



EnKlein Amphora Phono Cable

A Promising Debut

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Cables, it's commonly agreed, are one of the more mysterious parts of the high end. Designs vary wildly. So do prices. But only the most hardened double-blind-testers would deny that cables can significantly influence the sound of a stereo system, changing everything from bass impact to treble extension, from perceived instrumental detail to timbres. Thus, in recent years, a number of companies have entered the cable marketplace with new designs that promise to deliver on the promise of improved sound.

Into this very crowded field steps EnKlein, a manufacturer that specializes in low-mass cables. EnKlein produces a variety of interconnects and speaker cables. The one the company sent me for review is the Amphora silver phono cable, which boasts the very lowest mass of all its cables, as well as some exceedingly attractive silver WBT connectors. The cable appears to be carefully constructed. Its extreme flexibility means that it would take an effort to stress the connectors or otherwise harm the Amphora.

EnKlein suggests that the significance of low mass is often underestimated by cable manufacturers. The company works to minimize disruptive mechanical vibrations, which can have a deleterious effect upon the signal. Its director David Kleinbeck, who has worked for companies such as Sprint, has some pretty serious engineering chops when it comes to the wireless world. EnKlein's Web site says, "The thin film shield and sacrificial ground of 99.999% oxygen-free copper configuration creates a passive damper for extremely low capacitance and reactance, targeting the preservation of signals from a broad range of cartridges including extremely low-output cartridges."

In plain English, EnKlein is saying, I think, that cables need to have their own version of bodyguards in order to preserve bandwidth

and detail. And make no mistake: listening to its cable was a pleasure. The qualities of the Amphora were not difficult to detect. It is fast, precise, and transparent. The bane of silver cables, however, can often be that that speed is accompanied by an etched and fatiguing sound, particularly in the treble. This was not my impression with the Amphora. On the contrary, its felicitous character was a welcome surprise. Take the LP *I Remember Django* [Black Lion Records], which, among other things, features a languorous version of the old standard "Honeysuckle Rose." Both Stephane Grappelli's violin and Barney Kessel's guitar were beautifully rendered with a full body of tone and minute shadings. Particularly noteworthy was the hall ambience conveyed by the Amphora. This quality also came across on vocals: On an LP I recently acquired on Deutsche Grammophon of the baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau singing Richard Strauss *lieder*, the Amphora provides a real sense of the joy and pathos that Fischer-Dieskau imparts to each song.

Perhaps it was the alacrity of the Amphora that was most startling. On *Trinity*, a sensational SteepleChase recording of Boulou Ferre, Elios Ferre, and Niels-Henning Orsted Pedersen (if you're a jazz or guitar fan, or both, snatch up this album if you come across it), the speed and snap of the guitars were almost enough to induce whiplash.

Given the staggering variety of phono cables available, it's important to emphasize that careful matching with a cartridge and table is essential. The Amphora is a reasonably priced cable that seeks to combine the speed of silver cables with a more full-bodied tone. If I had my druthers, I would try and add even a little more harmonic richness to the sound. But it's a very promising debut. In a cable world that is already swarming with competitors, and that continues to attract new entrants, EnKlein looks to be a comer. **tas**

SPECS & PRICING

Type: Phono cable
Price: \$3595 (first 1.5 meters)

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enklein.com