

ATOHM ZEF

Listopad 2011 MJ-TR

" To sum it up there was *nothing* to indicate that the ZEFs would be extra performers. In reality they outshone most of the competitors, however..."

Pure as snow...

This article is part of our extensive loudspeaker cables group test. We recommend checking the full article here: [The Union of Snakes: the world of low and mid-tier loudspeaker cables](#). This is also where you can find the lists of the recordings and the audio systems that were used throughout the test.



Atohm

Atohm hails from sunlit France and is based around charismatic Thierry Comté who was involved with several big audio names in last 20 years, Triangle and Waterfall to name a few. Atohm is a loudspeaker company and currently sweeps the audio world with Sirocco speaker line and GT 1.0 monitors. Internal wiring of the speakers is done with the help of Atohm's own cables so it sounded as a good idea to launch the very same cables separately to harmonize the whole signal path and - *voilà* - the ZEF was born!



Technology

The Atohm ZEF features 3 OCC mono-crystalline copper wires that are surrounded by a bundle of 200 silver-plated copper filaments in Teflon dielectric. The outer shell of the ZEF is made from white PVC compound - the same material is employed for the bridge that keeps conductors in a predefined spacing.

In use

Well, from a distance of 3 meters the ZEF looks like an ordinary white twin-wire. If you take a closer look it still keeps looking like the ordinary white twin-wire. There is nothing special in how the ZEF is designed apart from its snow-white jacket that is very easy to maintain and very easy to manipulate. The cable is excellently bendable (bend radius of only 20mm) and as such it can be used also in very problematic conditions - you can even hide it behind a skirting board. The ZEFs feature Atohm's own WT-LMB bananas with the central pin that is quite loose in the banana's shells so you have to be careful not to lose it during manipulation.

To sum it up there was *nothing* to indicate that the ZEFs would be extra performers. In reality they outshone most of the competitors, however...

Sound

I got surprised right from the beginning of Pink Floyd's *Young Lust*. The MoFi remaster is heavy on bottom octaves which is addictive on the best audio systems and troublesome on the lesser ones. In many cases you can hear just kind of *basso continuo* without focus and inner resolution. The ZEFs were surprisingly good and managed to tame the bass excess in an elegant manner without trying to stun the listener with thundering, however unnecessary, lows. The kick drum of *Young Lust* was warm, full and hefty yet delicately outlined and dynamic. The energy of INXS's *Devil's Party* did not remain confined in my speakers and was thrown into my listening room with confidence and authority.

Listening to a more intimate music material revealed that the ZEF is tuned in favor of bottom and top octaves and that is how it manages to breathe new life into many recordings - as if you crink an equalizer a bit. Thus the lows get more saturated and the highs get a pinch of spark. When I made a direct comparison to my reference, the [Krautwire Fractal](#), it became clear that the Atohm favoured enjoyment over neutrality, however, at a 15 times lower price it is nothing that needs an apology. The good thing is that this type of tuning is not achieved through a suppression of the mids rather through the enlivening of frequency extremes and therefore I did not miss important information like piano

harmonies and uncompressed mid-band dynamics in Streisand's *In The Wee Small Hours of The Morning*.

Soundstaging is the element where the ZEF is very good - especially the lateral plane extends well beyond the speakers and is perfectly laid. The depth is shallower than with the Fractal and does not contain so many fine layers like the reference cable, it is still excellent however.

The effortless accent on a detail brings out textures of Johnny Cash's guitar and voice on *Hurt* - I have to mention the articulation of the voice that was presented without any stress on sibilants and 's', 'f' and 'sh' were perfectly delineated in the context of the music. I did not expect a lot from the Atohm ZEF and therefore I was very pleasantly surprised how good performer it was. Highly recommended.

Other cables in the test:

ATOHM ZEF

AUDIOQUEST CV-4

AUDIOQUEST Rocket 33

BLACK RHODIUM Emperor DCT++

FURUTECH Evolution II

KIMBER KABLE Monocle X

KRAUTWIRE Clever

NORDOST White Lightning

NORDOST Purple Flare

OEHLBACH XXL Fusion Two

PROSON P-217A

RAPPORT YPB621B

SHARKWIRE SSC-R Musical No.2

TELOS Black Reference

VAN DEN HUL The Magnum Hybrid

VAN DEN HUL The Revolution Hybrid

VINCENT Premium

XINDAK SC-01



Kontakt: [Nisel SK](#), Bratislava, tel. +421 905 203 078

© Copyright - text: [Audiodrom](#)