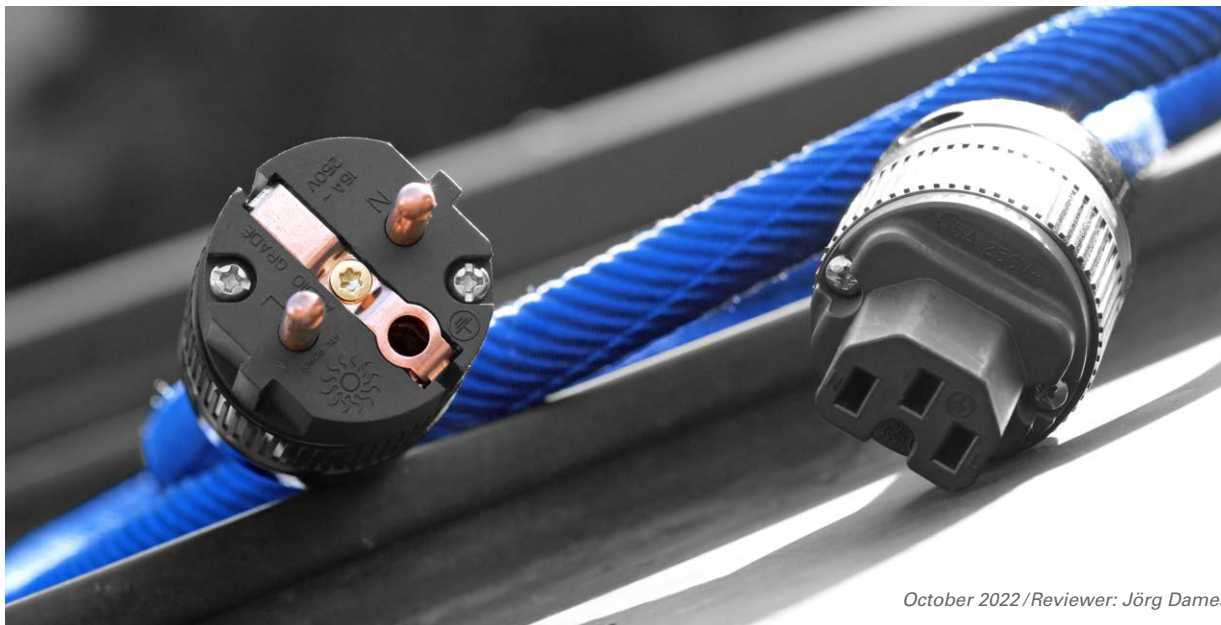


Powerful Leadership

Test: Audioplan Ampère L | Power cable

Retail price on date of reviewing: EUR 1,300; +50 Euro for each additional 10 centimeters



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Karl Popper, the Austrian-British philosopher, once stated: “All life strives for improvement.” Of course, this also applies to music listeners and their equipment. For me, the power cables topic came up recently – for various reasons, after new speakers (Wilson Audio, Sehring) and speaker cables (Kimber), as well as a new server-streamer combination (Melco), had moved into my listening room. It is a synergetic coincidence that I can let my ears hear the sound improvements and pass on the impressions gained with several devices in this test report; so I was interested all the more when I learned that Audioplan boss and developer Thomas Kühn, after having introduced the Ampère S, has now finally launched his “big” power cable Ampère L (1,300 Euro | <https://www.audioplan.de>).

Cable sound and the package insert ...

Even if we run the risk of repeating ourselves in the corresponding test reports: Audio cables naturally exert less influence on the sound than speakers or amplifiers, for example, even if that is not explicitly mentioned every time in the sound descriptions. Nevertheless, I find the Audioplan Ampère L’s sonic signature to make an above-average impact for a power cord.

For every reasonably well-configured audio system, a certain amount of money is more worthwhile to invest in high-quality cables than, for example, in slightly better speakers. And yes: Overall careless cabling (“... and even more so bad room acoustics”, I hear you mutter. True.) can let the sound of even (or in particular) the best components collapse.

The question of the last meter: the Audioplan Ampère L as a conductor and filter

Every audio component works with a kind of filter technology on the mains because the original signal of any sound, and thus the basis of signal generation and processing, ultimately comes from the socket. Due to the influences of today’s technology density (from switching power supplies to e-car charging stations), our power outlet current is rarely unspoiled. And, of course, there is also unwanted mutual influence between the audio devices.

Audioplan wants to take advantage of the fact that each cable has resistive, inductive, and capacitive properties – similar to a line filter – with its Ampère power cables. In addition, they are designed to keep external HF/RFI interference at bay. The Ampère L’s filtering effect derives exclusively from the conduc-



Every power cable has a specific filtering effect. Audioplan wants to make targeted use of this with its Ampère cables

tor packaging and the materials used, such as the dielectrics, combined with conductive attenuation fibers. Thomas Kühn emphasizes that no ferrite (many have certainly seen inductively acting ferrite rings on cables) is used: "In my opinion, ferrite has an extreme sonic signature: clean, but small imaging, colorless and lifeless, as well as low dynamic range, which is probably also related to the strongly frequency-dependent damping behavior."

The low-loss transmission of impulse-shaped charging currents (keyword: dynamics) must be highly prioritized. A high inductance is, therefore – filter effect or not – counterproductive in terms of sound, especially with power cables. Hans Martin Strassner from HMS (see test HMS Energia Suprema, including further explanations of the so-called "compensating currents"), for example, also attaches great importance to this aspect with his deliberately low-inductance



A high inductance is especially counterproductive for power cables, but a particularly low inductance was not a development goal for the Audioplan Ampère L

power cables. However, unlike HMS, Audioplan does not aim for a particularly low inductance; instead, it is a matter of optimally weighing the dilemma of good dynamics and filter effect.

Nevertheless, the power cord capacitance is a more suitable lever to put an end to high-frequency interference. Under the Audioplan Ampère L's outer jacket and insulation layers, there are attenuation fibers with conductive coatings for this purpose, which look like thin, black bristles and dissipate the capacitively built-up potential in the cable. Fine-tuning the filtering effect is done via various dielectrics and their coatings, which should provide additional control over the propagation of high-frequency currents. According to Audioplan, all this requires a lot of manual work, "which makes it possible to achieve certain attenuation properties in the first place because machines would only produce cable clutter in this process."



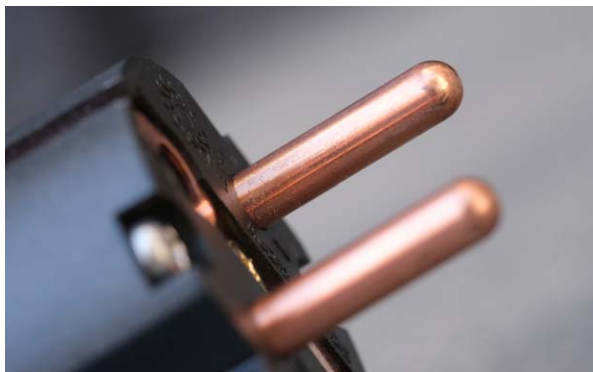
Much manual work goes into the Audioplan Ampère L, carried out at Audioplan in Malsch, Baden-Württemberg, Germany

Audioplan even brought up the subject of auto-induction effects caused by natural mechanical vibrations during the development of its Ampère power cables. Theoretically far less plausible for 230-volt power cables than for AF and loudspeaker cables, Thomas Kühn nevertheless promises "better dynamics, clarity, fine detailing and cleanliness" concerning the targeted mechanical calming (Audioplan CRC technology).

Thomas Kühn, like quite a few other developers, thinks little of conventional shielding, which not least prevents interference from the power cord to neighboring cables or components. The Audioplan



Ampère L reduces the stray field by dividing and interleaving the conductors. The total conductor cross-section of the Ampère is five square millimeters, divided into a total of four conductor strand bundles of 1.25 square millimeters each – plus one PE conductor.



The conductor materials of the Audioplan Ampère L's plug are also made of pure copper

By the way, the conductors all consist of pure copper – Audioplan now refrains from silver plating, if only because of the filter effect, since silver is also an excellent conductor for high-frequency interference and thus a major gateway. Much more interesting, however, are the ATL connectors used with their pure copper conductor material, which also does without any coating (often gold alloys, silver, platinum/palladium, rhodium...): "All precious metals have audible signatures that I don't want to have," says Thomas Kühn. A specially developed machining process nevertheless achieves the hardness required for the mechanical stresses of power plugs.



The small lightning bolt serves as a phase marker for the Audioplan Ampère L

I have connected and disconnected the Audioplan Ampère L during several months of listening to my HMS Energia MkII filter power strip umpteen times. I did not detect any significant mechanical traces; gold-plated contacts often look worse. The fancy blue outer sheath of the cable is more sensitive; it showed some tiny threads during the photo work. I can give an all-clear about the flexibility of the Ampère L: Earlier Audioplan power cables were notorious for their stubbornly stiff behavior; the bending radius of the Ampère L, on the other hand, is less than ten centimeters.

Audioplan Ampère L: Sound & comparisons

Devices and accessories from Audioplan are certainly never tonally bright, silvery, harsh, hard, or in any other way sound-wise exhausting. Anyone who talks to Thomas Kühn for a while will learn that a neutral soundscape is always the objective but that any form of "listening stress" should be avoided at all costs.

This is undoubtedly one of the reasons Audioplan has developed a steadily growing fan community since its founding over 40 years ago, which – at least in my assessment – often includes experienced music lovers who listen intensively. And this is undoubtedly also the reason our Audioplan test reports so far tend to testify to "more forgiving" or "warmer" sound impressions rather than "uncompromisingly hard high-fidelity doctrine."

I'm going to spoil a bit: With this background alone – but not exclusively – the Audioplan Ampère L passes for something unique. But one after the other:

Quite obvious: the tonality

Let's start with the compulsory exercises and, at the same time, the most obvious: In terms of tonality, there is surprisingly no sign of warmer tuning or lowered treble. Nor is there any sign of a lean tuning or aggressive upper registers – which is less surprising for an Audioplan cable.

The recently tested HMS Energia Suprema seems warmer, not least due to its more discreet high-range tuning, while the Kondo KSL-ACc Persimmon (which is also very neutral) has a somewhat more sparkling upper range. And the Audioplan Ampère L plays the



The coupling of the Audioplan Ampère L also comes with pure copper conductors

role of the incorruptible studio monitor in the midrange. But wait, the neutral Kondo power cord is more sparkling, and the Audioplan is even more incorruptible – how is that possible? We'll get to that when we get to the "freestyle section" in this report ...

Energy and Space

First, a few words about spatiality: Yes, perhaps it's technically crude to expect that a "more barrier-free power feed" to an amplifier (I had the Audioplan Ampère L connected to both my Funk MTX and the Norma Norma Revo PA 150 power amp) will pump up its spatial imaging more. Still, I often perceive a more expansive, larger stage via high-quality power cords. This is also the case with the Audioplan Ampère L, which is on par with the HMS and Kondo in this regard – my less expensive (and quite superb for the money) Quantum Powerchord, for example, narrows the stage width somewhat.

The bass

The different power cords are also equal in terms of bass depth, except that the HMS Energia Suprema produces a truly phenomenal blackness at the bottom end – one of the Suprema's best features anyway – and the timing of the Audioplan Ampère L feels even more light-footed. One of the HMS power cord's other specialties is the perceived "black background," i.e., the reduction of subliminal haze compared to many other cables. This results in a more precise and unambiguous spatial delineation between instruments. Here, of course, the issue of immunity to interference plays a role. With regard to

these qualities, the Audioplan Ampère L is also a match for the HMS power cable – and in case of doubt, even outperforms it:

Topping it off: Transparency + Focus

Because in terms of transparency, the disclosure of even the finest sound structures, the Ampère L cannot be topped – and that, as I said, without any gimmicks such as a particularly fresh high range. The definition and spatial delineation of instruments are thus further promoted. However, the precision of the Audioplan Ampère L does not come by chance but, in my opinion, stems from three unique qualities: I already mentioned the purity, which is perhaps even more remarkable in the Ampère L than in the Energia Suprema since it does not attenuate the high frequencies.

Precise for a reason ...

Okay, my Kondo KSL-ACc Persimmon sparkles even more in the upper registers than the Audioplan power cord – see above. But: The real difference and, for me, the second quality that pays to the precision of the Audioplan Ampère L is something that can be determined not least very well on hi-hats:

While the Japanese connector creates a subtle, diffuse aura around and over the fine impulses, which can be interpreted as fog but also as increased pleasant airiness or even sparkle, hi-hat sounds via the Audioplan Ampère L seem more clearly delineated, less frayed, and surrounded by less, but clearer air. It also reveals more subtle information about the textures of these (only seemingly simple) sounds. The slightly airier, more open feeling thus surrounds the Kondo.



The outer textile jacket of the Audioplan Ampère L looks nice but is not very durable

Nevertheless, I find the reproduction via the Audioplan Ampère L to be more defined, focused, and, ultimately, more authentic.

Influencing factor number three on the precision and a particular highlight of the Audioplan power cord is the accuracy, straightforwardness, and undistorted nature in reproducing both fine and gross dynamic impulses. A trait that one notices – see above – both in analytical listening (fast hi-hat transients do not “blur” over the Audioplan Ampère L, one would say in photography) and in a holistic just-enjoying-the-music experience: What is offered seems a tad more energetic, more vibrant.

Relaxed and spellbound

The bottom line is that I follow the music with the Audioplan Ampère L just as spellbound as effortlessly. Only the more “laid back” listeners, for whom a bit of glossing over may suit them, might have a different opinion. Over the past weeks, I spontaneously changed the various power cords on my Norma power amplifier without straining my ears in working mode: The Ampère L subliminally brought this special drive into the music every time, resulting in a more involved and coherent feeling.

Test conclusion: Audioplan Ampère L

To start with, there is no such thing as “the” perfect power cord. Simply because I find – despite frequently heard contrary opinion – that high-quality cables may well give the sound an individual spice or “bend” the sound of the system in a specific, desired direction. As the above comments make clear, there are more suitable power cables than the Audioplan Ampère L for such purposes.



However, the Ampère L will regularly provide a more robust dynamic profile, a fog-free definition of contours and textures, and ultimately an increased tension and richer facets – and thus indeed suggest something like a more “extroverted” music reproduction. In particular, this will further grant a tailwind to perfectly balanced or mildly tuned systems that do not inherently sound too harsh. Either way, the Audioplan Ampère L is the most transparent, low-distortion power cord I’ve had the pleasure of testing, if not listening to, to date.

Facts:

- Model: Audioplan Ampère L
- Concept: unshielded power cable with targeted filter effect
- Price (1.5 m): 1,300 Euro incl. IEC plug Audioplan APM16Cu (unit price: 130 Euro), IEC plug AP320Cu (unit price: 80 Euro), optionally with 20-A IEC plug APF20Cu (unit price: 100 Euro), +50 Euro for each additional 10 centimeters
- Geometry/conductor cross-section: four interleaved conductor bundles of 1.25 square millimeters each plus PE conductor
- Miscellaneous: potential-dissipating, conductive attenuation fibers, uncoated pure copper connectors
- Warranty: 2 years

Manufacturer and distribution

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