

CABLE MUFFS™ by WESTLAKE AUDIO

Necessity. The mother of all good inventions.

“If I had a dollar for every time Andrew cut out a cable support I’d be a rich man”, said Phoenix. “You know” said Sherwood (our purchasing manager), “we can have our Muff (Speaker Muff) supplier make us a bunch so that Andrew can go back to work checking speakers where we need him. All I need is a drawing specing the dimensions and materials. I see every size, color and material known to man in that sound room!” So a few hundred hours later we have them. Super-Duper Omega Cable Muffs™ by Westlake Audio.

So where is the value?

Oh, sure, we can hear it now; you want how much for a cutesy piece of packing foam?.... Well,...it isn’t just any old foam. It’s Super Duper omega Foam! Actually, there are a few little licks that separate our foam from the stuff in your “bean bag chair”. First is the shape itself. Marketing hype? Not really. Having struggled for years to keep our sonic house in order we find the Omega Cable Muffs the ideal solution for most cable routing and isolation problems. The unique Omega shape serves as a reminder to police the separation between speaker, signal, power and video cables, which can get by us when the hunt for the perfect sound image reaches fever pitch.

The shape also reminds us that we are dealing with a pretty complex bit of physics. “It’s not rocket science...but it’s close” says Phoenix. And deal with it we must if we are going to have half a chance at resolving 16 bits (1 part in 100,000) or the dream of 24 bit (1 part in 10,000,000) accuracy in our systems and the shape has a hidden feature; grab the base with your thumb and fore/index fingers and the mouth opens like a clip, facilitating installation to the suspect cable. The shape also reminds those around us, not to throw out these specialized pieces of foam. The flat base supplies some stability to the situation and the grooved sides allow one Muff to isolate and space 3 cables. Dampening is applied locally by each Muff, and use of several of the 3 available sizes will introduce a sense of security in an otherwise fluid situation. Who hasn’t adjusted the cables, turned around, returned to the listening position, only to notice...they’ve moved....again! agh!

Most importantly these things work.

Cable cross talk and induced hum are the common culprits in diminished system performance when proper component and interfacing issues have been addressed.

Let’s discuss the problems and suggest some solutions.

POWER CORDS: The field strength in the immediate vicinity of a power cord is quite high and thus we should keep them away from signal/line/interconnect and speaker cables as well as the electronics and the speaker themselves. Although specialized power cord products may modify the geometry of the field that is radiated; there is no substitute for a good cable layout. Also keep in mind that A.C. power wiring, buried in walls and floors, can be an invisible source of sound polluting interference!

SPEAKER CABLES AND AMPLIFIER LOCATION: De-humming a complex system can be a daunting task even for an experienced professional. Assuming proper cabling and grounding (contact your dealer or professional installer if required), start with just the power amplifiers connected to the speakers and no (or shorted if required) input to the amp. All should be quiet except for the slightest hiss from mid/tweeter when within a few inches/cm. If not, a component or system problem exists and needs correction.

Amplifiers can radiate directly into a speaker systems’ internal crossover if it uses air core inductors, as many high-end units do. If interference is suspected from an otherwise good amp, increasing the distance between it and the speakers is the recommended fix although rotating it may effect an improvement to some degree. Listening with hum in the background is not recommended as even a low amount defeats the purpose of a high quality audio system. Once de-hummed, work up stream to active crossovers, preamp and then the source components one at a time. If working by yourself, use headphones connected to the output of the different power amps to compare the changes cable and equipment positions make. This allows your ears to hear a constant reference level, unaffected by distance to the loudspeaker or room modes, which can make listening to speakers while adjusting, difficult. Of course power should be turned off during equipment connecting to prevent inadvertent damage or personnel electrical shock. High sensitivity headphones can work directly, or the use of a variable gain a/c voltmeter out, connected to the phones may be required, to reach a good working level. A portable, battery powered, practice guitar amp may be the ticket for musicians or fiends of.

The low impedance of some high-end speaker systems can produce a very strong magnetic field close (within 2-3"/4-7 cm) to the speaker cable. Also, its' effective reach is extended as loudness is increased. So keep them away from other cables, electronics (including the amps themselves as soon as possible after leaving the connector) and each other. Speaker cables are particularly vulnerable to vibrations near the connectors themselves. Lever action may mean that the dampening benefit of a Cable Muff may be best when located several inches from the connectors themselves. Careful listening is recommended.

SIGNAL LEVEL INTERCONNECTIONS and SOURCE COMPONENT LOCATION: This category includes very low level runs such as phonograph pick-up to preamp, which are most sensitive to various forms of signal interference. Line level in/outputs from/to preamp, various source (analog or digital) components active crossovers and the power amplifier inputs, all are possible candidates for interference from outside sources, or possibly, from each other. Although the electronics and cable design provide considerable noise immunity from each other, keeping groups (in/output, analog versus digital) separated by as much as is practical, can produce audible benefits. Keeping together associated cables (such as left & right or high & low pass outputs from a single channel of an active crossover) can reduce the audio hum from pick-up of local a/c power fields that may get amplified and fed to the speaker system. This phenomenon may be noticeable when placing an ear close to the speaker system drivers. If hum is present, listen while someone arranges the cable runs for minimum hum. The system volume control should be set for loud but not full or excessive gain during this test, if adjusting cables that are before the preamp. Have C.D. players @ pause and turntables with stylus elevated or stowed. When adjusting cables after the preamp, the volume should be at minimum.

In systems where hum is not an issue or is not improved by keeping common groups (L/R etc.) together, there may be slight sonic benefit to keeping the groups a minimum distance apart, typically 1-3" (2-7 cm).

Westlake Audio is dedicated to making the listening experience as good as the specifications of the equipment will allow.

To do this, the system's "effective dynamic range" (what we hear) must be brought up to a level that is closer to the systems "potential dynamic range" (equipment specs). Super Duper Cable Muffs, Westlake Audio Cable Muffs, Omega Cable Muffs or just plain Cable Muffs are just one of the tools that the audiophile or recording engineer will require to optimize the "effective dynamic range" of the system.

DIAMETER (INCHES)	mm	mm	
SIZE	OUT-LL	HEIGHT	L-EDGE
DEPTH	2.57-6.4	3.75-9.5	5.12-13
T-ELL	2.03-5.2	3.30-8.4	4.5-11.3
THICK	1.23-3.2	1.00-4.0	2.5-6.4
HOLE	2.57-6.4	3.75-9.5	6.00-17.5

