

Wireworld Equinox 5/Atlantis 5

PRICE £220/m £75/m

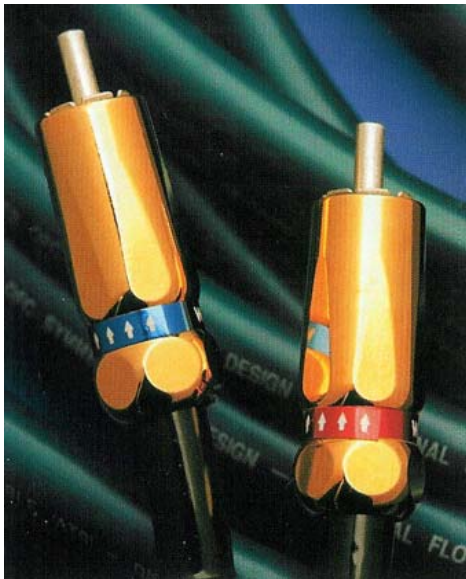
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American brands such as Transparent, Kimber, Cardas, Audioquest, Nordost, MIT and Monster, have long been familiar to UK enthusiasts. But Wireworld founder David Salz has put in 25 years of work in the field and has mined a particular technology vein he calls 'symmetrical coaxial'. This is a form of coaxial cable with a hollow core and symmetrical conductor topology. Top quality materials are used and the range is now very wide, encompassing all applications and varieties. The pricing appears to be competitive too.

When attempting to select representative examples in a fine-quality cable range I often seek a compatible and realistically priced combination of interconnect and speaker cable where the former retails at about £250 a stereo metre and the speaker cable about £80/m, and thus about £800 for my standard test length of 2 x 5m. This makes a total of about a grand, appropriate for £5k to £10k audio systems.



In this general area we have assessed, in the past, established designs from vdH such as the First Ultimate interconnect and variations on the Revelation speaker cable theme and similar contenders from Kimber and Transparent. In the Wireworld range I liked the look of the Equinox 5 interconnect at £220/stereo metre while the speaker cable that appeared to match well for me at the 5m length chosen was actually from the next lower group, one recently renamed Atlantis 5 and priced at £75/m.

Comparing these with relevant examples from my cable library, I used a system comprising Naim CDS3 player with Conrad-Johnson ART and XTC PRE II control units, Karan 450 and Krell FPB 700cx stereo power amps with Quad 63 plus Avalon Eidolon loudspeakers. Reference cables included models from Transparent XL, Cardas, vdH and Kimber.

Equinox 5 interconnect is medium diameter, reasonably flexible cable that comes fitted with ingenious phono plugs [see 'Technology' panel, overleaf]. The first thing to strike me was the good rhythm and timing on offer, allied to a firm, crisp,

very good for this price sector, and image focus and stage width was exemplary. Despite a hint of dryness in the reverberant acoustic, low-level detail was well resolved and complex material was also delineated very well.

Moving to the main strengths, this cable ultimately impressed by virtue of its strong dynamics, fine dynamic contrasts, and involving sense of rhythm. As with the Equinox, with which it worked really well, the balanced midrange is aided very good image perspectives and the overall effect is clean and neutral, with very good treble definition.

This is a form of coaxial cable with a hollow core and symmetrical conductors

upbeat character, with clean percussive bass lines, a very neutral midband - particularly evident on vocals - and a well balanced, high definition treble. Also good was the cable's transparency, if not quite to the van den Hul Ultimate level, though the latter was matched on both image width and focus.

The Equinox showed a small gain in bass grip, tune-playing and mid neutrality - a high standard indeed. Furthermore, in less than optimum system arrangements, where the higher-resistance vdH carbon cable can show impaired hum levels, the Wireworld design remained silent.

This cable settles in well and with extended listening I grew to appreciate it further, particularly for its sense of balance and solidity, and a strong vein of musical involvement, achieved without exaggeration of any aspect of sound quality.

Turning to the Equinox 5 speaker cable, I chose the single-wire configuration but this same, twin-barrel symmetrical cable may be specified for bi-wiring with the requested terminations. The spades are well dimensioned and made of pure copper with a heavy duty silver cladding.

As with the interconnects, the contacts are protected with Pro-Gold preservative, which may be refreshed annually if you are keen to keep up the standard. I was pleasantly surprised by the good first impressions generated by this cable, which is many orders of magnitude cheaper than my reference Transparent XL. Very few cables even approach even a single feature of the XL's performance, whether it be its powerful dynamic bass, or the excellent focus and stage width, the standard setting image depth and transparency, not to mention the high level of detail. However, with XL there is also a touch of 'character', a little less than would actually be termed coloration, and here the Atlantis scored straight away, being perceptibly more neutral and natural-sounding than XL. Bass is a tad leaner, but it matches the XL for speed and dynamics, which is rare. While there is a very moderate loss in image depth, the result remains

I found the overall performance of these Wireworld cables to be surprisingly well attuned to UK standards, showing a neutral, natural tonal balance, crisp, focused bass, and very good dynamics. These cables also maintain a good sense of rhythm lending to a rewarding level of listener involvement, vital to keep reproduced music sounding alive.

Easy matching is assured by helpfully low values for resistance, capacitance and inductance for both the interconnect and the speakers cables tested. I also found these two Wireworld cables to be well made. In view of their overall balance of quality they now help to set the standard in their price ranges and will certainly be joining my reference cable library. ■

Martin Colloms

Technology

The phono plugs on the Equinox 5 use a system whereby the gold-plated outer barrel serves as a grip for the non-conducting silicone rubber tensioner. The latter delivers a constant pressure to the outer retaining contact system, which is silver on copper and provides. The hollow centre pole is also silver on copper, with PTFE dielectric. The conductors total 78 strands of Litz wire in OCC oxygen free copper arranged in a symmetrical coaxial configuration.

As for the Atlantis, conductors total 240 strands of silver clad OFC, with a PE foam dielectric, equivalent to a high current capacity, low resistance conductors 2 x 6.2mm sq (2 x 9 gauge US).

Features

- Good rhythm and timing
- Transparent sound
- Easy system matching