

Wireworld Platinum Eclipse Series 7 Speaker Cable & Interconnects

The Sound of Nothing?

Neil Gader



Wireworld always seems to end up on my short list of preferred speaker cables and interconnects. The reason? The line embodies uncolored sonics year in and year out. If we can agree that every wire (every component) leaves something akin to fingerprints on a pane of glass—a smear, a smudge that impairs transparency and resolution—Wireworld, in my experience, has consistently left fewer traces of itself than most others. Actually, as weird as this may sound, Wireworld wires never seem to be actively *doing* much of anything—except making music, and a whole lot of it, as I discovered with Wireworld’s latest, Platinum Eclipse. (The flagship now carries the Series 7 moniker in celebration of the firm’s 20th Anniversary.)

Beyond its newly refined cosmetics, Platinum Eclipse represents the summit of Wireworld’s current thinking. When I reviewed the

entry-level Equinox and mid-priced Eclipse (Issue 238) Wireworld’s David Salz discussed Series 7, and his remarks regarding its improvements bear repeating here. He describes a developmental process that began with “the discovery that most audible differences among cable insulation materials are caused by spectral variations in the noise they create. Furthermore, that noise is modulated and therefore amplified by the electrical energy of the music signal. This discovery led me to focus on custom-blending composite insulation materials specifically optimized for sonic purity.” The result of that effort is Wireworld’s Composilex 2 insulation technology, which dramatically reduces triboelectric noise (note: static electricity occurring through friction is an example of triboelectric noise) at the interface between conductor and insulation. “Additional improvements were garnered from new versions of Wireworld’s DNA Helix conductor geometry, which channel more electromagnetic energy and therefore more music, than the previous designs.” The new geometry is the most obvi-

ous visual difference compared with the flat-profile of the cable’s immediate predecessor.

Platinum Eclipse Series 7 (PE7) uses heavy nine-gauge OCC Silver conductors (interconnects are seventeen-gauge OCC Silver). The speaker cable is as stiff and unwieldy as the interconnects are supple. That stiffness made me reconsider my choice of the delicate banana terminations used for my review samples. I would opt for the more robust spades if these were mine.

Over the years I’ve found that when a system is paired with Wireworld cabling—entry-level to cost-no-object—the distinctions are not (initially) obvious. It’s not a sense of “lights on” in the treble or “fasten your seatbelts” in the bass. Platinum Eclipse, for all its technology and (let’s face it) awesome cost, is not about hype. If there is one phrase that describes its character, it would be relaxed but ready. PE7 is first about balance and about uncovering the bundles of inside activity that animate a great recording. These include the details, dynamic gradations, and harmonic nuances that were preserved during the recording/mixing process—and the higher the playback resolution the better (LPs especially).

At rest, there’s an underlying silence to this wire that creates something akin to a glassy expanse of deep black water—a motionless landscape waiting in anticipation of the micro-ripples of music to begin. Listening to Malcolm Arnold’s *English Scottish and Cornish Dances* I could hear the ever-present hall sound reverberating behind every note and filling every pause and musical rest. Or the crackle of the far upstage tambourine that rockets down the center section of the London Philharmonic orchestra, its reverberation flaring and fading

into the soundscape. The point is that it’s the sheer silence of these cables that provides the launching pad for all that comes later.

Tonal balance is essentially neutral with just a suggestion of midrange warmth and a top end that at first blush can sound slightly shaded, but in fact is not. I’ll return to this point further on. Most importantly PE7 possesses a uniform palette—there are no color shifts across the musical spectrum. Rock-steady, its sonics don’t ripen in one octave and then narrow or bleach out in another. And these include the frequency extremes where such discontinuities manifest most audibly. When I listen to Joni Mitchell singing “A Case of You” as I recently did in my evaluation of the Ortofon Quintet Black cartridge (review in this issue) I don’t want to hear splashes of treble harmonics and air decoupled from the fundamentals of the vocal. This is all too common in cables that miss the mark. But Platinum Eclipse’s overall response is continuous and smooth. At the other extreme, its bass response is as open, well defined, and complex as its treble, imparting body and air proportional to the demands of the music. For instance, listen closely to the final smack of the bass drum during John Williams’ *Liberty Fanfare* [Wilson Audiophile]. Beyond the immediate and immense impact, you’ll hear and feel the resonance and flutter of the drum head as it does a slow fade into the background.

As I alluded to earlier, Platinum Eclipse is at its most expressive in the treble octaves—to my mind audio’s most precarious region where most wires either narrow, bleach, or otherwise wring out the harmonic juices of the signal. The initial tip-off for me is the sibilance range, the 6–8kHz regions, where overtones either gently punctuate a singer’s articulation or begin to

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sizzle like bacon on the griddle. As I listened to Norah Jones' "Wish I Could," consonants and especially "s" sounds were smooth, devoid of trailing smudge off the transient. At first blush, this can lead to the (false) impression that there is some shadowing in the treble, but it's really the reduction of distortion. It was a lesson in naturalistic reproduction—like I said earlier, no hype. What you won't hear from the Platinum are violin sections losing bits of resonant body and sounding stringy, or brass sections depleted of their sparkling golden bloom from lack of air and truncation of harmonics.

In these upper octaves PE7 most reminds me of my first experience listening to Tara Labs Zero and Omega (at JV's suggestion) many years ago. They were driving MBL's three-way compact, the mbl 121 Radialstrahler via MBL electronics. This omnidirectional speaker (since replaced) had a reputation—as musically luminous as a loudspeaker could be, it was equally ruthless in the way it exposed component impurities. Prior to the Taras it was also disturbing to me that the vaunted treble purity of the Radialstrahler was proving so elusive in my listening room. The violin solos of Arturo Delmoni from *Songs My Mother Taught Me* [JMR] had a stridency, a stinging string tone more penetrating than the instrument deserved. Similarly the upper octaves of Valentina Lisitsa's piano registered a more metallic signature as if the felt had worn off the keyboard's hammers. The Tara effectively put an end to that immediately. It smoothed, sweetened, and opened up these octaves. The Platinum Eclipse is the first wire since the Tara to score as highly in this area. On solo piano

and violin there is a consistent sweetness, especially in the treble range, a warm air enriching each image in the way an artist adds rich swathes of color to a line drawing.

Beyond its upper-octave performance, dimensionality and spatial gradations are Platinum's most persuasive virtues. It sets a symphonic soundstage with the same precision as the staff preparing the dining room table at Downton Abby. Once again I turned to Rutter's *Requiem* [Reference Recordings], a reference album of immersive spatiality and vast staging. As heard through the PE7 wire, the Turtle Creek chorale remained fully integrated within the reverberant venue yet, if the mind's eye so chose, the individual vocal nuances of each chorus member could be singled out. The presentation never devolved into a slice-and-dice affair that set players apart from their acoustic surroundings. Only the Synergistic Research Tesla CTS, with its uncanny holographic soundstage, has bettered the Wireworld in this regard.

What price glory? Platinum Eclipse is certainly well beyond my pay grade. But don't assume that just because it is so costly it requires an ultra-high-resolution, *fancy pants* system to make its magic—or that it wouldn't make a dime's worth of difference in a more "real world" high-end system. Unfortunately it does make a difference, and all too much of one. Loudspeakers as cost-accessible as the new Audio Physic Classic 30 floorstander and the ATC SCM19 stand-mounted monitor benefitted to no small degree from these wires. So much so that it may not be a good idea to try them unless you're prepared to go all the

way to purchase.

For those prepared to go all the way, and I'm glad there are those of you out there, I wouldn't hesitate to commend these wires. I've heard plenty of other cables that have

proven themselves over various criteria, but Wireworld's Platinum Eclipse Series7 is the most balanced and musical cable I've experienced yet. A component worthy of the designation, the state of the art.

FURTHER THOUGHTS FROM WIREWORLD'S DAVID SALZ

It's consistent with the Wireworld philosophy that the only valid comparison is against no cable at all, hence the creation of the Cable Comparator. I asked Salz about its development.

Back in 1980, about 14 years before I even thought of creating a Cable Comparator, I performed my first cable bypass test by soldering together a pair of two-inch-long twisted-pair jumpers to replace the various high-end one-meter interconnects I had been using between my preamp and amplifier. The moment I listened to my system with the interconnect bypass, I realized that I was hearing much more music than I had ever heard through any of the one-meter interconnects. The confusion of only being able to hear differences between cables was gone, because I had gained the ability to hear what each cable was losing! I also realized that I had discovered the way I could learn to create cables that let more of the music through, and so I vowed to turn that challenge into my career.

Creating excellent cable bypass tests is rarely easy and it's often very tedious to keep switching among various cables and reference jumpers. The very detailed and tiring work of perfecting and performing these tests is what led me to invent

the Cable Comparators. With direct switching between cables and the reference bypass, I was then able to test more easily, and I also gained the capability of demonstrating the audibility of cable losses in double-blind comparisons. Even though the Cable Comparators are a great convenience, I now perform most of my bypass testing manually to avoid the sonic losses of the extra connections within the Comparators.

Do you have more than one reference system and do you use a listening panel?

Throughout my thirty-odd years of performing cable bypass tests, I have always gone out of my way to repeat important tests on multiple reference systems to avoid system-dependent effects or limitations. Despite obvious differences in the sonic impact of various cables on those systems, I have learned that the actual effects of cables are very consistent from system to system. I have also enjoyed the benefits of having some very talented listeners, including high-end audio designers, recording/mastering engineers, and musicians, assist me in my testing and prototype evaluations. **tas**