

## Studio Connections Black Star Audio Cable Review

Matt Colton of Alchemy Mastering, one of London's most prestigious mastering studio, take a full reivew of Studio Connections Black Star cable system



**About Matt:** *Matt Colton was awarded the Music Producers Guild Mastering Engineer of the Year award in 2013. A mastering engineer since 1997, Matt joined Alchemy as a director and engineer in 2012 having previously worked at AIR Studios, Alchemy Soho, Optimum and Porky's Mastering. Matt has worked with many of the world's biggest and greatest artists including Coldplay, Muse, James Blake, George Michael, Peter Gabriel, Manic Street Preachers, Leftfield and Flume.*

**Music is all about timing**, and all recording is based on timing. From how well the band play in time during the recording process, through to the mastering tools of EQ and compression which are just devices to alter the timing of a recorded signal.

Phase is timing between the 2 channels that make up the stereo field. Better timing sounds more natural and more pleasing to the ear, less fatiguing, less forced.



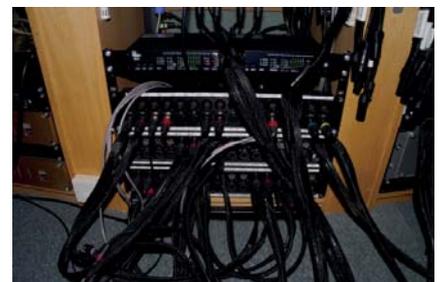
In my work as a mastering engineer it is often the timing of a performance that I am looking to correct, or to enhance; dynamics processors such as compressors and limiters can change the listeners perception as to how tight the band are, how in front of the beat the drummer is, how in the pocket the bass player is.

Equalisation can delay or accelerate the point in time that a sound reached the listeners ear, so that the tambourine in a recording can be pushed back into the background of the 3 dimensional sound image, or a vocal can be brought forward.

*“Studio Connection’s Black Star analogue, digital and power cables all have a remarkable effect on the timing...”*

Studio Connection’s Black Star analogue, digital and power cables all have a remarkable effect on the timing of a recording, or the timing of the replay of a recording. They don’t to my ears add any enhanced colour to the sound, so the bass or the treble doesn’t get hyped in the way some hi-fi products can affect things.

But with the greater accuracy of this improved timing the sound from the speakers becomes more realistic, and sounds less like a recording.



Interestingly from a working perspective I have found that with this improved timing less processing is required, because we aren’t looking to engender the recording with some kind of pseudo realism. By the same token I have also found that I can use more processing on occasion without the sound starting to sound artificial. The improved timing reveals a kind of musical truth that is in the recording.

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The effect has been beneficial on all of the pieces of audio equipment in my studio. For example some equipment also adds undesirable colour or smear the high frequency of a lot of program material. But the increased smoothness, openness, enlarged stereo image and more precise placement within the stereo field that the analogue and digital interconnects, and the power cable bring to bear on the unit have made me fall in love with it again!

You can still hear the tonality of the classic electronics within but the honkiness and ugliness that they could add to the signal is gone, and the tops no longer sound smeared in the way they frequently used to.



*“...the increased smoothness, openness, enlarged stereo image and more precise placement within the stereo field that the cable brings to bear on the unit have made me fall in love with it again!”*

The effect it has had on the cutting lathe is also noticeable - less distortion- so I am doing less ‘deessing’. The vinyl recordings I am making seem cleaner, with more solid mono image and precise stereo placement. Everything sounds wider, and I seem to be able to cut slightly louder as a result.



It’s worth noting that we found replacing parts of the signal path led to incremental improvements in the sound quality that we were hearing, but that there was a step change when we had replaced all the components; so replacing part of the digital cabling with some Black Star cable yielded some benefit, but the benefit was much more apparent when we replaced all the digital cable and the low impedance of the cables was matched all the way through.

Likewise with the power cables; when we had the entire system running on the Black Star power cables the effect on the sound stage was breathtaking due to the common impedance running through the wire.

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### Summary and Conclusion

The overall effect that studio Connections Black Star cables has on the sound stage is breathtaking. All performers have a well defined location and depth in the stereo image.

Studio Connections ‘Black Star’ is the cleanest, clearest sounding cable, and imparts less of itself on the audio signal than anything else that I’ve heard, and that’s what its bringing to my studio.

**Matt Colton (Coldplay, Muse, George Michael, Peter Gabriel, James Blake)**  
**Mastering Engineer and Director**  
**Alchemy Mastering**



Alchemy Mastering  
[www.alchemymastering.com](http://www.alchemymastering.com)