

Wire on Wire Experience880 interconnects

by Alan Sircom



We review a lot of cables in *Hi-Fi+*. Most of them differ from one another by virtue of materials science, type and number of conductors, connectors, or the way those conductors interact and intersect with one another. However, Wire on Wire Experience880 is different.

Wire on Wire's unique take on audio cables is wrapped up in what it calls REDpur1™, or 'Adaptive Asymmetric Geometry'. The materials involved are good – multi-stranded silver-plated copper conductors wrapped in blue or white PTFE dielectric with KLE copper Harmony connectors – but it's the way they are used that makes Wire on Wire so special. The fully exposed geometry looks a little like someone was trying to build an interconnect cable while under the influence of some pretty strong LSD; the asymmetry of the braid looks almost chaotic at first glance, but shows a complex geometry that is designed to allow key parameters of cable design to be altered 'on the fly'.

This adaptive geometry creates small but significant changes to the inductance (and thus the series capacitance) of the cable, and in an analogue environment where the cable is a major part of the interface between the

output impedance of one product and the input impedance of another, those small but significant changes can dial in improvements to important parameters of the overall sonic performance. These inductance changes are created by adding small spacers in the larger gaps ('tune loops') in the braid of the cable itself. The provided booklet includes a small list (I'd call them 'recipes') of specific spacer placements to change the system's presentation. These recipes are not meant as the only positions for spacers and experimentation is encouraged, although over-stretching the conductors (for example, by trying to shoe-horn spacers into the regular, tighter loops) is not recommended and not covered by warranty. ▶



▶ Perhaps the quickest, most immediate test for Wire on Wire (on a 1m Experience880 cable, at least) is to determine if there is a change in air and space at the top end and increases in mid-band detail in any given system. This requires the listener to count back loops from the source component until you reach 'tune loop' 14 and add just one spacer in that position. It is a very convincing demonstration. The system's performance is successfully opened up at the top-end with more 'space around the notes' at higher frequencies and more clarity in the mid-band. If your system benefits from that improvement, the sound just 'pops' into focus; if it doesn't, you also hear the difference, but the system begins to sound too 'wispy', 'tinkly', and 'ethereal'. In the former case, it's time to move the spacer within its 14th loop until that sonic focus becomes even more precise. In the latter, the change is also convincing enough to try out the other two recipes with yet more spacers.

There tend to be three main areas of performance that are addressed by Wire on Wire; mid-band clarity and top-end air, soundstage size and precision, and bass weight and warmth. Systems can often come up short in one of these aspects of overall performance, and the Wire on Wire cable allows you to zone in on addressing that shortfall without either tampering with the sound elsewhere, or having to work through a store's worth of expensive 'almost' cables in order to let your system find its mojo.

The degree of 'pop' seems to depend on the relative size of the impedance mis-match of the two devices, rather than price, but the change was audible in every system I tried. If anything, most lower-end products are more accommodating of one another's input or output quirks, so the differences are often more marked in top-end systems, but this is as much an indictment of high-end audio's ability to run roughshod over standard practices as and when it suits than it is of 'windows opening wider.'

How you think about Wire on Wire says perhaps more about your perceptions about audio than the performance of the cable itself. If you buy cables the way Tsar Nicholas II used to buy Fabergé eggs, then Wire on Wire lacks 'platinum-infused, gold-plated Vibranium' heft and bling. Similarly, if your audio obsession really is an obsession, the infinite adjustability of the cable might just play to the 'cornflake counter' in you; the potential for never-ending 'touch-ups' to the system might mean every day means yet another tweak.

Wire on Wire also has an added – but paradoxical – advantage for 'serial box swappers'. The cable is consistent enough to port from system to system, and its ability to dial out some of the more glaring mis-matches between components can be retuned for each new product in the system. However, those for whom the journey is more important than the destination might prefer the 'storage box full of cables' approach instead as it better satisfies their need to keep swapping the boxes.

Wire on Wire is a force for good in audio. It allows a degree of fine-tuning of performance between components that was hitherto unavailable, or at least was only available by churning through a wide range of very different cable designs at considerable time and expense. The results are extremely consistent, too; dial in the right performance between two components, and the system snaps or pops into focus as described above (sorry Crackle... it's back to the Rice Crispies box for you!). The term 'Experience' in audio usually amounts to little more than one of those names companies turn to – it's like 'Reference' or 'Performance' – but here it means something. If you 'Experience' what a tuneable cable can do in a system, there just might be no turning back. +

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Conductors: Multi-stranded, silver-plated copper, 16-22 AWG

Dielectric: PTFE

Termination: KLE Copper Harmony RCA

RFI rejection: Modified twisted pair

Geometry: REDpur!™

Capacitance: 69pF/m (non-tuned)

Inductance 10KHz: 0.54uH/m

Shielding: N/A

Price: £650/1m pair

Manufactured by: Wire on Wire

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