

[Mr. KAZUO KIUCHI, the owner of Combak Corporation, is a typical Japanese - he has a master belt in Kendo, he loves opera, he is also a fan of high-class sound. In addition to the production of electronics under the Reimyo brand, Harmonix and HIJIRI cabling and Bravo! loudspeakers, he is also a co-owner of the XRCD24 patent and releases CDs with this logo: jazz in the Master Music series (JVC) and classic in the Hi-Q Records label. A typical Japanese ...]

It seems that with the SM2R "Sound Matter" cable a symbolic change took place - **the Harmonix cables seem to be replaced with the full lineup under the brand name 聖 Hijiri**. This process began in 2015 with the **HGP-10R „Million”** analogue interconnect, and the symbolism that I am talking about concerns the fact that the **Harmonix X-DC350M2R IMPROVED-VERSION**, the predecessor of the reviewed SM2R "Sound Matter", was used in JVC studios when mastering XRCD24 releases. It made it an important element of the company's strategy.

There is another possibility that you can fit into one word:

resolution. However, there is a problem with it - while correcting individual sound aspects is relatively simple, i.e. it can be achieved in a relatively short period of time, it is not so with the resolution. These are not details, sound components, but rather a proper combination of them. **It is not possible to "decreed" a better resolution.** Achieving it is a result of a multiple actions that are not explicit and which do not necessarily lead directly to producing more detailed sound with better bandwidth extension, greater palpability and a deeper sound stage. As it is the case with the SM2R "Sound Matter" cable.

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| SM2R vs X-DC350M2R

The comparison of these two cables shows what I have expressed in the previous paragraph. I know, like and respect the sound of the Harmonix cable because it has never let me down. And despite the fact it has a clear own sonic signature, it does not dominate over recordings. Nevertheless, the new cable outperformed its older brother (or sister) in almost every aspect. And again - not because Harmonix was a poor sounding cable, and because the 聖 Hijiri is so good.



And the XRCD24 format, and more broadly the music, is for Mr. Kazuo Kiuchi, the owner of Combak Corporation, which owns 聖 Hijiri and Harmonix brands, a particularly important undertaking. It is there that the world of music and technology meet and the proper selection of all elements/details decides whether they complement and support each other to achieve fantastic result or they get in a way of success. (More about the XRCD, XRCD2 and XRCD24 in the article entitled *PRAISE OF A (NON)FORMAT: XRCD An attempted description*)

| SM2R „Sound Matter”

聖 Hijiri means a 'maestro' or an 'important leader'. Initially, it seemed that it would be the name of only one cable, the interconnect we talked about, because Mr. Kiuchi wanted to highlight its distinctiveness and



Its resolution is two orders of magnitude better. This is something that can not be invented, you have to put a lot of work to it to achieve such improvement. What one needs for it is: a great *background*, a high starting point, and an awareness of the direction in which one has to go. Mr. Kiuchi's new power cord sounds much lower and fuller - these are basic features of high-end sound. The center of gravity of the tonality is set in the lower midrange, which results in a darker sound than with Harmonix.

And yet, it is not a closed-in sound. In direct comparison, it turns out that the cymbals are strong and unambiguous with it, perhaps even stronger than with the older version. That's how, for example, the Max Roach Quartet *Live in Tokyo Vol. 1* sounded like. This is a disc recorded in 1977 in the PCM by the Denon label. I wrote about it many times, so it will not surprise you if I say it offers a great sound. Slightly shifted up

emphasize the importance of it. Something had to change though, because **when the market warmly received new products, 聖 Hijiri became a brand, not the name of one cable.**

The X-DC350M2R Improved-Version was a improved version of an older cable, also used in JVC studios, the X-DC "Studio Master". It took the company ten years to get from one to the other. The transition from the X-DC350M2R Improved-Version to the SM2R "Sound Matter" took "only" seven years, but only because a moment earlier, in 2015, a different power cable "happened" with the Harmonix logo, the **X-DC Studio Master Million Maestro**. It was a reference cable, very expensive one, and it was the basis of the tested SM2R "Sound Matter".

Kiuchi-san offers very little information about his products, because he believes that only sound matters and no description can replace it. All we know is that assessing this cable took a whole year and the cable will be offered in limited quantities. What's more, **it will be sold only in two countries in the world – in Japan and in Poland!**

The power cables developed by Mr. Kiuchi have characteristic visual features, because of their sleeves **a cotton material resembling a braid of a iron cord**, that we remember from our youth. In this case, it features a yellow-black interlace. However, using the SM2R "Sound Matter" cable, you could probably iron the sails of a huge ship because it is thick and heavy. It is slightly less flexible than the older version, but the only **element that distinguishes it is a wooden "band" placed mid-length of the new model**, to which the brand's logo was glued. The connectors look the same - they are very good, rhodium-plated, Wattgate plugs.

The X-DC350M2R and X-DC15SM-MR models differed in both conductors used and - although to a lesser extent - in connectors; the more expensive cable also featured an exclusive, large wood element

on the scale, but extremely dynamic, consistent and clean.

聖 Hijiri presented this album in perfectly accurate way. It did not pretend that there is a lot of bass there, because there isn't, but it also presented, in a much more sophisticated way, the advantages of Denon recording technique, which - in my opinion - until the DSD times no other digital recording technique, no matter the bit depth, could match. Soundstream recordings could have been an even better way, but it's a matter for another article. In any case, the reviewed cable delivered internal complexity, resolution (real, not one resulting from the theoretical bit depth) and the phenomenal dynamics of this disc.

And the dynamics is an important element here, because this is the feature that was great in the older cable, and if the comparison is made by someone less experienced, they could point to the superiority of X-DC350M2R in this respect. In fact, compared to it, the 聖 Hijiri sounds "more", but only if we know what a good sound is. If we don't, then there may be a situation similar to that, when one compares audiophile power cable to a regular power cord that is added to audio equipment. It may seem more accurate, faster, more open. But it is an illusion, a delusion, it is simply not true.

Because the tested cable, to be clear, is better, so much better. **It sounds lower, denser, there's a lot more information in it.** And to tell you the truth, it's closer to the Harmonix X-DC Studio Master Million Maestro and Siltech Triple Crown Power than to the X-DC350M2R Improved-Version.

| SM2R vs Triple Crown Power

The comparison of SM2R and X-DC350M2R cables was aimed at determining in which direction Mr. Kiuchi's thinking of sound went. It

placed mid-length and was delivered in boxes handcrafted by a Japanese artist. In a nutshell – the Studio Master "Million" Maestro was made of directional wires of PCOCC copper, and the Improved-Version of OFC copper. What was used in the latest cable? - We do not know.

| HOW WE LISTENED TO IT

The X-DC350M2R Improved-Version is a power cable that I have been using continuously since the moment I tested it. I just had to buy it because it was unmatched in its price range. So this is the case in which the tested product is compared above all to its earlier version, which for many years was part of the reference system. The top cables in my system are the [Acrolink Mexcel 7N-PC9500](#), [Siltech Triple Crown Power](#) and the [Acoustic Revive Absolute-Power Cord](#).

The new cable was facing a tough competition, especially since I really like the X-DC350M2R. To learn about the new power cable as much as possible, I tested it in three different applications - two analog and one digital, comparing it from one side to the older Harmonix, and on the other to the top Siltech.

In analog systems, it powered phono preamplifiers in the following configurations:

| 1 | Miyajima Labs. Madake cartridge → ViV laboratory Ltd. Rigid Float 7 / Ha tonearm → RCM Audio Sensor Prelude IC phonostage,
| 2 | DS Audio DS-W2 cartridge → Schröder CB Tonearm → DS Audio DS-W2EQ phono preamplifier (part of the system with cartridge).
Both arms were mounted on the [Döhmman Helix 1](#).

In a digital system, the cable powered the Ayon Audio CD-35 HF Edition SACD player (№ 1/50) and Reimyo CDT-777 Toku CD transport. The rest of the system consisted of the Ayon Audio Spheris III line preamplifier, the Soullution 710 power amplifier and the Harbeth

turns out that it is similar to the one followed by the best specialized manufacturers. In turn, the comparison with my reference Siltech cable was to show where we are objectively at this price level.

It's about the structure of sound, not details - about important things, not about "beating around the bush", as our friend Janusz, the host of the Krakow Sonic Society meetings, often says. The performance as a whole is more important than individual sonic features. And it is similar to what both aforementioned cables do. **The sound is low and there are lots of details in it.** But these are not "details" that people often talk about discussing audio components, because you do not hear them as details. It's something that builds large, dense, three-dimensional bodies.



In direct comparison with Siltech it become clear that **聖 Hijiri focuses a bit on the middle of the band.** It presents vocals closer to the listener,

M40.1 loudspeakers on the Acoustic Revive Custom Stands.
Interconnects and speaker cables - Siltech Triple Crown.

The test was conducted as A/B/A comparisons with A and B know. I used 2 minutes long music samples, as well as full albums.

- Sound -

Recordings used for the test (a selection):

- Brendan Perry, *Ark*, Cooking Vinyl/Vinyl 180 VIN180LP040, 2 x 180 g LP (2011)
- Depeche Mode, *Personal Jesus 2011*, Mute Records Ltd 12BONG43, 33 1/3 rpm maxi-single (2011)
- Frank Sinatra, *Swingin' Session!!!*, Capitol Records/Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab MFSL 1-407, "Special Limited Edition | No. 346", 180 g LP (1961/2012)
- Komeda Quintet, *Astigmatic*, Polskie Nagrania „Muza”/Polskie Nagrania | Warner Music Poland 190295452032, „Polish Jazz vol. 5”, „Limited Edition Coloured Vinyl | № 299”, LP (1966/2019)
- Max Roach Quartet, *Live in Tokyo Vol. 1*, Denon Jazz YX-7508-ND, LP (1977)
- Shinji Tanimura, *Shinji Tanimura*, Stereo Sound SSAR-013, „Studio Master Series. Stereo Sound Analog Records Collection”, 180 g LP (2017)

like Sinatra from the *Swingin' Session!!!*. It was slightly better separated from the band behind him and closer to the listening position. Same happened with Brendan Perry and the *Ark* album. His vocal has a much smaller volume than Sinatra's, and a different role to play, but it was also a bit more selective.

And this is because the **Japanese cable focuses more on this part of the range, extracts individual layers of the stage, polishes them**, because it does not have to control so much what is happening at the bottom of the band. The bass is low, dense, very nice. But it also does not go as low as with Siltech, it's not that kind of presentation. It didn't lack anything because when needed - as in some fragments of the analog version of the Varius Manx debut entitled *The Beginning* - it surprised me with its weight. But it was also clear to me that this cable's priorities were different.

| SUMMARY

One of the basic objections of the “academic” people towards the "audio" people is that the latter do not test the audio components using the ABX comparison regime, i.e. a double-blind tests. Without going into details, let me just say that we **do not do it because it does not work for music**, so the test as such is defective. It actually tests something - the tester himself.

I have the impression that although I use A / B / A tests, with A and B known, I rather test myself to some extent and that you are reading not only the description of the sound of a given product, but also a description of my own preferences and sensibilities. But it must be so, it's part of the critic's job in any field. And **my preferences are really well described by the 聖 Hijiri SM2R "Sound Matter"** - it delivers the sound I like, value and believe to be the right one.

- Takeshi Inomata and his Friends, *Get Happy*, Audio Lab. Record ALJ-1030, LP (1975)
- Varius Manx, *The Beginning*, Polskie Nagrania „Muza” SX 3008, LP (1991)



He you ever wondered what the designer are driven by when looking for better solutions? I mean, what exactly do they want to achieve? Better sound - it's clear, but what does "better sound" mean and what would make it "better"? **One way to improve a product is to improve some element, for example, make it more detailed, with more range extension, more palpable, more spacial** - there many aspects of the sound I could name here. It is a good way that brings the benefits that we expect.



First of all, it offers a great resolution, thanks to which the recordings live deeper, are interesting, each time we hear something different, because we pay attention to something else. It's about focusing our attention in the middle of the band - not even through an emphasis, but because the most is happening in this part of the band, and we are evolutionarily more sensitive to this range. **There is a great, dense treble, and a low, strong bass.** However, they are a bit "behind" the midrange, as if by half a step - to complement it and not to suffocate it. It's a beautiful sound, that's why the 聖 Hijiri SM2R "Sound Matter" gets a well-deserved **RED** Fingerprint. ■