

封面 故事

Cover Story



Harmonix

Hijiri Takumi Maestro Powercord

Editor | Megan

The famous Japanese Audio tuning specialist, Mr. K. Kiuchi's Combak Corporation have a few brands of products. The first known brand of product by our local audiophiles was Harmonix, producing various of effective sound tuning devices, tuning cables, room acoustic tuning devices, Powercords, and Enacoms – signal tuning devices. There is a line of high-end electronics under the brand name of Reimyo. Then, there is also its own unique loudspeaker, first model was the Bravo , and now is the Encore ENC-5.

Production

X-DC10AC and X-DC Studio Master are the first 2 models of Harmonix powercords which we have tested them more than 10 years ago, the sound is rich and warm. It was very different from many other Japanese made powercords which tend to sound light and fussy. The Harmonix powercords did leave us a very good impression.

During these past years, we did pay attention to the development of the Harmonix powercords. The X-DC10AC was improved to be the X-DC2 and it has kept its rich and warm character but it was a lot more detailed with high clarity that you could hear the weak sound very clearly with better ambience, and much better imaging. It was surely an economical powercord with great characters.

The development of the X-DC Studio Master powercord is even more aggressive. For the celebration of the 20th Anniversary of Combak Corporation, the X-DC Studio Master 350 M2R was launched. The list price of a piece of 1.5M powercord was HK\$15,300.- Later there was a much higher price of X-DC Studio Master Million Maestro at the list price of HK\$92,100.- The sound is very sweet and pleasant, rich flavor and fascinating, and also have the ability to polish dry & hard, thin to be brilliant sound. The texture and

strength are even better than the 350 M2R. It is capable to satisfy the power consumption demand of any of the huge amplifiers.

Harmonix recently has utilized new concept on the cable design to produce a new series of Hijiri cables. The first was the Hijiri Million Interconnect cable being launched in previous year, then followed by the Hijiri NAGOMI Powercord (list price of a 1.5M piece is HK\$14,500). Now there is a latest higher end model, Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro Powercord, a 1.5M piece at the list price of HK\$49,000. All Harmonix powercords are available in the options of 1M, 1.5M, 2M, 2.5M or 3M to suit audiophiles' need.

Harmonix cables have always stressed on the sound tuning, and its sound character is carefully tuned. Looking at the appearance of Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro, the power plugs on both ends are equipped with black color wood assembly and there is also a piece of black color wood marked with "TAKUMI" on the center of the cable. This is Harmonix's prestigious cherry wood production, and it also proves that this powercord has been carefully tuned with selected sound tuning materials.

On the plug, Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro has utilized the Wattgate 330i RH American style AC plug (Harmonix also offers 390i RH Schuko European-style plug option), IEC is the Wattgate 350i RH, all

rhodium-plated, and then insulated with Harmonix specially selected wood on the outside. It is just like the flagship X-DC Studio Master Million Maestro powercord.

As explained in the website of Combak Corporation, Hijiri stands for a maestro or great leader, and in engineering field, it is unprecedented technology stand alone in the industry, and it is a new name for the new generation of Harmonix cables and powercords.

The packaging of the Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro is a very beautiful and elegant wooden box in red color. It is engraved with a word "匠", which is exactly the meaning of Takumi (hand-craftsman). Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro can be called "the Master Craftsman".

The Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro is specially designed with custom-made copper. The AC current is exceptionally smooth and unobstructed, making the sound very clear, musical and natural. It is the "art of music", reproducing the sound retrieval reminiscent of the live musical event. This power cord is also specially designed for those who cannot compromise, always seeking the best sound enthusiasts.





Music Source Playback with Rich Atmosphere

In the audition, I first used Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro powercord on the Accoustic Arts Drive II CD transport, so that the powercord was in the music source so as to perform the most significant demonstration of its sound characteristics. I also found an Audio Note SOOTTO Mains Powercord for the comparison reference.

The vocal of Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro gave me very warm, rich and sweet feeling. The imaging is dense with good texture; the vocal is strong with good energy and powerful, which instantly evoked the beauty of X-DC Studio Master Million Maestro from my memories.

To playback the Whitney Houston's "The Bodyguard" CD album, the several beautiful songs including "I Will Always Love You", "I Have Nothing" & "Run To You", being reproduced by Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro, the vocal sounded richer with good taste. A warm solvable affection and a full shape of the mouth of the vocalist could be

found. The strong sound was powerful and full of energy; the mid-low frequency was steadily stable and real. The songs in this album are much nicer than Whitney Houston's first album and the recording is much better, although the general recording of the American pop songs is usually lightly shined. Plus the sound character of this Drive II CD transport with clarity but low-sugar type, in order to playback this CD album to sound very pleasant, it'll require to spend a little more thought. Utilizing the Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro powercord with its warm & rich sound, to power up the Drive II, is a good match. It allowed Whitney Houston's voice to sound warmer and smoother, with a bit less glare and hardness at the high frequencies. It was just like the edges being slightly polished to be smoother, but not deliberately asking for the extreme crystal clear presentation as the microscope-style. It was more willing to express a bit richer and more pleasant sound. Thus, in the playback of the song "Even If My Heart Would Break", the reproduction of Kenny G's Saxophone and Aaron Neville's soft vocal, it sounded richer and warmer that was surely another tasteful experience. If you like to listen to Whitney Houston's songs with more

powerful rhythm, i.e. "I m Every Woman", "Queen Of The Night" etc., the Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro powercord, of course, can also reproduce the effect with the strong and powerful mid-low frequency, to be steadily stable, vigorously strong, prudent practical, and full-weight, to provide a solid foundation for the mid-low frequency.

The sound character of Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro powercord has reminded me of Tsai Chin's voice. The recording of the album "Tsai Chin Folk Song " with a very sweet warm vocal, dynamic ups and downs change supple, but also with a little passion of vacuum tube sound, to have the same sound character of the Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro powercord. Using it to playback this CD album can further strengthen the charming voice of Tsai Chin, making it richer with great flavor. Although the Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro and Tsai Chin's recording have the same distinctive character, but the combination of the two will not lead to overlap to be less pleasing due to excessive personality because there is always the Drive II as the dilution adjustment. If the CD transport is replaced with the recent new CD transport, the Metronome Kalista Ultimate SE, which is using in our big listening room, the extent of the system matching co-ordination may not be so high.

Although Hijiri is designed with a new concept, it still maintains Harmonix's usual sound character with flesh and blood, a rich and strong intoxicating nature, not blindly focus on the bold fast, high-definition transparency. On the other hand, it is more deliberately to fascinate the audiophiles, to indulge in the aesthetic audio world that is carefully arranged by Harmonix.

Self-contained to be different

Next, we replaced the original Analysis Plus Ultimate Power Oval power cord (with Wattgate plug) with the Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro powercord on the ModWright LS 36.5DM preamp. The Drive II CD Transport was then connected with the list price over hundred thousand dollars SOOTTO Mains powercord.

After listening to the several audition tracks, I felt the performance was even much better. There was

a wider and more opened three-dimensional soundstage, the ambience in the weak sound was more abundant. The high and low frequency extension on both ends could also go further, as the charming sound performance of the Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro powercord could also be delivered through the connection on the preamplifier power supply.

To playback the Zukerman and Midori's "Bach: Concerto in D minor" violin duet concerto, the violin sounded so lively, the changes were smooth and elegant. The ending of the high-frequency sounded long and delicate, the soft sound were meticulous, the sound was bright enough but warm, the soundstage was open and wide. Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro is really the perfect accompaniment to string music reproduction. It is tuned to have a warm and charming sound, and even to show a bit of graceful woodiness. It is surely self-contained to be different. The charm of the Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro has also made the Evgeny Kissin's piano recital of "Pictures at an Exhibition" to sound more elegant and woody warm.

Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro sound performance is very different with the Audio Note SOOTTO Mains, perhaps from the former pure copper conductor, the latter of pure silver conductor, and their respective manufacturers of the usual sound orientation, we can more or less guess the difference. Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro's acoustic charm in addition to a warm musical and smooth sound with the effect of special custom-made copper, there is also carefully selected high-density wood, just like Tsai Chin's voice that is intoxicated and attractive; once you fall in love with it, and there is no substitute for it!

Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro sound performance is also very different with the Analysis Plus Ultimate Power. Although the tone of the two are also warm and delicate, not too bright, no hard edges, but the Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro sound is richer, can be more virulent, the imaging is also denser and thicker, and Ultimate Power Oval has a little more fresh air, open soundstage, and the end of the buzz sound to be more relaxed and drift feeling.



The Most Effective Way

Our editor, Sam Ho, with good knowledge and very experienced in audio, has listened together with me for a while, and he immediately pointed out that we should use the Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro on the DAC so as to maximize its performance in the complete system. We then used the Ultimate Power Oval back on the preamplifier so as to allow the Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro to power the Accoustic Arts Tube DAC II mk2 decoder, replacing the original Vitus Audio Andromeda power cord.

When we turned on the system again, the sound performance was definitely better overall. The soundstage was further open and wide; the energy and dynamic were also the most powerful, and the Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro's rich flavor sound can also be highly distributed, so that we're all listening very happily! Then, we playback Evgeny Kissin's "Pictures at an Exhibition" again, the sound of the piano did not only exude the Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro's woody warm flavor, and the body was also thicker and plump, fuller and powerful. We could feel his fingers moving fast on the keys and powerful, the impact and liveliness were stronger.

To playback Diana Panton's "I Believe in Little Things" album with the melodic melody of Alice in Wonderland episode "In A World Of My Own", the beginning of the refreshing guitar sound through the Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro interpretation also made us feel so much better and tasteful, the low-frequency string was deep and powerful, coming right from the floor. Diana Panto 's voice was full body with precise imaging, but also lively and lovely, calm and supple, full of charm. The soundstage was open and wide with good density, and it really easily filled up our big listening room.

The Detroit Symphony Orchestra directed by Paul Paray , the album "Suppe and Auber Overtures" of which the third song "Franz Von Suppe: Light Cavalry" got a lot of passionate strings musical instruments; the bright and loud brass, and full of marching rhythmically dynamic drums, under the interpretation of Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro, the sound was absolutely strong and powerful, energetic, loud and charming. It also gave you a little bit of the rich, thick and warm flavor of this power cord. The bright glory sound was no longer harsh or too sharp for your ear, it was really a wonderful result!

The sound characters of the Accoustic Arts Drive II CD transport, Tube DAC II mk2 D/A Converter and ModWright LS 36.5DM preamplifier were all light with low sugar type, vivid and strong direction, they were all well-matched with Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro powercord. Under our long-term experience with these equipment, we recognized which type of powercord would be the most ideal and comprehensive for them. I like mostly the sound to be more vigorous open, more details on the weak sound, more extend on the high and low frequencies in both ends by connecting the powercord on the CD transport. I like the open & wide soundstage, powerful and imaginative power cord for connecting the preamplifier and I also like the sound with strong flavor of the power cord to power up for the D/A Converter. This is an example of how to configure the power cord for this combination in a very stable manner.

As for the power amplifier to select the power cord, I'm the same as many of you that we prefer to use the powercord that is powerful and strong with good texture. The performance of the Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro in this area is quite ideal, even though it has not yet reached the level of the X-DC

Studio Master Million Maestro as be more freely. In addition, the Hegel H30 sound character is similar to the Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro as both sounds rich. These two work well together that the sound is marvelous tasteful, but it is just a bit less vigorous jumping. Thus, it is better to let the deep affection of the Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro powercord for the D/A Converter to express them out.

The Hijiri TAKUMI Maestro and Tube DAC II mk2 D/A Converter really hit it off, making Evgeny Kissin's piano sound so deep, rich and strong, and it also made the "I Believe in Little Things" in which the jazz big cattle tendons coming from the earthquake. To playback the "Suppe and Auber Overtures" was so lively, and moreover to make the 6th song "Orpheus / Sonnet" of Patricia Barber's "Mythologies" in which the electric guitar sound full of tension and charming, drum sound so powerful and strong, low-frequency so deep and heavy, as powerful as the earthquake. It really stimulated excitement to all the listeners!