

# AUDIOPHILIA

## Wireworld Platinum Starlight Ethernet Cable

March 4, 2019 **Karl Sigman**

Audiophiles with a high-end audio system eventually recognize that cables make a difference in the sound quality (SQ) of their system. Interconnects, speaker cables, power cords, USB cables and so on. Sometimes the SQ is just different, sometimes 'better', sometimes 'worse' as compared to the cables they already have.

Controversial as it is, it is what it is. For me the time came about six years ago when I experimented with power cables that clearly made a positive difference in my ever evolving system, particularly amplifiers. That the soundstage grew in all three dimensions and the bass benefited were the most obvious improvements. As a scientist and skeptical as I should be, I was baffled; but I accepted what I heard with my own ears and moved on—keeping the new cables and enjoying the sound.

After my power cord experience, next came speaker cables, analog interconnects, then USB cables for my DAC. The improvement USB cables made was a surprise. About 3.5 years ago Wes Bender (of Wes Bender Studio, NYC) invited me and some others over to his place for a high-end USB cable 'shoot out'. There were definite differences in sound quality although admittedly not as prominent as with analog cables. In this case it really was a matter of personal taste for the

high-end cables—the same as when drinking fine wines. Some were more clinical and neutral sounding, while some offered a fuller and richer sound, and some a thinness in sound. I recall we all had different favourites. My favorite was the Wireworld Platinum Starlight 7.

Although high-end audiophile cabling can enter a zone of insanity in price range (reaching over \$10K for a



1-meter cable, as compared to stock cabling), I have always been able to find some that yield outstanding sound quality and are reasonably priced.

So, what cable type was left for me to consider? Ethernet cables, of course. And the focus of this review is the Wireworld Platinum Starlight Ethernet Cable, manufactured by Florida, USA based Wireworld Cable

Technology. Many thanks to Larry Smith (Wireworld National Sales Manager) who kindly loaned me a 2 meter pair of these cables for review.

This beautiful, silver-colored cable is Wireworld's top ethernet cable and it is their latest upgrade including 'Composilex 3' insulation. The Platinum is a triple-shielded layer flat conductor design with OCC-7N Solid Silver conductors. The flat style yields a wide band that splits the eight ethernet wires into two groups of four. They are expensive: each 2-meter cable retails for \$1450 (\$550 for 0.5 meter).

### SPECIFICATIONS

- DESIGN: Tite-Shield Technology
- SIGNAL CONDUCTORS: 23AWG — 0.26 sq. mm
- PLUG CONTACTS: 24K Gold-plated
- NOTE: 100 Ohms

The cable arrived packaged within a black bag inside a classy looking 9" x 9" x 2" aluminum case, along with a Certificate of Authenticity signed by Wireworld President David Salz, including the cable's serial number. Each cable's heavy-duty connectors are capped with black plastic tops for protection before use.

For those who wish to contemplate why an ethernet cable might make a difference, Wireworld

states on their website:

*In theory, digital audio connections are supposed to be less sensitive to cables than analog connections, but cable polygraph tests have shown that the audible losses of digital and analog cables are actually comparable. Even Ethernet connections, which are perfectly reliable when saving files, tend to degrade the fidelity of streamed music and video in comparison to a local file source. Wireworld has invested in decades of research, testing and development to create digital audio cables that overcome those losses to provide substantial upgrades in musical realism and enjoyment. Over a wide range of applications and price levels, Wireworld digital audio cables advance the art of preserving the natural tone quality, spatial imaging and exciting dynamics of live music.*

#### **Why consider ethernet cables?**

Digital audio streaming is going through a major revolution with the introduction of streaming services such as Tidal and now Qobuz, Roon player software, as well as DACs and music servers that allow for a hardwired ethernet connection. As reference, I use ethernet cables to connect my music server (Mojo Audio Deja-Vu with Linux OS and Roon Core) to my DAC (PS Audio Direct Stream with ethernet Bridge II) instead of using USB, and to keep them connected to the internet. I had been using inexpensive stock cables. Yes, I was skeptical in this ethernet case, but surely given the high quality of my audio system (both my music server and DAC alone are close to \$7K each) it was prudent to check out and consider upgrading the ethernet cabling—just as I did over the years with all other cables. I've learned to keep an open mind—and ears. Given my appreciation of Wireworld Cable Technology USB and headphone cables (both are my reference), contacting Wireworld was

a no brainer. As it turns out, Wireworld has produced yet another winner. But the process involved to reach that conclusion was an interesting one.

#### **Listening**

When I first swapped out my own stock cables for the Platinum Starlight, I was worried: the sound overall became soft, fluffy, dull and lacking transparency; lifeless. I was taken aback. I convinced myself that I must have messed something up in my system while swapping out the cables. I re-booted some devices, checked connections, re-downloaded software and so on—to no avail. So, I went to bed but left my system playing overnight (using Roon in Radio Mode), but with the preamplifier off; no need to have sound coming out of your speakers to exercise ethernet cables.

By the time I checked again 24 hours later, I observed that things were just about back to normal, and moreover there were new things coming into play that I liked. I was noticing an increase in the separation of individual instruments, and a more lifelike overall presence; instruments in the soundstage seemed less squashed together. It got even better after I kept the system on for another 24 hours. It was as if subtle and delicate little ornaments/embellishments that had been hidden from me before were now on display, and the timbre of instruments and voice were more natural. Subtle, but there.

As a prime example, I streamed a native 24/192 FLAC file from Qobuz of the jazz standard 'Sway' from the Album Turn Up The Quiet by Diana Krall. Lovely. Such intimacy and delicacy displayed. Interestingly, the song was originally composed by the Mexican composer Luis Demetrio Traconis Molina, and called '¿Quién será?' which in English translates as 'Who Will Be?'. It was Norman Gimbel who created an English version and named it 'Sway'; Dean Martin made it a big hit in the 1950s. From what I

can tell, the original lyrics in Spanish (written by Pablo Rosas Rodriguez) when translated into English, are completely different from those in the English version by Gimbel.

For classical, I sampled a dash from the Tidal Masters (MQA) Deutsche Grammophon 120 which contains a wide-ranging five hours of 24/96 MQA music from Schubert to Chopin, Philip Glass and beyond. In the first track even, 'Adagio for Violin and Orchestra in E major K 261' with violinist Daniel Hope and the Zurich Chamber Orchestra (from the album Journey to Mozart), I could hear some musicians breathing. I followed up with 'Études no. 9' from Philip Glass: Piano Works, performed by Icelandic pianist Víkingur Ólafsson, which I found otherworldly, with such intriguing venue acoustics displayed (apparently an Icelandic Hall). He takes liberties with Glass's original interpretation of things but Glass does not seem to mind: In a New York Times interview with Joshua Barone in 2017, Ólafsson quotes Glass as having told him (concerning 'Études no. 6') 'It sounds wonderful. Someone should really give you a speeding ticket. But that's not going to be me.'

#### **Summary**

Although expensive, I found that the Wireworld Platinum Starlight Ethernet Cable makes a difference in sound quality and a fine one at that. Top-notch. Highly recommended.

