

# STEREO STEREO

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For demonstration purposes, Symphonic Line fitted its RG7 MK4 Reference amp with different WBT input and output sockets.

We've fitted three pairs of our RCA and speaker output sockets to a Symphonic

Line amp to allow direct comparisons. Would you be interested in listening to the results?" You're telling me! The offer from WBT boss Wolfgang B. Thörner was too good to miss. We were also able to conduct comprehensive tests on the nextgen RCA connectors using the same cables. With the exception of a brief check during the last high-end show in Munich (see "Workshop" in STEREO 10/07), lack of opportunity has prevented any comparison between these sockets.

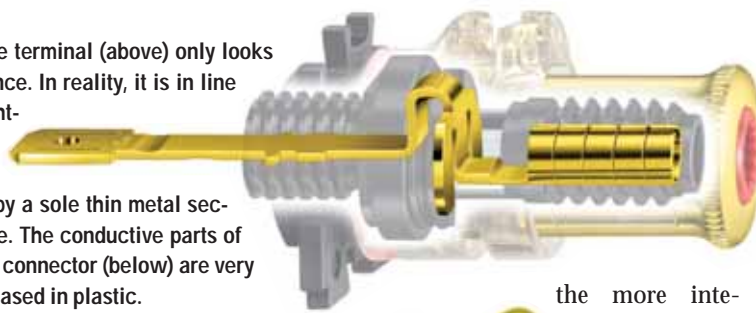
In all connection modes, the RG7 MK4 Reference was equipped with WBT sockets in the standard brass version with velour chromium coating as well as nextgen sockets in gold-plated copper and pure silver. The signals were transmitted via identical cables inside the amp, and the silver versions were fitted with silver conductors on the grounds of homogeneity. This was obviously the right thing to do, as will become apparent. We remained true to this approach and connected our pure silver "Silvercom" cables from Mudra Akustik fitted with pure silver WBT sandwich spades to the corresponding speaker terminals of the RG7 for our first test – with Wilson Audio's Maxx 2 at the other end. Ideal conditions for a shootout between the RCA inputs. One AF set of "M. C. Integration Hybrid" from van den Hul with copper nextgen connectors and one with copper connectors were ready and waiting.

We began with the copper version. To cut a long story short: the transmission route via the standard sockets fell at the first hurdle. The sound images they generated were spatially cramped and were restrained in

## Sensational Socket

We used a specially prepared amplifier to track down the advantages of WBT's "nextgen" RCA and speaker sockets. We even had the opportunity to compare the copper and silver versions.

The nextgen pole terminal (above) only looks solid at first glance. In reality, it is in line with WBT's light-weight concept, as the signals are transmitted by a sole thin metal section on the inside. The conductive parts of the nextgen RCA connector (below) are very light and are encased in plastic.



terms of tonal colour, reach and dynamism, in fact almost a little "timid". After the changeover to the copper nextgens (WBT-0210 Cu, pack of 2 for around 46 euros), the same pieces started to grow as if they had been released from their chains and no longer had to struggle against an imaginary resistance. Our findings for the RCA connectors from the Essen-based specialists in trials and workshop reports were confirmed for the sockets: the standard versions had the same limitations and were a poor second to the nextgens.

All of which made the comparison between the copper and silver versions (WBT-0210Ag, pack of 2 for around 81 euros) all



the more interesting. In summary, what we can say is this: combining the two is not a viable option. Although copper connectors in copper sockets do not produce as refined, firm and contoured a sound as in combination with the pure silver input, the end result was still more homogeneous and natural. With the "mixed double", the energy slid up into the upper midranges, creating a particularly urgent, transparent and crisp sound reproduction – but causing voices to appear too throaty and giving the music a slightly stringent and unnatural touch. The silver connection only really played to its theoretical strengths when used at both ends. It brought out more detail than the copper duet, and the tonal flow and degree of finesse were more pronounced. This ties

in with our experiences to the extent that we tend to recommend the copper nextgens on the end of your cables in combination with the ubiquitous standard RCA sockets. They are a better match in that they supply more realistic timbres. Silver is only the version of choice if used front to end.



Internally, the connections are identically wired – with the exception of the silver versions, which are fitted with pure silver conductors for reasons of homogeneity.

We left the silver cores in place and tested the speaker contacts (WBT-0710 Cu/Ag, pack of 4 for around 125/192 euros). Once again, the standard connection didn't stand a chance: the sounds that came out were more confined, less inspired and more sluggish than with the nextgens – and the silver path to the speakers again produced the freshest, most direct and most expansive tones. When we changed over to the copper versions, the definition was slightly more modest, the volume was more compact and the upper frequencies were not quite as brilliant, yet there was no lack of homogeneity. All the same, further tests showed that the copper nextgens are less susceptible to tonal interference and therefore more forgiving, as the producer has no way of knowing which speaker cables the customer actually uses.

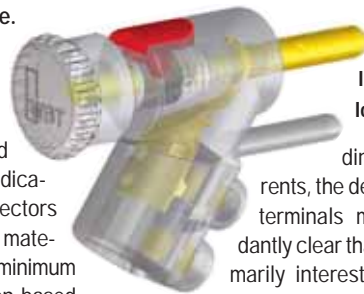
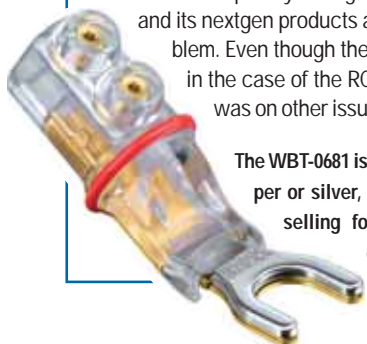
## Low mass goes on – new nextgen-contacts

WBT is expanding its nextgen line. With the new sandwich spades and bananas, the focus is on reduced weight.

Much of what we have seen and heard during our listening tests indicates that the key criteria for both connectors and sockets include not just top-grade materials and firm contact pressure but also minimum weight. Only a few years ago, the Essen-based specialists would have pooh-poohed any suggestion that the use of solid material equals memory effects equals saturated sound and sluggish timing. But in-depth comparisons show that there really is something to this claim.

WBT subsequently recognised the effect, and its nextgen products address the problem. Even though the focus – at least in the case of the RCA connectors – was on other issues such as avoid-

The WBT-0681 is available in copper or silver, with a pack of 4 selling for around 69/147 euros



The new revolver banana – a little metal and a lot of plastic

ding eddy currents, the design of the pole terminals makes it abundantly clear that WBT was primarily interested in reducing the weight of the components, and not just because of the sky-rocketing prices for raw materials. The "weightwatcher" philosophy has now also been adopted for the popular sandwich spade (below) and the expandable banana plug, both of which possess dual screw connectors for cables with crimped cable end sleeve. The metal elements that used to be a byword for robustness and rigidity have now been replaced by lightweight plastic material. The sandwich spades are already available in nextgen design, and the banana will follow shortly. And it's safe to assume that they too will help to produce a better sound than their weightier counterparts!

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