

## REVIEW: Furutech DSS-4.1 speaker cable: Clearly talented



*Audio cables are easily overlooked, often underrated and generally misunderstood. Really good cables are also usually really expensive. The Furutech DSS-4.1 speaker cable is in the upper class in sonic performance terms – but you can save significantly by buying it off the reel*

By Deon Schoeman

While most audio enthusiasts will accept that decent cables and interconnects are a must-have to ensure good system performance, many will still consider them a grudge purchase – until they've heard what good cables can do.

Spending two or three grand on cables is one thing, but shelling out tens or even of hundreds of thousands on high-end interlinks, speaker cables and power cords is mostly considered proof of insanity.

I'm not going to get involved in a debate on the merits of audiophile cabling, nor how much one should spend on optimising signal transfer. For me it's quite simple: if you can hear a difference, if that difference warrants the asking price – and if you can afford it – it's worth investing in.

Affordability remains a key factor – and that's not unique to cables. The better the gear, the more expensive it gets, while the gains in sonic terms diminish as the prices increase.

The Furutech DSS-4.1 speaker cable is technically sophisticated and fastidiously manufactured. It's a far cry from the stuff you buy off the reel at your local Builder's Warehouse – and it promises upper-class performance.

Usually, cables of this calibre come pre-packaged in fancy boxes. But in an effort to make its high-end cables more accessible, Furutech only makes the DSS-4.1 available off the reel. In other words, you buy the length you need, then terminate it with the connectors of choice yourself.

That way, you don't pay for the packaging nor the labour, which should translate into a significant saving.

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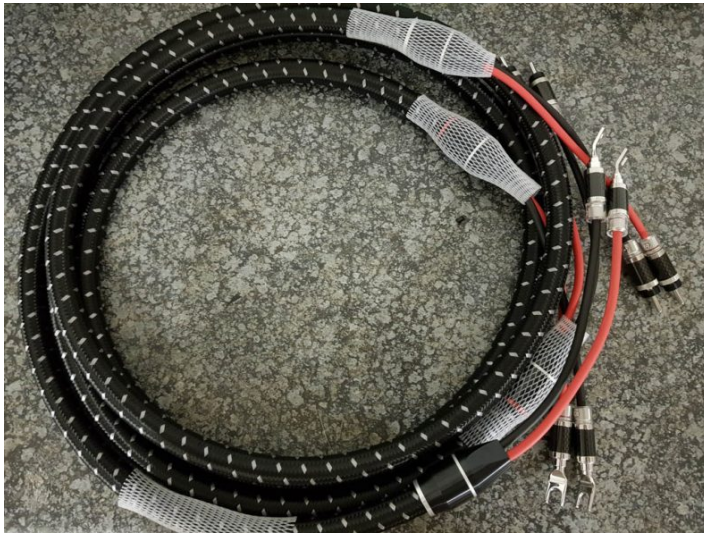
**MSG 15 (15")** **SMS 15 (15")**



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The Furutech DSS-4.1 is a relatively thick, fairly pliable speaker cable. It also oozes quality in tactile terms, thanks to a black and silver nylon-braid outer sheath, that looks and feels the classy part.

And so it should, at R7 800 per running metre. As I said, this is not a run-of-the-mill speaker cable – which is why it also makes sense to buy only as much as you need.

As reviewed, the DSS-4.1 was fitted with top-flight Furutech termination, which is exactly what a cable of this pedigree deserves.

At the source end (the cable is directional), local importer/distributor The Audio Visual Boutique's Jeandré Botha chose to use CF-202(R) bananas, while the CF-201(R) bananas were fitted to the speaker end. Also employed were DSS-4.1 cable splitters.

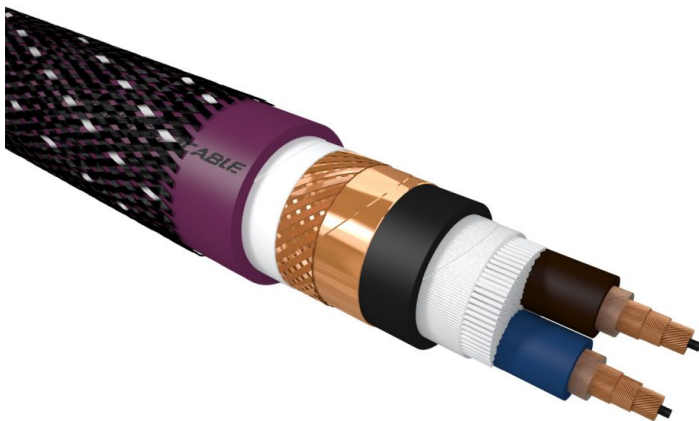
The result is a speaker cable set that looks the high-end part.

#### UNDER THE COVERS

There's a lot more to the DSS-4.1 than a sleek, sophisticated appearance, however. Furutech takes the science behind its cables very seriously indeed, and the DSS0-4.1 is not exception.

The key construction principle of the cable revolves around the use of two high-purity oxygen-free copper types. The first is Furutech's traditional, highly regarded Pure Transmission Alpha-OCC. But here, it's partnered with Alpha DUCC Ultra-Crystallised High-Purity Copper.

DUCC is processed and supplied to very high standards of quality control by Mitsubishi Materials Industries, and Furutech considers it as one the best signal transmission conductors.



It's manufactured using a proprietary technology that optimally aligns the crystals, while reducing the number of crystal-grain boundaries, which makes for a highly efficient conductor that's also less direction-sensitive than conventional OCC.

Furutech's own Alpha-OCC benefits from proprietary cryogenic and demagnetizing treatment to improve conductivity.

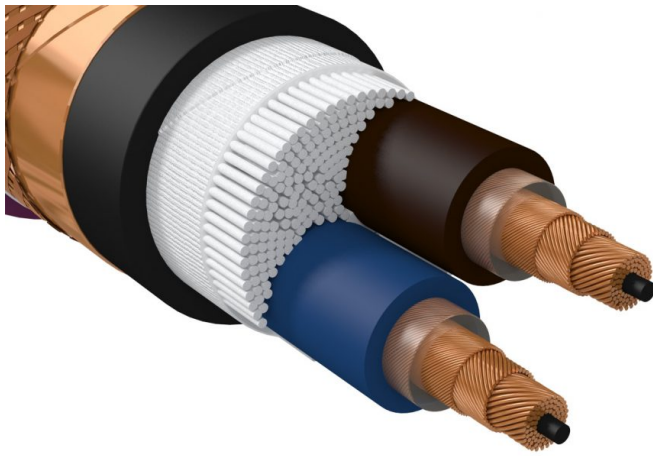
The cable's actual construction combines both OCC types in a three-layer, rotation-specific conductor layout. Each of the two conductors (one each for positive and negative) consists of polyethylene core, around which the copper strands are arranged in three layers.

The first layer is made up of 89 Alpha-OCC copper, each measuring 0,18 mm in diameter and arranged in a clockwise pattern. The second, middle layer is made of the same Alpha-OCC, but the 39 strands are arranged anti-clockwise.

The third, final layer is comprised of 62 Alpha-DUCC strands, each just 0,13 mm in diameter, and arranged clockwise.

Protecting each of the three-layer, multi-stranded conductors is are two layers of insulation, two layers of shielding, a filler and two barrier layers, an outer lead-free outer sheath, all contained within the braided sleeve mentioned earlier.

Even so, the DSS-4.1 cable has a relatively modest diameter of less 20 mm.



As mentioned, the Furutech CF-201(R) are top-end spades featuring a rhodium-plated Alpha-OCC copper conductor, a non-magnetic stainless steel body and a damped carbon fibre/stainless steel body.

The same materials are used for the CF-202(R) bananas, and both use a screw-down compression clamp to fix the cable to the connector in a sturdy, mechanical, non-soldered connection.

Finally, purpose-designed aluminium alloy splitters are used to divide the left/right conductors for easier connection and a professional, durable execution.

#### SOUNDS LIKE ...

The Furutech DSS-4.1 was used to link my reference Vivid Audio V1.5s to PS Audio Stellar M700 monoblocks. As this isn't a bi-wire cable, I used Vivid's own Van Den Hul-based bridging cables.

Source signal was provided by a PS Audio DirectStream DAC/Bridge II, delivered to the amps via an Electrocompaniet EC4.7 pre-amp.

I also used the cable in the AVSA listening room, partnering a pair of KEF LS50 standmounts powered by Anthem's impressive STR integrated amplifier (review pending), with a Lumin D1 network streamer providing acting as source.

The sonic trends displayed by the cable in each system remained consistent: this is a cable that favours and open, clean and resolved sonic image that is both uncannily detailed and almost disconcertingly revealing.

Tonal breadth was exceptional, allowing even the small KEFs to deliver a solid, fast and powerful bottom end. The midrange was open and revealing, bringing a strong sense of clarity and definition to the music.



Trebles were crystalline and extremely detailed, but without becoming overblown or bright. In fact, I enjoyed the way the cable managed to retain the emotive content and intent of the music: it steered clear of the clinical analysis that can suck the joy out of listening to hi-fi!

There was a tautness and cohesion to the delivery that benefited overall pace and momentum, while the cable expanded the perceived soundstage, spreading the musical information wide and deep, but not to the extent of comprising the cohesion and intent of the music.

On Supertramp's *Crisis? What Crisis?*, the fine details and sound effects preceding the opening 'Easy Does It' were resolved with a clarity and realism that was quite startling. Traffic noise, the approaching footsteps of a whistling pedestrian, a blaring hooter – all were brought to life with presence and believability.

On 'Sister Moonshine' off the same set, the bass showed real oomph and momentum, while also revealing the harmonic character of the bass, while the drumwork was delivered with muscular intensity.

The texture and character of the electric and acoustic guitars were effortlessly reproduced, while the harmonica and penny whistle had just the right bite and brilliance to cut through the fabric of the

music. The cable certainly afforded the listener full access to the music's complexities.

The Furutech cable was well up to the task of unravelling and contextualising the multi-faceted performances of Snarky Puppy on their latest set, *Immigrance*. On 'Cover', the fat brass was perfectly juxtaposed against the deep, throbbing bass, the reverberant drumwork and the shimmering percussion, and the delicate guitars.



The DSS-4.1 really opened up the music, bringing not only detail, but also dimension and presence to the listening experience. It made the most of the recording's vast stage and pervasive dimensionality, ensuring an engaging and enthralling listening experience.

On the Bach Collegium Japan's stirring rendition of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, the cable allowed a sense of insight and dimension that made for riveting, almost experiential listening.

The recording's ability to capture the ambience and the atmosphere of the music was fully exploited, bringing the grandeur and the gravitas of the music into fine, compelling focus. The cable allowed the complex layers of voices, orchestra and organ to be revealed, while also ensuring that the cohesion of the overall performance remained gloriously intact.

#### THE BOTTOM LINE

Anyone with an ear for music will quickly hear the difference a good cable can make to the ability of an audio system to communicate and engage. Simply put, it should allow more of the music to come to the fore.

Of course, that presupposes that the system, from source to speaker is good enough to warrant the additional insight and resolution. It also presupposes that the cable will simply provide more access to what the system is producing, rather than adding a signature of its own.

The Furutech DSS-4.1 succeeds on all those counts. It's reveals more of the essence and intent of the music, pays closer attention to detail, and affords the music more air and space. It extends the perceived frequency band, but doesn't interfere in the tonality of the recording.



In short, it provides a more efficient, more transparent conduit for the music signal's path from amplifier to speaker. And once you've heard the sonic result, the price/value proposition seems a lot more palatable.

Also, let's not forget that a pre-packaged, pre-terminated cable of similar quality would cost a lot more. By buying the DSS-4.1 off the reel, and terminating it yourself, you'll save yourself a packet, and still end up with a top-class product that will benefit overall system performance.

#### VITAL STATS

**Conductor material:** Alpha-OCC and Alpha-DUCC (7N) high-purity copper

**Conductor construction:** Three-layer, multi-stranded, twisted pair

**Directional:** Yes

**Insulation:** Fluoropolymer inner, polyethylene outer

**Inner sheath:** Flexible PVC with nano-ceramic/carbon particle compound

**Shielding:** Copper foil and OFC braid

**Outer sheath:** Flexible PVC

**Outer sleeve:** Nylon-strand braid

**Maximum resistance:** 4,5 ohms/km

**Capacitance:** 51,69 PF/m

**Inductance:** 0,7 uH/m

#### PRICE

**Unterminated cable:** R7 800/metre off-reel

**Furutech DSS-4.1 splitters:** R5 550/set of four

**Furutech CF-201(R) spades:** R2 400/set of two

**Furutech CF-202(R) bananas:** R3 200/set of two

#### SUPPLIED BY

**The Audio Visual Boutique**

#### ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT

PS Audio DirectStream DAC

Lumin D1 network streamer

Electrocompaniet EC4.7 pre-amp

PS Audio Stellar M700 monoblocks

Anthem STR integrated amplifier

Vivid Audio V1.5 and KEF LS50 speakers

TelluriumQ Black cabling

#### SOFTWARE

Supertramp – *Crisis? What Crisis?* (A&M/Universal)

Snarky Puppy – *Immigrance* (Ground Up Records)

Beethoven – *Missa Solemnis* – Bach Collegium Japan/Masaaki Suzuki (BIS)



ALPHA-DUCC

ALPHA-OCC

DSS-4.1

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DSS-4.1 SPEAKER CABLE

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