

## The Great Cable Debate



The Internet is full of people who claim that cables can't make a difference in sound, or that a coat hanger will do just fine, thanks, in place of expensive cables. Audio enthusiasts who accept that sort of nonsense at face value without taking the time to listen for themselves only limit their own listening pleasure. The wrong choice of cable, even one chosen from among the best, can destroy sonic satisfaction. End of rant.

I began this review with TARA Labs' Zero single-ended interconnect (\$15,900/1m pair) and Omega Gold speaker cable, which have long been my references. For this review of the Constellation Performance Centaur Monos, TARA lent me a long length of their Zero balanced interconnect. Yes, the Zero is hideously priced – I'm not suggesting that it's a "good value" for the money – but as those who've heard it in the best systems and then bought it will testify, its sound is stupendously transparent, tonally even-handed, and seemingly without sonic limitation.

Then I got an email from mastering engineer Greg Calbi, who normally steers clear of the cable wars – though he, more than most, has heard the considerable differences a good cable can make. He told me that I had to get Wireworld's David Salz to send me a set of WW's new Platinum Eclipse 7 cables, because it had wrought such a big improvement in the sound of his mastering system.

Earlier iterations of Wireworld cables had left me ambivalent at best; Salz knew this, but was kind enough to send a complete system's worth of Platinum Eclipse 7's, including speaker cables (\$24,500/ 3 m pair) and interconnects both single-ended and balanced (both \$3,000/ 1m pair), in long runs to connect my preamp and the DCS Vivaldi stack to the Centaurs.

That proved fortuitous for this review, as did having an Audioharma Cable Cooker to break in all these cables, without which I would have been less sure of the results.

While the TARA cables still provided a better match for my dartZeel reference gear, for whatever reasons, they were less useful with the Constellation Centaur Monos. Don't get me wrong: the Centaurs' sound overall was as stated in the review. But the somewhat laid-back personality of TARA's Omega Gold speaker cable unnecessarily blunted and softened some of what the Constellations did best. Wireworld's Platinum Eclipse 7 speaker cable let the Centaur's remarkable transparency, three-dimensionality and transient speed shine through.

Tara's Zero balanced interconnect was a mixed bag: somewhat more open than the Platinum Eclipse 7, it helped pass along the Centaurs' sensational decays into black, which were partly responsible for their 3D soundstaging abilities – but it also added a bit of hardness and excess energy to the upper midrange.

The full set of Platinum Eclipse 7's produced a much better overall picture in terms of tonality, texture, and transients, well integrating all of the Centaurs' strengths while diluting none.

It's possible that the TARA cable would work with the Centaurs with different speakers, or a different digital front-end. But in this system with these components, over the long haul, the Platinum Eclipse 7's produced the most transparent, most resolving, most three-dimensional, forget-the-system-and-listen-to-the-music experience – something Wireworld wires had never before managed here. Were I buying the Centaurs, I'd try to audition them at home with the Wireworlds. At least in this system, they are a benchmark product.

– Michael Fremer