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Oehlbach Antennas/Accessories
Test result: very good

Oehlbach®
XXL Transmission Ultra 320 S
FM Tower 17 / Digital Flat 2.5

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i-fidelity.net took a very good look ... at three products by Oehlbach. The first to be scrutinized was the combined FM Tower 17 FM and AM antenna. It is best to use a good aerial to receive the better sound that is available on the FM band. And Oehlbach's FM 17 possesses just such a good antenna as its shortened aerial comes with an amplifier. The 17 refers here to the height in inches, which is equivalent to 43 centimetres. The discreet polished wedge is available in glossy black or white and works omnidirectionally so it only needs to stand vertically on its rubber-based silver metal foot and does not need to be aligned. At two metres long, the two antenna cables are sufficient to allow the aerial to be quite freely positioned close to the system on a side that is concealed from view. The built-in amplifier gets its power from an AC adapter. This adapter requires hardly more than a single watt, which means that owners don't have to worry to any great extent about wasting power or electricity bills. The illuminated blue control allows amplification to be manually set from +10 to +20 decibels.

In practice

The testers simply carried out an empirical test to see what such a bespoke antenna could do. They set up the wire aerial included with the tuner and just ran the tuner's automatic station scanner. Then they connected Oehlbach's FM Tower 17 and turned the antenna's amplifier up so that the FM tuner's mute switch was still just able to suppress the background noise. The testers were very fussy with their assessment of the audible interference and only stations that were crystal clear were awarded full marks. The number of such stations increased from six to nine. The number of stations with RDS station identifier and correspondingly low background noise increased from six to almost three times as many (17). The effect that the Oehlbach antenna had compared with the simple wire aerial was therefore very considerable. Playing a little with the amplification control allowed the reception quality and quantity to be adjusted over a large bandwidth, from a few stations without interference to considerably more stations but then often with interference and no longer suitable for stereo reception. A similar picture presented itself when the primitive loop antenna inclu-

ded with the preamplifier was compared with Oehlbach's AM antenna.

Fit for the future:

Digital Flat 2.5 flat antenna

The active Digital Flat 2.5 flat antenna for digital DVB-T television is also new to Oehlbach's range. It is also ready for the high-resolution DVB-T2 systems that will be available in the future. Although it is difficult for non-engineers to understand, the super-flat Digital Flat 360° is omnidirectional. So it only has to be positioned once using the included base and then left where it is. And because it is nice and flat, it can be easily concealed behind TV sets, cupboards and curtains, which is really practical. The only requirement is that it has to be precisely vertical. The positioning freedom is increased by the fact that the amplifier is located in a black box right in the middle of the cable. You get the best sound and – in particular – picture quality with direct satellite reception. This is where the stations supply their content directly and you can receive it from the sky with a maximum data rate for best quality. Which, by the way, doesn't only go for the television: of all the delivery channels, the radio stations transmitted from Astra 19.2° just sound the best. And hundreds of stations transmit from all over central Europe via the Astra satellite, which means that you can even receive local stations that you would otherwise not be able to get. The bad thing about receiving signals directly from satellites is the comparably tiny power with which the signals arrive at your antenna from the geostationary orbit, which is around 36,000 kilometres away. In comparison, a moving-coil pick-up delivers a high-voltage current. The main focus when transferring data captured from satellites is to get it to the receiver unharmed and so corresponding maximum shielding against such earthly interference as mobile-phone signals and the neighbour's power drill is vital. Roughly speaking, the "shielding rating" describes the extent to which external electromagnetic interference is kept away from the signal-bearing internal conductor. Nothing less than 100 decibels should be used for satellite reception, really good standard cables protect their data with with 120 dB three-fold shielding.

XXL Transmission Ultra S

Oehlbach has, however, pushed noise suppression on its XXL Transmission Ultra S to the extreme and achieves a shielding rating of 125 decibels. The cable possesses a four-fold shield consisting of two foils and two wire braids. The corresponding plug design is also almost unique and is itself able to maintain the extremely high shielding rating right down into the proverbial tips. The actual signal travels comfortably along an internal conductor made of high-purity, oxygen-free HPOCC copper. The full-metal plug uses a thread made to a very tight tolerance to secure it to the F-sockets. Only when the testers placed the plug precisely on the socket did the thread engage. But when it did, it was very easy to screw the shielding's screw tight. The XXL Transmission Ultra S has been designed for indoor use and so it has been dressed in an attractive textile jacket. A ferrite ring has been fitted at both ends of the cable for additional protection against high frequencies. As expected, the 3.2 metre long test cables delivered a stable signal without any abnormalities. This cable is also available as a version without the "S" that uses DIN plugs for cable customers and users of communal installations, with Oehlbach supplying both versions in lengths ranging from 1.7 to 10 metres.

Test result

This Oehlbach range delivers the best signal for any method of reception. In the test using classical analogue radios, the active FM Tower 17 antenna received around three times as many stations with clearer signals than the standard aerial with the better results being particularly noticeable on the FM band. The Digital Flat 2.5 active DVB-T antenna possesses a clever design because it is also omnidirectional, which means that it can be easily concealed. The XXL Transmission Ultra S satellite cable, which is available in all the usual lengths, pushes technical boundaries to provide the best shielding against interference and so ensure the clear reception of satellite signals.