

gravitas for electric bass; I found its overall ethereal sound better suited to acoustic music. If you listen mostly or exclusively to classical and/or jazz and can spend \$15,900 on a phono preamp, the Fono should be on your very short list. Having it here for over a month had me listening to classical and jazz long into many evenings.

Two Single-Ended Interconnects

ACROLINK 7N-DA2090 SPECIALE & FONO ACUSTICA VIRTUOSO

The smooth-sounding combination of Dr. Feickert Analogue Firebird turntable, Reed 3P tonearm with wooden armtube, Lyra Etna cartridge, and Viva Audio Fono phono preamp had me swapping out my reference TARA Labs Zero Evolution interconnect linking the phono preamp to my darTZeel NHB-18NS preamp, to hear what other links might offer. (And lest you think the Firebird's smooth character was the work of the Viva Fono, I also ran all of the arms I used with it through my reference Ypsilon MC-10L/VPS-100 combo and Pure Audio's solid-state Vinyl phono preamp.)

I had on hand what turned out to be two cables with diametrically opposed sounds: the AcroLink 7N-DA2090 Speciale (\$2375/1.5m pair, above right), and Fono Acustica's flagship model, the Virtuoso (\$20,384/1.5m pair, above left).

The 7N-DA2090 Speciale is made of 99.99999% pure multistrand copper in what AcroLink calls a "balanced twin core structure." There's not enough space here to go into AcroLink's impressive noise-reduction technology (including magnetic-alloy films developed by Nippon Telegraph and Telephone), but their specifying of this product's resistance (18milliohms/meter) and electrostatic capacitance (56pF/meter) is something *all* cable manufacturers should do.

The pricey Fono Acustica is not only hand-terminated but hand-built, of proprietary conductors drawn from Canadian-sourced solid-core silver/gold alloy, with conductors enclosed in silicon sleeves, air-spaced Teflon insulation, and a host of other features you can read about online. The look is Spanish Cowboy Baroque.

Those who deny, because they "know," that the material a conductor is made of can affect the sound, simply haven't listened. Substituting



the AcroLink 7N-DA2090 Speciale for the TARA Zero Evolution—which, at \$18,000/1m pair, costs a little less than the Fono Acustica—produced sharper but not unnaturally defined transients, shorter sustain and decay, and an overall well-detailed and more speedy sound. It generated notable rhythmic excitement that in some ways benefited the Viva Fono's long sustain. The AcroLink's sharply drawn top end worked well with the Fono, as did its somewhat punchier bottom.

Substituting the Fono Acustica Virtuoso for the AcroLink *completely* changed the sound, which now was far richer overall, with more graceful, almost cautious, romantic, but somehow still precise and well-detailed attacks, and long, long sustains that let the Viva Fono fully express itself. But because the Fono Acustica sounded warmer

and darker in the mids, it tamed the Viva Fono's glare at higher volumes, which also made it an ideal match for the Viva in the mids. However, this very pricey interconnect—it costs even more than the Viva Fono!—also somewhat muted the *very* top end, producing that romantic sound that some crave.

When I went back to my reference TARA Labs interconnect, which has solid-copper cores, the TARA produced an ideal balance of transient speed and detail, generous sustain, and high-frequency extension. Did I miss elements of the AcroLink's and Fono Acustica's sound? Yes—but you can't have everything! ■

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Viva products are available in the US from Earsnova in New York, NY, Pro-fundo in Round Rock, TX, and Blackbird Audio Gallery in San Diego, CA.

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