

The Audio Beat

What I'd Recommend to a Friend: Nordost SuperFlatline

by Roy Gregory, December 12, 2018

When it comes to the highest end in audio and the cables that inhabit that rarefied atmosphere, few brands are as visible -- or as divisive -- as Nordost. In the pantheon of Nordost flagship designs, there was SPM, then there was Valhalla, and finally there was Odin -- cables to make your system dance, your face smile and your wallet weep.

But in the beginning there was only Flatline Gold, a revolutionary speaker wire as thick as a business card that used fluorinated ethylene propylene (FEP) insulation and ribbon conductors to deliver astonishingly direct and immediate musical performance at an equally astonishingly low price. It is no exaggeration to say that Flatline Gold awakened the audio public's awareness of both the importance and performance potential of speaker cables, transformed the budget-speaker market



and created the foundation on which the Nordost empire was built.

Well, twenty-odd years later, Flatline is back and just as impressively feisty as ever.

Listening to it now is almost as astonishing as it was first time

around, and it's easy to understand why it took the audio world by storm when it was first launched.

Its sheer clarity combined with its coherence, detail, uninhibited dynamic response and positive sense of rhythm and purpose are just as impressive now as they were back then. But times have changed and so have expectations. SuperFlatline, the current iteration, impresses now for all of the old reasons, and some new ones too.



Of course, now we have had the benefit of having experienced Nordost's bigger, better and far more expensive cables. When Flatline Gold first strutted its stuff, it impressed through simply delivering more, so much more, of the music. These days, it's not the nature of SuperFlatline's performance that's so remarkable, but just how little it gives away to the bigger cables in the line. It might not have the textural subtlety, absolute weight and bandwidth of the Valhalla 2, but it is very obviously cut from exactly the same musical cloth, with its crisp, clean dynamics, unforced transparency and expressive musical range. That uncluttered clarity allows it to cut straight to the heart of the densest or most compressed studio mix, unraveling the interwoven lines and revealing the underlying symmetry in Bach or Beethoven, delivering the light and shade, the emotional shifts in Shostakovich and Sibelius, or the spit and attitude that came with the New Wave. Regardless of genre, SuperFlatline's musical exuberance is hard to beat. Listening to the sheer energy and musical enthusiasm of Amandine Beyer and Gli Incogniti, or hearing it peel back the layers of Peter Gabriel's *Passion*, it's hard to

credit that you are listening to what is, in high-performance-audio terms, a budget cable.

But it's not only the cable landscape that has changed; Nordost might have been one of the first companies to recognize the importance of running the same cable right through your system, and there's no ignoring the fact that using their cables in that way delivers by far the best results. But the nature of systems has changed too. The emergence of high-quality, one-box digital integrated amplifiers, many of them at surprisingly affordable prices, has made the one-box do-it-all option increasingly popular, and that makes SuperFlatline even more relevant (and even more of a steal) than it was before.



From around \$300 for a two-meter pair, with an extra \$100 for each additional half meter of cable, SuperFlatline is available single-wired or biwired, with banana plugs or spades. With so much musical bang on tap for surprisingly few of your hard-earned bucks, Nordost's returning hero is as easy to recommend as it is to enjoy.