

Wire Woes

JULIAN MUSGRAVE & STEVE ANDREWS DO SOME BLIND TESTING ON CABLES.
SPOILER ALERT: YOU WON'T LIKE THE OUTCOME...



Science, and its boisterous offspring, technology, is usually viewed as a River of Knowledge flowing inexorably from the Mountains of Ignorance down to the Sea of Understanding. As it flows past and through the fields of human endeavour it enriches all it touches. While there may be meanders and a few eddy currents, it does not flow uphill back to the Mountains of Ignorance. Advances, once gained, are not lost. We can't just un-know stuff¹.

Music recording and replay is one such field of endeavour and the River of Knowledge has watered our field generously. We now have over a hundred years' worth of recordings and audio equipment to savour². As a result we audiophiles are habitual technophiles, ever eager to accept the latest advance because, in our experience, new equipment is (usually) better than old equipment³.

So when audio companies use lots of science & technology to improve our lot, just what sort of pillock is going to put his hand in the air and say "Sir, sir, sir. Please Sir, can't hear the bleedin' difference"? Very few; because to do so is to will the water to flow back uphill, for our fields to bake dry in the sun and for we audiophiles to go back hitting things with sticks to make music. And anyway not being able to hear what those frightfully clever

chaps have cooked up for us is audiophile death. An audiophile is, at the end of the day, a highly refined connoisseur of sound who looks for excellence and cherishes the positive side of his hobby.

So we won't do any of that negative, water flowing back uphill, stuff: We'll concentrate on being inquiring and open-minded audiophiles that believe they can hear clear differences in kit. Cables in this case. We'll believe that for now, anyway.

Comes a time when thoughts turn to cables

This particular story begins with the necessity to re-cable the Big Rig following a move around in the newly expanded music room (HiFiCritic passim). Now, I can't guess where you place cables in your audiophile pecking order. You may lie awake at night dreaming of particularly seductive looking cables for all I know; and if you do, good luck to you. Or perhaps, like me, you find cables just plain boring and there's always something better to do than mess about with them: licking the kitchen floor clean or teaching the cat to read for example. But, at times, all of us must think about cables. One has one's duties.

I emailed Steve Andrews⁴ hoping he would refuse to help with the auditions, sensibly preferring to saw a leg off below the knee without anaesthetic to avoid the draft. In which case I would call off the exercise and rewire with odd lengths of left-overs. But he emailed back with Tigger-like enthusiasm at the prospect. Damn, damn, damn, damn, damn. You can go off people, you know.

So I set to recruiting some wires to audition and ended up with the following 1m XLRs:

The Missing Link Aleqeia - £200/pair: Silver plated oxygen free copper⁵. DIY.

Studio Connections Reference - £800/pair. Oxygen free Copper⁶.

Mundorf SGW305 - £200/pair: 99%Silver/1% gold. Three twisted strands DIY⁷.

Chord Signature Tuned Array - £1000/pair: Silver plated copper⁸.

Purefonics Skyline - £75/pair. OFC Copper & Teflon. DIY⁹

Audioquest Wind - £2000/pair: Pure silver¹⁰

A motley collection of, you may comment, but no worse than most cable line ups and the Chord and Audioquest, at least, are fully paid up audiophile