth. Propagation Delay is 88% of light velocity, 2% better than Odin. Resistance per 1000ft is as low as 1.33Ω, equipped with HOLO:PLUG power plug.

Analogue Interconnects

Each interconnect has 10 strands of 23 AWG silver-plated 8N OFC, 2 strands more than Odin. 5 of which are positive, 5 negative. Capacitance is 18.5pF/ft, inductance 0.05µH/ft, and Propagation Delay is 90% of light velocity.

Odin Tonearm Cables

Each interconnect has 4 strands of 23 AWG silver-plated 8N OFC, basically the same as Odin, but upgraded to 8N instead of 7N, and so specifications are also upgraded. Capacitance is 23.5pF/ft (XLR) and 9.75pF/ft (RCA) ; Inductance is 0.0611µH/ft (XLR) and 0.11µH/ft (RCA) ; and Propagation Delay is 90% of light velocity.

75Ω coaxial Digital Interconnects

The core is made of 1 single 14 AWG 23 AWG silver-plated 8N OFC, much thicker than the 16 AWG of Odin. Capacitance is 15.3pF/ft, impedance 75Ω, and Propagation Delay is 90% of light velocity. Original HOLO:PLUG, with BNC to RCA adaptor.

110Ω AES/EBU Digital Cables

2 strands of 18 AWG silver-plated 8N OFC, one positive, one negative. Capacitance is 10.5pF/ft, impedance 110Ω, and Propagation Delay is 90% of light velocity, while Odin is 89%.

Speaker Cables

The Speaker Cables are made of multi-stranded flat conductors in parallel. Cable cores are 26 strands of 20 AWG silver-plated 8N OFC, 2 more than the Odin. 13 strands each for positive and negative terminals which are distinguished by black and white sleeves respectively at the connectors. They also help to strengthen the joints between the cable and the connectors. They are also made with Dual Mono-Filament Technology with no screening. The high quality gold-plated copper spades are also HOLO:PLUG. Capacitance is 0.125pF/ft, inductance is 0.125µH/ft, and Propagation Delay is 98% of light velocity.

Audition Venue

From past experience, there are no best cables, only cables that match best. So for every audition, whenever possible, I would bring the cables to different venues,



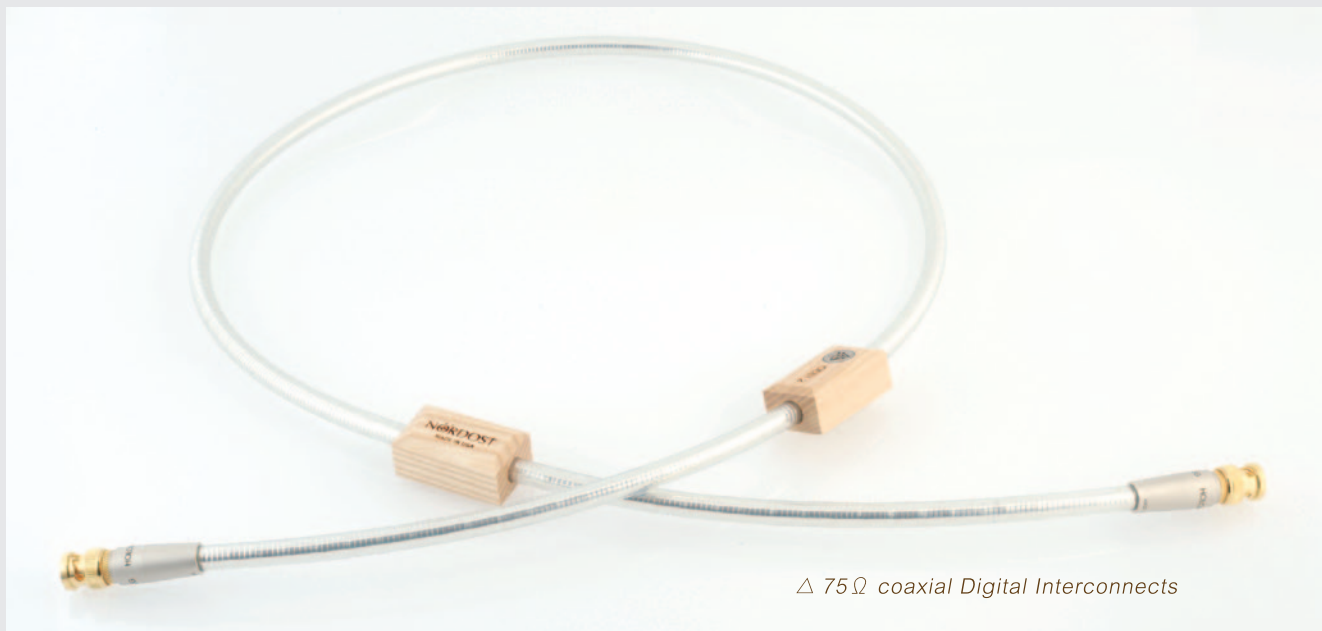
△ Odin 2 Power Cords



△ Odin 2 Analogue Interconnects



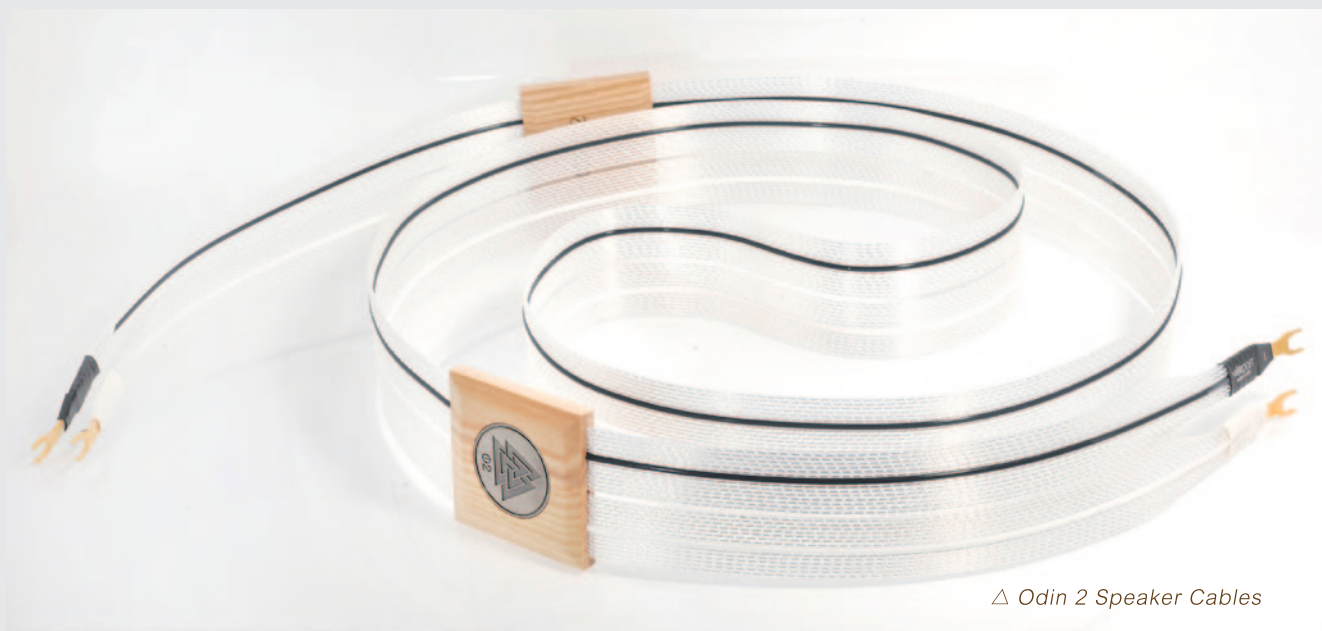
△ Odin 2 Tonearm Cables



△ 75Ω coaxial Digital Interconnects



△ 110Ω AES/EBU Digital Cables



△ Odin 2 Speaker Cables

to match them with different environment and also equipment. With Odin 2, I tested it in the Audiotechnique audition room, in my place and also in a friend's place who had used Valhalla 2 before. After a series of tests, I found it was very significant to have the cables 'burn-in'. It made huge difference before and after the Odin 2 was burn-in. Before burning-in, a pair of Odin 2 interconnects gave very narrow sound field; but after burning-in, everything was clear, the sound was open, and the sound field was unlimitedly widened. I believe our readers fully understand the importance of burning-in. With Odin 2 interconnects, the difference is so huge that I must remind you to have them burn-in first.

Quick, Firm and Accurate

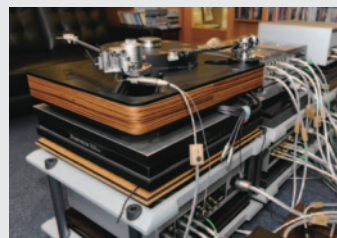
To sum up, under different venues, Odin 2 were very balanced, without boosting any frequency sections. If the gears they connected to were balanced, mismatch was unlikely. If the end user looked for sweet and warm sound, or he wished to emphasize vocals, Odin 2 won't be his cup of tea. One thing I found Odin 2 very outstanding was its high speed. I won't say they were the quickest cables ---- I had not listened to all cables, but their speed must be one of the highest within those I had listened before. It'd be best to use all Odin 2 for a whole system to experience how fast they were. Odin 2 won't add colour to music, they transmitted signals accurately, recovering the original musical scene.

How is Odin compared with Odin 2? If a manufacturer produces a new model which is not better than the old one, there must be something wrong with the manufacturer and it would soon fade out in the market. Nordost is a renowned cable manufacturer in the industry

and it will not launch a new product just for the purpose of a new model.

We have not compared the whole set of Odin Vs Odin 2 directly, yet we have used Odin on the same gear in our audition room before, and then we changed the whole set to Odin 2. From memory, I could hear the progress of Odin 2 in every respect such as density, velocity, background quietness, depth and width of the sound field, analytical power, micro dynamics, contrast in dynamics, etc. Everything was upgraded. The most impressive was the images of vocals, the sound floated in the air between two speakers, producing a most 3D listening experience.

I brought home with me a pair of XLR interconnects, a DIN to XLR tonearm cables and two power cords. First I plugged in the XLR pair interconnects between my Burmester 069 CD player and the Burmester 808MK5 preamplifier. I played the Analogue Production 24K gold Living Stereo CD, "Pictures at an Exhibition". When it came to "The Great Gate at Kiev", the powerful bass was strong with clear body, no confusion at the most complicated passages. Other percussions were brilliant and splendid, the highs built up a highly excited feeling. One pair of Odin 2 had already shown its extensions without any compression at both ends. I then connected the Odin 2 power cord to the CD player. Yes, just the CD player, and the whole system became more lively, and the sound field was further widened. When replaying Sony's new CD, the Beethoven Triple Concerto with Sol Gabetta on the cello, with the addition of the Odin 2 power cord, they gave me very clear and detailed sound from the light introduction. The violin, cello and piano came in respectively; they all had a steady image, firm and holographic.



Then I took one more pair of Odin 2 home. It was the speaker cables. This time I had the tonearm cables, interconnects, power cords and speaker cables (for my Tidal Contriva G2 speakers) all changed to Odin 2. I played LP's, of course. With a RR red "Mephisto", the sound of the stylus on the no signal grooves seemed clearer than ever. When the music came, the whole room seemed to be covered with an atmosphere just like I was inside a recording studio. That showed the Odin 2 had an excellent ability to reproduce micro dynamics in the music signals. When it reached the tutti of the full orchestra, the bass came in a fraction of a second, fast as lightning! The overall performance was superior in both static and dynamic scenes, and the super-fast velocity. I believed that was why Nordost emphasized so much on Velocity of Propagation. After the whole signal path was replaced with Odin 2 cables, it was just like a super racecar running on a highway with no speed limit. That was a feeling I never experienced in my gears before.



Epilogue

Odin 2 cables are powerful, with very high density; instrument and vocals have good focus. In addition, they have excellent sound stages and 3D images, good bouncing, strong sense of rhythm, outstanding velocity, top class analytical power, highest fidelity and sounds are by no means 'thin'. The high price is justified with such super performance! After listening to Odin 2, "Oh! I'm crazy!" (Odin sounds the same as the Cantonese: O! Crazy) 音



Precious and Real

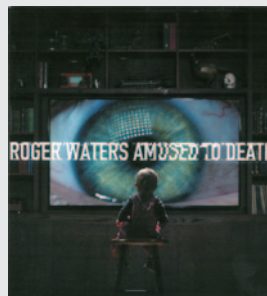
Nordost Flagship Audio Cables : Odin 2

Text | Martin Leung(馬田)

It is well-known fact that Nordost Flagship model Odin is world-famous. Its second generation has used HOLO:PLUG in every model and I think that is an important step forward, resulting in significant sound upgrade. They are easy to connect and is well-balanced in weight. Not only for XLR, but also for RCA plug which has a springy clutch at the end. Once it is plugged in, there is little empty space in between plug and socket. I tried to shake the XLR plug lightly after it is connected, and found that there is practically no loose space. This is especially obvious with the power cord. It uses HOLO:PLUG for the first time and the conductor size is raised to 14AWG (15AWG in previous model, Odin). When all the conductors are bundled together, the cable is much thicker than Odin. But the cable has not bent downwards, and it can be easily turned for the connection on the other end. Before that, when several power cords were plugged in the same power conditioner, because of the big power plugs, they were too crowded resulting in bad contacts. Whether the plug can be firmly connected affects the sound quality. HOLO:PLUG has solved this problem perfectly.

The progresses of Odin 2 in sound performance are a darker background and better body. When replaying "Wish You Were Here" from Fragile's "Polarity", a song with only a double bass and a piano, they generally sounded flat in most gears. But with Odin 2 cables, the two instruments became very holographic, especially in the double bass. I could hear the bass went deep down until there remained only vibration in the strings. The result was similar to a sub-woofer, giving out a very deep and low bass. Such effect was never experienced before in this song. Apart from deep bass, the width of the sound stage was also amazing. When listening to the 3rd concept album by Roger Waters, "Amused to Death", from the first track, "The Ballad of Bill Hubbard", Odin 2 brought a fearful excitement much stronger than before. From the distant barking, the sound stage had entered into an empty space; and from the left

side emerged a narration, it was an old soldier recalling how he abandoned his comrade on an uninhabited island during World War I. Every sentence was very clear. Suddenly there was barking in the front. I could feel different sounds surrounding me from all directions, sometimes the sound rised higher than me, creating very complicated sound levels. Odin 2 was like a catalyst to strengthen the feeling of desolation and loneliness. When it came to the 2nd track, "What God Wants", I could hear very obvious separation between instruments and the sound effect. It also told the depth of the sound stage. Then Roger Waters sounded like God from a high position in the middle and his voice was protruding. Such distinct analytical power made me shiver with the music. I'd better turn to some warmer music to calm me down! Xuefei Yang' guitar was just the Chicken Soup for my Soul! Every time I listened to her, I felt refreshed. In her new album "Heartstrings", it was airy, with good bouncing in guitar strings. In one of the pieces, "Tango en Skai", I found Odin 2 was not only analytical, but also very true to the original sound. It could reproduce lifelike resonance of the sound box and the flawless fingering. The intensity of the plucking was just right. I could say this because I had personally listened to Yang playing her guitar in front of me right in this audition room! When compared to CD, the live performance differed only in the sense of airiness. This was easily understood as there was mastering in CD, the sound was naturally not the same, but they are very close. For such performance, Odin 2 should have many supporters --- even for a higher price! 音



An Incomparably Powerful 2nd Generation Nordost — Odin 2

Text | Lincoln Cheng(大草)

Audio cables bear the responsibility for transmitting signals and power to audio equipment. I've been in contact with them for over 20 years, witnessing their status from standard accessories supplied with an equipment to independent items pricing as much as the equipment itself. The choice of materials and the accuracy and complexity of the cables are beyond imaginable in the old days. The performances of the latest audio cables have reached an extremely high level. Well-matched gears and the right audio cables complement each other, unleashing the potential of every piece of equipment. Every time I met a certain flagship cable product which has excellent audio properties, I have worries. Theoretically, the design of cables is not as complicated as electrical mechanical products; if a cable can perform so well, what can they do to further improve in the next flagship series?

A Higher Level

Nordost from US is one of the most renowned audio cable manufacturers. Its flagship series, Odin was launched in 2008 and we adapted the full series (including power cords, analogue and digital interconnects, speaker cables, and tonearm cables) in 2013 as the reference cables in our audition room. The Odin is quiet, balanced in sound, high velocity, excellent extensions at both ends, not strong in character; they matched perfectly with our reference equipment and with most of those under audition in our audition room. We are happy with their service during this two years or so. On the other hand, we know it's only a matter of time Nordost will inevitably replace the Odin with a new flagship model. It made us wonder how Nordost would put Odin to a higher level; we waited with high expectation. Finally, Nordost announced the brand new flagship model, Odin 2, in the Munich Hi End show in May, 2015. In mid-June, the whole series

of Odin 2 was shipped to our audition room and they replaced our old Odin. From specification, Odin 2 is using 8N silver-plated OFC instead of 7N in Odin; apart from that, the number of strands or diameters of conductors have been increased. The most obvious change is all Odin 2 cables are using their own connectors, the HOLO:PLUG. This includes XLR, RCA, BNC, power plugs, speaker spades and even DIN plugs for tonearm cables. They still keep the "Dual Mono-Filament Technology" and TSC screening as used in the Odin.

A Leap in Performance

Nordost reminds their customers to have their cables burn-in before they can perform their best. The Odin 2 set has been burnt-in for 120 hours before sending to us; but still, after thorough comparison, we found they could perform even better if we treated them with a burn-in machine and musical signals, and we were quite surprise with that.

Our reference gear included: dCS Vivaldi SACD/CD transport + upsampling + DAC + master clock digital source, Dr. Feickert Firebird turntable + Acoustical Systems Axiom Tonearm + Aiwon Cartridge + Ikeda IT-407CR1 Tonearm + 9mono Cartridge + Kondo SFz step-up Transformer + GE-1 Phono Stage analogue source, Dan D'Agostino Momentum Preamplifier, Audia Flight Strumento n'8 Monobloc Power Amplifiers, Dynaudio Evidence Platinum Speakers. This combo had served us for quite a long time with all Odin cables as bridges between them and we knew very well how they sounded. So it didn't take us much effort to distinguish the differences when Odin 2 took over the old Odin. How much better was Odin 2 over Odin? I could tell you frankly, very much better, and very much over our expectation.



Unrivalled Sound Performance

The progress of Odin 2 was comprehensive. The already low background noise was even lower. The quiet background enabled us to hear more minute details in the recordings, the more the details, the higher the fidelity to music. When playing Chopin's "Fantaisie-Impromptu", a very captivating piece by Freddy Kempf in "Accuphase Special Sound Selection 3", we not only appreciated the virtuosity of the young Brithis pianist (he was 23 when recording the album), the ingenious phrasing and emotion were also clearly expressed. The sonority of the piano, the resonance of the piano body and the small changes in Freddy' touching, the ample reverberation of the hall in Stockholm Music Academy, all these were so lively displayed, the fidelity had never been higher!

Odin 2 was a leap forward when compared with Odin in sound density, velocity, analytical ability, micro-dynamics and extensions at both ends. When replaying "Private Investigations" from the album "Love over Gold" by Dire Straits, you could feel the smell of sweat, the dynamic contrasts in quiet and vigorous passages, the bouncing of the guitar strings, the impact of the kick drum, Mark Knopfler's unique hoarse voice and the huge sound stage. This was the most appropriate demonstration of "There is no Best, only Better"! 音

