

toneAudio.

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AudioArt IC-3 Interconnects

— Jeff Dorgay

These snuck in under the wire. Rob Fritz was such a nice guy on the phone, I was more than happy to give his new cables a try. He came highly recommended, but I thought, "How good can a hundred dollar pair of cables really be?" Answer: damn good! Audio Arts founder Rob Fritz has chosen to forgo the traditional dealer model and sell direct to you to keep costs low.

I tried them in a number of different systems with excellent results. One of the most important things to me with a cable is that it be as neutral as possible and take as little away from the sound as possible. Granted, we all have our favorite cables to give a system a bump when necessary, or to tone things down a touch, but if I have my druthers, as neutral as possible is my favorite flavor.

The IC-3s provide way more than just a little bit of this at a price that is so inexpensive, I can't believe it. A one meter pair will set you back \$100 with RCA connectors and \$115 if you get XLR connectors. For those of you that want a bit more technical information, peruse the AA website. They feature silver coated OFC conductors and decent quality RCA plugs with an unobtrusive silver jacket. Remember, these are budget cables, nothing fancy, but very well executed. *(continued)*

How good can a hundred dollar pair of cables really be? Answer: Damn good!



Just to give them the major torture test, I put these in my main reference system so that I could get an instant read on what they would do. To be as scientific as possible, I just replaced one pair, between my Wadia 581 and ACT2 Series 2 preamplifier. There was definitely a difference, with a bit lost in terms of high end clarity, a little bit of spatial information and a touch of the timing cues. However, this is in the middle of a system that is almost worth six figures!

I played a lot of music that was very dynamic, that specifically had a lot of aireness, just so I could see where they would fall down, and I was very impressed. Rob suggests that you give these cables 80-100 hours of break-in before making the final judgement. I must say that they were quite good right out of the box and settled in about 5-10% after they were in my system for a couple weeks.

I won't tell you the IC-3s blew away all of the really expensive cables, but they did an awfully good job; way better than you would expect something at this price point would do. Moving them back in to a couple of more realistic systems, they were fantastic. If you have a system in the range of about \$1200-\$10,000 (or possibly even a little more) I think spending more money than this on cables would be much better spent on room treatments to improve overall sound.

Ever since I started writing professionally about eight years ago, I always wanted to say "stop the presses!" (too many episodes of Superman when I was a kid...) We had this issue all ready to go and our Exceptional Value Awards had long been chosen, but I felt compelled to add one more to the list. The Audio Art IC-3 interconnects are a steal at this price.

Rob's new "signature" line of cables are on the way soon, with better RCA plugs, so we will be curious to give those a whirl when they are ready. Stay tuned. ●

MANUFACTURERS INFO

Audio Art Cable

619-255-6451

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Price: \$100 per 1m pair w/
RCA Plugs, \$115 with XLR

ASSOCIATED COMPONENTS

SME 10 turntable with SME V arm and Shelter 90x cartridge. Aesthetix Rhea phono stage with Great Northern Sound mods, Conrad-Johnson ACT2 Series 2 Preamplifier and Premier 350 power amplifier. Wadia 581 Disk player, Tetra 506 Custom speakers with REL B2 subwoofer. Tetra Artet speaker cable and interconnect (between amp and preamp) Cardas Golden Reference everywhere else. Running Springs Jaco Power Conditioner and Mongoose Power Cords. Clearaudio Smart Matrix Record cleaner.