
hms
SINCE 1975
Your specialist for high-end cables and power filt
Warranty Certificate
hms
SINCE 1975

# Points of Connection

**Across all stages of its evolution, the Gran Finale series has been a flagship of HMS. The current version not only retains the name but also consciously reflects a fifty-year company history that is set to continue under new leadership.**


In the hi-fi world, HMS stands for Hans M. Strassner. The developer from Leverkusen transferred his company in 2023 to International Audio Holding, which already represented two renowned cable brands with Siltech and Crystal Cable. One could sense the relief among hi-fi dealers and customers alike — HMS would continue, even after its founder had stepped back from active professional life. Customer loyalty is also rooted in the product portfolio. For decades, HMS has offered not just cables, but a complete system that begins at the wall outlet and ensures optimal connectivity across two partially overlapping domains: the path of energy and the path of the music signal. Integrating third-party cables into this system without compromising sound quality was possible, as I know from experience, but required careful selection to avoid altering HMS's characteristically "neutral" sound. By contrast, upgrading within HMS's own product lines did not suddenly change everything, but typically resulted in a cleaner, more refined presentation with fewer errors. The musical signal seemed to arrive more intact at the loudspeakers. Customers seeking higher sound quality therefore often chose to move up within the brand.

This has much to do with the philosophy of Hans M. Strassner: "Measurement technology for research and industry" defined the goals of his company, whose origins predated his entry into the hi-fi business in 1993. His approach, as I understand it, was to investigate the physical causes of sonic differences between cables — to treat them almost like measurement errors and to find ways to minimize them. HMS avoided vague theorizing, but did have a clear mission, grounded strictly in technical and physical understanding. Strassner's essay on the "phenomenon of the last one and a half meters," the importance of clean power supply, and the effects of potential differences between components was widely read at the time. It can still be found online as a PDF. What has changed, however: production is no longer in Leverkusen, but in Elst (Netherlands). No longer a mastermind with a handful of


The “Gran Finale 50” series raises high expectations — and delivers on them, both overall and in detail. The most noticeable visible change compared to the versions previously produced in Leverkusen is the textile weave, which now forms the outer jacket and feels more premium than the earlier plastic braiding. The wooden elements have also been refined; the previous versions in light beech had started to look somewhat dated, even though they developed a pleasing honey-yellow patina over time. The interconnect cable (top) is fitted with WBT RCA connectors, whose signal conductors are made of pure copper; bandwidth and shielding further round off the cable’s technical performance. A firm contact pressure ensures a secure and stable connection. For the power cable (bottom), the new development team now relies on four Furutech components. The reasons are not only sonic, but also mechanical — such as improved strain relief.

no longer a long-standing individual workforce, but a team of around thirty people — including four product developers — supported by production capacities that partly focus on metallurgy, but also encompass the traditional craftsmanship of cable manufacturing, such as twisting, sheathing, connecting, and assembly.
One may shed a small tear for the former manufacturing operation on the Lower Rhine out of sympathy or sentimentality, but anyone who has ever closely examined a cable from Siltech or Crystal Cable knows that the already high manufacturing standards of HMS will certainly not decline at the new production site.
This was also evident in the test samples, whose textile sheathing feels more pleasant to the touch and appears more refined than the previous plastic braid. With the power cables, it is above all the weight and stiffness that give a more substantial impression. Whether this is relevant to sound is debatable — or perhaps it is: the more stable a cable rests, the better. At least one point goes to the previous series, however: due to its greater flexibility, the earlier power cable was easier to handle.
If any skepticism arises among long-time users, it may be due to certain design choices. Had we not learned from Hans M. Strassner that when it comes to equipping power cables with connectors, boutique components from renowned high-end brands are not what truly matters?
Accordingly, he used a solid yet rather conventional Schuko plug as a base, whose conductive elements he evidently modified or replaced. These were coated with 20 µm of soft copper and additionally plated with just 1 µm of soft gold purely for corrosion protection.
The power cable of the Gran Finale 50 series now features high-end Furutech components, namely the FI-E38 G (Schuko plug) and the FI-28 G (IEC connector). A paradigm shift that has sparked demand (see interview with Werner Kempf).
And what else? Oxygen-free copper is used as the conductor material, arranged in a twisted braid of 26 individual strands.
This construction, along with the increased material usage, is likely the main reason for the new cables' greater resistance to tight bending.
Their insulation consists of polyolefin and thermoplastic polyurethane, while shielding is made of carbon.
My own system has been wired with HMS Gran Finale Jubilee cables for several years, although not exclusively. For this test, I deliberately reduced it to a minimalist setup — consisting only of the SACD player, integrated amplifier, and speakers.
This allowed me to remain entirely within the HMS ecosystem — although not directly from the wall outlet, as a power filter is placed upstream.
Two old power cables out, two new ones in — the differences are definitely audible. Subtle, yet relevant. The old ones remain good, but my Marantz SA-11 S3 and YBA Genesis IA3 sound slightly more muffled by comparison.
The new power cables require a few minutes to settle before their initial brilliance relaxes, after which it becomes clear that they simply sound more open. When Hilary Hahn plays double stops — sixths and octaves — in a Mozart violin sonata (E minor, K304, Allegro), the sound resolves more transparently. The two simultaneously played strings separate more clearly, with greater sensitivity to the texture of acoustic instruments — to their resonance,

## Associated Equipment

**Turntable**: Transrotor Orfeo Doppio with TMD bearing
**Tonearms**: SME 3500, VPI JMW 12.5
**Cartridges**: Transrotor Figaro, Audio-Technica VM 540 ML
**Phono preamp**: SAC Entrata Disco
**SACD player/DAC**: Marantz SA-11 S3
**Streaming bridge**: Pro-Ject Stream Box S2 Ultra
**Integrated amplifier**: YBA Genesis IA3
**Speakers**: Acoustics Concept 500
**Cables**: predominantly HMS Gran Finale Jubilee, also Colours of Sound "White Bird"
**Accessories**: LAB 12 Gordian power filter, Aqvox Switch SE, Solid-Tech rack, custom turntable console, Subbase Audio echo LS speaker bases, Pro-Ject record cleaning machine, Josef Will outer ring, wall sockets and fuses by Grombberg

## Interview with Werner Kempf, Sales Manager DACH at International Audio Holding

**image hifi**: In the past, HMS deliberately chose connectors from German industrial production, whose contact pins were then soft-copper plated and soft-gold plated to ensure the largest possible contact surface even under light pressure. The new generation now uses Furutech connectors. What are the technical advantages compared to the previous in-house HMS solution?
**Werner Kempf**:With contacts made of pure copper plus 24-karat gold plating, improved strain relief, and overall better contact quality, Furutech connectors meet our requirements more effectively. In our tests, they deliver superior sound quality. Connector technology has simply evolved. And we believe that a power cable like the Gran Finale 50 definitely deserves a high-quality connector. Feedback from customers and dealers confirms this. One remarked: "Yes, the cables have become more expensive, but even the Gran Finale 50 power cable delivers significantly better results on an amplifier or high-end all-in-one devices than the previous Suprema."
**image hifi**: The previous interconnect cable from the Gran Finale series followed the principle of "as much air as possible and as little Teflon as necessary" in terms of dielectric. PTFE sleeves provided the required air layer by acting as spacers around the conductor. Has this construction essentially been retained?
**Werner Kempf**: Yes, air remains the best insulator for us in a connection cable. That is why we have only modified the existing construction. A matrix of Teflon tubes still provides air-based insulation, ensuring very low capacitance and minimal background noise. Especially in combination with our monocrystalline copper conductors, this approach has proven highly effective.
Speaking of interconnects, you tested the RCA version, but many readers may also be interested in the XLR version. It offers an option that deserves clarification. The small housings on the XLR cables allow a 1-kilohm resistor to be activated, slightly reducing the signal on pin 1 (ground). Fully balanced XLR inputs often sound better. In some combinations of source and amplifier, this makes a noticeable difference; in others, less so. If the switch remains in the white-marked default position, the entire ground signal is passed through — typically advantageous for XLR inputs that are not fully symmetrical internally. Many amplifiers internally connect pin 1 and pin 3.
**image hifi:** Ferrite core shielding was a defining feature of HMS's top-series speaker cables, intended to reduce stray field losses. In the new version,

ferrite elements are no longer used. What development may have made the previous solution obsolete?
**Werner Kempf**: Ferrite has excellent properties, but also drawbacks. It essentially creates a kind of Faraday cage, which does not only have positive sonic effects. With our carbon-based technology, we achieve equally effective shielding against electromagnetic interference (EMI) and radio-frequency interference (RFI), while also improving the dissipation of static charges. In our tests, this resulted in a significantly more open sound compared to ferrite-based solutions. The twisting of the monocrystalline copper conductors, along with improved insulation and increased

Conductivity also contributes to making ferrite unnecessary.

**image hifi**: When it comes to shielding, carbon is always mentioned. However, the outer layer appears to be a woven material — does it perhaps contain cotton?

**Werner Kempf**: The outer jacket is indeed made from a combination of nylon and a cotton-like material, providing additional noise reduction and resonance damping. Beneath this lies a braided shielding made of carbon-based material, which is not visible.

**image hifi**: In the cherry wood housings of the previous series, inductance and resistance could be adjusted in several steps via a Zobel network to match the speaker/amplifier combination. What is inside the wooden housings of the new generation?

**Werner Kempf**: To remain true to HMS tradition, we have retained the Zobel network in the speaker cables, but opted for a design with only two variants. One reason is that our monocrystalline copper conductors can sound even better in some applications without filtering — a "pure signal path," so to speak. When the switch is in the red position, the Zobel network is activated. At that point, it simply comes down to trying it out. It depends on the combination of speakers and amplifiers. However, these two options are entirely sufficient — one of them will prove sonically optimal in any given system.

**image hifi**: Thank you for the interview.

**Werner Kempf**: My pleasure!

Friction, resonance. Yet the greatest strength of this excellent recording (CD, Deutsche Grammophon) has always been, for me, the captivating interplay between the violinist and Natalie Zhu on piano. This too now seems more agile and almost reflexive — simply more alive. The improvement is not only evident in detail but also on a grand scale, as in "Blood of Eden" by Peter Gabriel, produced by Daniel Lanois: the expansive soundstage unfolds widely and deeply before me, with bass impulses and percussion elements showing an added sense of freshness, while the deliberately diffuse vocal presentation is rendered with slightly greater precision between the layers. Overall, the new power cables convey the emotional weight of "Blood of Eden" more intensely than the previous ones (CD, Collaborations by Sinéad O'Connor as Peter Gabriel's duet partner, EMI). It is hard to resist.

Next came the interconnect cable of the "Gran Finale 50" series. Its conductor consists of three single-core strands of monocrystalline copper. Air is used as the dielectric, building on proven HMS technology (see interview with Werner Kempf). As with the entire series, shielding is made of carbon. Tonally, I perceive the new interconnect cable as wonderfully balanced — never too bright, yet not deliberately tuned for warmth either; perhaps slightly more subdued than the White Bird from Colours of Sound that I often use between source and amplifier, but with at least equally phenomenal information flow and a slightly less forward presentation. Compared to the previous Gran Finale Jubilee, which I unfortunately only have in the XLR version (not an entirely fair comparison, as it tends to be disadvantaged in my setup), the new cable plays with greater elasticity and responsiveness. It follows the often-used test material of Marianne Beate Kielland's coloratura passages in Bach cantatas with greater agility and reveals, not least, improved dynamic sensitivity (CD, Geistliche Solokantaten für Alt, Naxos).

At this point, however, it could not yet reveal everything it was capable of — the speaker cable was still awaiting replacement. For me, this had always been the highlight of the "Gran Finale Jubilee" series; with its ferrite elements, which sat on the cables like a highly flexible scale armor, it was not only visually distinctive but also consistently held its ground against competitors in my system over the years. Ironically, the tried-and-tested speaker cable now proved to be — a bottleneck? No, that would be overstating it. A good speaker cable remains a good speaker cable. But the

the new one brings qualities I didn't even realize I had been missing in the previous version. But first, the technical foundation: why ferrite is now a thing of the past and what replaces it is once again explained by Werner Kempf in the interview. The signal path in the speaker cable is handled by eight single-core strands of monocrystalline copper. A Zobel network has been retained, but its switching options have been deliberately simplified — not a drawback in my view.

Perhaps the most striking difference: with the current speaker cables, my system delivers slightly more impact and a touch more definition in the bass.

The double bass in Schubert's Trout Quintet, which often seems somewhat underrepresented due to its low-frequency role, becomes more engaged in the performance. Christian Ockert may play it more airy than forceful, but you can clearly hear how it supports, densifies, and at times even drives the music from below (CD, Leipzig String Quartet, Christian Zacharias, MDG). But when we take a broader perspective, it's not only the bass that changes. Mussorgsky's Night on Bald Mountain unfolds in its dark original ver-

...performed as if it were written in 1867, right in front of me. Esa-Pekka Salonen conducts the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra in Walt Disney Concert Hall. It was the conductor's first work for Deutsche Grammophon and also a matter of prestige for the label. The recording was produced in SACD quality, resulting in a sonic masterpiece. From the best seat in the hall, a cinematic perspective opens up onto the musical performance. What the recording completely avoids, however, is any form of exaggeration or spectacle: the view that unfolds is wide and deep, yet the proportions remain intact — nothing appears artificially emphasized. The spectacle lies entirely within the music itself and in the orchestra's performance: one can almost see the motoric-acoustic energy unfolding and how the musicians work ever more intensely with increases in tempo or dynamics. Above all, the dynamic differentiation stands out: the explosive force of the loudest passages — the bass drum strikes with stunning impact, yet always remains proportionate and realistic — is contrasted by ghostly sound shadows that seem to emerge from nowhere. The precision, transparency, and neutrality with which this speaker cable conveys tonal colors, dynamics, and spatial information is phenomenal. It allows for deep immersion into Night on Bald Mountain. Comparable intensity of storytelling is otherwise found more in painting than in music — for example in The Raft of the Medusa by Théodore Géricault. The HMS cables present the haunting story told by Mussorgsky completely unfiltered. The music becomes utterly captivating.

***Left: The Top-Match technology continues to define the speaker cable, allowing inductance and resistance to be adapted to the specific amplifier/speaker combination. This is achieved via a Zobel network housed in the wooden element, which can be activated (red switch position). Naturally, different lengths and additional options are available. Shown on the left is the version used in our test, featuring low-mass WBT banana connectors and bi-wiring termination on the speaker side.***

**Conclusion**: Yes, the "Gran Finale 50" series has a clear advantage over my cables from the previous series. The new ones reproduce music more directly and with greater clarity — they simply sound more open. However, this need not cause sleepless nights. One key takeaway from my test — perhaps the most important — is this: old and new cables can be used together; they harmonize well. There is no need to replace everything at once (although you can, if you wish). Upgrading can be done step by step. My recommendation: start with the new speaker cable, then follow with interconnects and power cables. For my system, this would be the most promising path. As always, only personal testing provides reliable insights. This also applies to further experiments with HMS, which I continue to find as interesting as ever. Enjoy!

---

## HMS Gran Finale 50 Power Cable

**Price:** €1500 (1 m), (€1800 for 1.5 m as tested)

## HMS Gran Finale 50 Interconnect RCA

**Price**: €2400 (1 m)

## HMS Gran Finale 50 Speaker Cable

**Price:** €4620 (2 m), (€6420 for 3.5 m as tested, bi-wiring termination €480)

**Warranty**: 60 months (for all cables)

**Contact:** I.A.H. Germany, Hardtstraße 2 B, 63843 Niedernberg, Phone +49 6028 4390, www.internationalaudioholding.com

---