

Review of Chime Interconnects

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GutWire Interconnects Model Chime
Source: GutWire Audio Cables
Price: Cdn \$980.00 US \$769.00 per 1 meter pair
Rating: 3 1/2 notes

This company was established in 1998 and first introduced two AC cables, the G Clef (reviewed in Vol. 11 #1) and the Power Clef (reviewed in Vol. 11 #4). GutWire Audio is headed by Herbert Wong and Alex Yeung, both involved in the audio industry for years. In addition to research and development of new products, the two principals also engage a group of audio enthusiasts who's mutual objective is to assist in developing products which make an audible difference and to attain a higher level of performance. The cables under review are based on solid technology, measurements and good old-fashioned listening tests, as the company feels that, in the final analysis, nothing can replace the human ear.

Appearance:

As with their power cord designs, GutWire's Chimes are wrapped in a woven black material terminated by WBT RCAs or Neutrik XLR plugs. There is nothing pretentious about these cables and the only difference from similar interconnects are external ground wires.

Technology:

Rather than telling you the figures for purity, GutWire states that "high purity oxygen-free copper" is used as the conductor material. Triple shielding is employed whereas the outer shield is used to ground the entire cable. Aluminum ends are implemented and provide dampening of resonances caused by external components, thereby interfering with the cable's stability as a conductor. Geometry, though relatively uncomplicated, is not discussed in the company's white paper, which brings us promptly to...

The Sound:

These interconnects distinguish themselves for their lack of "personality"; there doesn't seem to be a particular sonic signature the GutWire cables can call their own. We tried the Chimes with our in-house Magnum MD108 tuner, our Audio Alchemist/Elite playback system and between amps and preamps. However, the apparent absence of a recognizable signature doesn't mean that the cables aren't proficient in handling musical material, on the contrary! These cables handle highs, mids and bass without accentuating frequency or bandwidth, a quality which results in absolute smoothness and effortless handling of any program material. In addition, the cables offer rather precise imaging, a well elevated sound stage, admirable focus, excellent front-to-back information and remarkable spatiality. We found little or no difference when we connected the cables' ground wires to the chassis of the components in use, but experimentation is in order. Without a doubt, some amp/preamp combinations or preamp source connections will benefit from the external ground wire which, when connected, can lower the noise floor of the entire system. When the system performs well with the ground wire disconnected, you may still find that these cables operate very quietly with the noise floor far below the audible range, a definite bonus, usually attributed to cables at a much higher price.

Synopsis & Commentary:

We hesitate to call the Chimes neutral-sounding cables, as "neutrality" in audio can not be established or authenticated. Nevertheless, the lack of personality could also be called a lack of colouration, which is desirable when assembling a system. Folks with a preference for "forward" sound are well advised to stay away from these cables. Furthermore, listeners who are partial to overly subdued or "romantic" high frequency information, mellow midrange and bass aren't going to enhance their system with the use of the Chimes. Those with relatively accurate systems, components which offer a dose of musicality without tonal emphasis overall, may find the Chimes to be a revelation. When compared with the best cables currently on the market, the Chimes fall short of absolute completion, that's reserved for the megabuck range. Bearing this in mind and considering these interconnects' performance, there is one essential element the folks at GutWire have not neglected, it's called musicality; and the Chimes have oodles of it.