



TRUE TO THE ORIGINAL

The “Suprema” line from HMS is not only the brand's flagship – it is also one of the best cable options on the market. Under new management, it has been redesigned in the spirit of the original to become the “MC2”.

Text: Matthias Böde

The name HMS is almost synonymous with high-end cables from Germany. Over five decades, the company, once based in the Western German city of Leverkusen, had earned a first-class reputation among local hi-fi enthusiasts. Its founder and mastermind, Hans M. Strassner, was a powerhouse of expertise in this field and always approached his developments from a scientific standpoint. At hi-fi shows, he was a sought-after speaker on cable topics, as he had a deep unders-

tanding of the subject matter and knew how to explain even complex issues in an understandable way. Not least when it came to stubborn humming problems, his knowledge was second to none.

All history now! Because at the beginning of 2024, the International Audio Holding (IAH), based in Elst, Netherlands, took over the company—and with it Strassner's hi-fi legacy and life's work. The interesting thing about this corporate twist is that IAH is at least as knowledgeable a specialist in high-end cables and itself a

manufacturer of the renowned brands Siltech and Crystal Cable.

This first of all means that HMS's legacy is in good hands. However, the particularly brand-loyal fan base in this case fears that the core sound of the HMS cables they love could be compromised in their new home.

These concerns are not entirely unjustified, as the connectors from Siltech and Crystal Cable follow different design principles in some respects. For example, they are made of pure silver instead of copper, which in turn has always been favored by

HMS. Therefore, there is good reason to suspect that the brand will take a different approach to sound in the future than it has in the past.

But apparently, nothing could be further from the Dutch company's intentions. The aim was not to replicate the extensive HMS range one-to-one, but to add a few own touches after the takeover, says IAH sales manager Werner Kempf (see interview), while taking care during the careful revision of the existing product lines to ensure that everything that is named HMS also remains HMS. To this end, the cables were analyzed and measured with high precision in order to make modifications here and there.

Top cables in everyday testing

Now the first results are in, and STEREO has secured various types of cables from the top-of-the-line range, which is still marketed under the name "Suprema", for a review. The comparison was all the more appropriate given that STEREO still uses a whole range of the previous Suprema cables on a daily basis. Yes, our everyday work reviewing hi-fi products would be limited without the HMS cables. Whether for mains, balanced or unbalanced audio or speaker connections: we have long relied on the large HMS cables, among others, for all these use cases.

No readjustment is necessary with the new models. The high-priced MC-2 cables are still encased in black fabric braiding. There are also no changes to the connectors. When it comes to RCA and speaker connectors, IAH continues to rely on the

"Nextgen" contacts from Essen, Germany, based supplier WBT, which have repeatedly proven to be superior in terms of sound quality compared to visually more striking solutions of sometimes dubious origin. The Dutch manufacturer also continues to use high-quality plugs and sockets from Furutech in Japan for the XLR models and the Suprema power cables.

Where the old Supremas had small plastic boxes, some of which were equipped with switches to adjust the cable to the respective devices, there are now beautifully designed wooden modules with name stickers and direction indicators, which clearly embody the high standards of this high-priced series.

While the XLR connection from the old range offered the possibility of preventing mismatching between the output stage of source devices and the high-impedance amplifier input by applying resistance values – which is not needed with modern components – only a toggle switch remains from the multi-stage selection. When this is set to red, the ground wire is loaded with an additional resistance of one kilohm. In a "true" fully balanced connection, this is intended to reduce the capacitance of the signal conductors relative to the ground.

According to the manufacturer, this can result in a tonal advantage under favorable circumstances. Feel free to try it out. But please don't be disappointed if you don't notice much difference. That's okay! For the record, we have almost always operated the old Suprema XLR in its unadjusted neutral position.



As before, WBT and Furutech connectors are used on the Suprema MC 2.

As far as the speaker cable is concerned, according to IAH, in the case of a less stable power amplifier, using the switch on the wooden block can prevent latent oscillation tendencies if it is running on a very low-impedance ribbon tweeter, for example. So this would also be something for rarer special cases.

Carbon foil replaces ferrite

However, the most significant change concerns the conductors used in the new Supremas. Whereas Hans M. Strassner had already used low-oxygen OFC copper in stranded form, IAH has now switched to the bigger "solid-core" strands made of monocrystalline copper, which is said to ensure even more efficient electron transport.

The solid conductors therefore move less in the magnetic fields caused by the electric current flow, as well as due to microphony, i.e., external excitation by sound waves. In addition, IAH attributes a more optimal ratio of cross-section to surface area to them. Furthermore, fewer undefined contact points are formed, which also aims to benefit the unimpeded signal transport. The manufacturer from Elst also pursues this concept in its smaller HMS series, named after the former designation "Gran Finale 50."

The new Suprema power cables feature six solid-core strands, twelve within the speaker cable, and two and three in the RCA and XLR versions, respectively—in the latter, per individually routed channel, of course. In order to shield the speaker cables from unwanted high-frequency magnetic fields, which surround us constantly and everywhere due to mobile communications, Wi-Fi, and radio, IAH switched

Photos: STEREO



Previously, the XLR offered impedance matching from device outputs to inputs. On the new MC 2, however, in fully balanced operation a resistor can be applied to the ground to reduce capacitance.

„THE DECISION WAS EASY“

IAH sales director Werner Kempf on the new Suprema MC 2

STEREO: What was IAH's motivation for taking over the competitor HMS?

Kempf: The decision was very simple. HMS was for sale, and the cables contain so much know-how and experience that it would have been a sin to let them disappear without a trace.

Is it not somewhat schizophrenic to offer multiple cable lines that are technically quite different?

We do not see it that way at all; rather, we perceive HMS as a real enrich-



ment of our range. We are simply expanding our offering with a high-quality sonic alternative and also hope to address new customers with it.

How was the response to the transition from HMS to IAH?

Very positive! HMS cables were previously sold mainly in Germany, but they enjoy an excellent reputation worldwide. Our international partners are delighted that we are now also opening the path for this renowned brand to reach those markets.

from ferrite cores that were previously arranged in series to a continuously effective carbon foil, which is retained up to the mid-priced "Armonia" series.

In our STEREO listening room, we used both generations of Suprema, both together and individually, in our reference system to determine the differences in sound after all this theory. We listened to the new and old power cables—we had two of each—on both T+A's Multiplayer MP3100HV and the "demanding" Accustic Arts' Amp VI power amplifier. Both require a pair of power cables each.

Indeed, the T+A gained a little in terms of spatiality and detail when it was fed energy by the new MC2 Supremas. Christy Baron's extremely transparent and laye-

red "Not While I'm Around" had a little more air, and the delicately nuanced hi-hat playing in the background moved a little further away from the front of the stage. With the previous mains cables, the performance tended to be more compact and at the same time a little stronger in terms of fundamental tone.

MC 2 offers even more structure

The power-hungry Amp VI also sounded a little more spacious on the Suprema MC2 and a touch smoother in the upper registers. Tiny details in Ron Nelson's "Rocky Point Holiday," which is as brutally powerful as it is subtly changing, and which had previously been slightly clouded, now stood out more clearly. In terms of dynamics, the different power chords offered hardly a difference, but with the new ones, the performance was once again more deeply structured and serene.

The concern of "HMS disciples" that the beloved combination of homogeneous cohesion with, yes, a minimal touch of warmth and radical openness could be replaced under the new aegis also seemed unfounded to us when comparing the old and new Supremas. Incidentally, it typically made no difference whether we compared the RCA or XLR variants with each other.

On the contrary, the presentation was even smoother and more stringently staggered than before thanks to the new cables. Ana Caram's lively, intricate, and incredibly realistic "Telephone Song"

sounded a little more orderly, agile, and finely graded in all respects, as well as tonally smoother, through the MC2s.

While we found this somewhat remarkable, the generational comparison of speaker cables proved to be a genuine surprise. Similar to their interconnect counterparts, these cables also provided an audible improvement in the structure of the sound image. This took the form of individual elements being set apart from each other with greater clarity, while at the same time the entire spectrum gained in clarity and seemed to recede by half a step, allowing for a better overview.

Fortunately, the increase in analytical capabilities does not come at the expense of homogeneity and coherence, which ultimately even improve slightly thanks to the now even more perfectly interlocking sound facets. All in all, a modification that is entirely in keeping with the spirit of the original!

CONCLUSION

Concerns about preserving the sound DNA of HMS' Suprema series are unfounded. Even with the new owner IAH, its audiophile core remains untouched. At the same time, individual aspects continue to evolve, allowing the MC2 cables to deliver on their promise of combining homogeneity and resolution at a higher level.

HMS SUPREMA MC 2

Website: www.hmselektronik.com

German distributor: International Audio Holding, www.internationalaudioholding.com

Phone: +31 481 374783

SUPREMA MC 2 IC RCA

1 m set terminated with WBT-0110 Cu PVD around 3,840 euros; each additional 50 cm plus €600.

SUPREMA MC 2 IC XLR

1 m set terminated with Furutech CF-601/602 around 4,400 euros; each additional 50 cm plus €690.

SUPREMA MC 2 LS (SINGLE WIRE)

2 m set terminated with WBT-0681 or -610 Cu PVD around 7,200 euros; each additional 50 cm plus €840.

SUPREMA MC 2 POWER

1 m terminated with Furutech FI-38/28 (G) around 2,520 euros; each additional 50 cm plus €480.

+ The sonic concept of the Supremas has been refined in the MC 2 version.

- The high effort comes at a cost. That is why the price is also high end.



Each Suprema MC 2 has an individual serial number entered on the box.