

## Column by Renzo van Riemsdijk (Masterenzo):

### Cable fear

#### **cable (noun)**

[key-buhl]

1. a heavy, strong rope
2. a very strong rope made of strands of metal wire, as used to conduct electricity

In our universe of mastering there are two types of people: the makers and the users. The makers, that's us, the mastering engineers, the ones who define what the user will hear, the masters of the universe! The users, that's you, the listeners, the enjoyers, the consumers, the ears.

I could gracefully connect those two worlds with a beautiful amorphous cable. A cable free of oxygen, its strands surrounded by silver molecules treated with cryogenic technology.

A true miracle of technique.

The cable, no more than three feet long, is equipped with gold plated plugs, each weighing more than your average peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

But no, cable science is serious business. There's definitely something going on in the world of cabling.

Ok, let's start at the beginning. A cable is made, as we can read above, to conduct electrical energy (music) from A to B.

Well, fair enough. But why, I repeat: WHY is there so much discussion going on about this type of transportation?

The moment you post something -on whichever type of social media- regarding audio cables is the moment a polemic storm breaks loose. Each and every person with an opinion about cables and audio (re)defines their own truth.

This actually reminds me of a great one-liner from actor Clint Eastwood starring in a Dirty Harry movie: *"Opinions are just like assholes, everybody has one."*

Okay, so this subject most certainly stirs things up among people.

Let me try to shine my simple but (I hope) effective light on the subject.

A cable has to do two things:

- Stay put. I've once experienced a cable which plugs were so badly constructed it literally came loose from the terminals. The poor thing.
- Conduct electricity (music). You could easily forget but only a well constructed cable is capable of delivering music from A to B without sizzling, crackling, hassling and other artefacts.

Of course I can throw all kinds of physical phenomena's and formulas at you to test, measure and raise the quality of a cable to unmeasurable heights.

In fact only one thing is very important. A phrase that can be found on a little tile that once belonged to my great grandfather:

## **“A chain is only as strong as its weakest link”**

I'll try to explain how this works.

Unless you're the owner of a hi-fi set with a value of a middle class car, a set using single-ended or push-pull tube technology, with a cryogenically (here we go again) treated atomic clock to drive the converter or a set with a couple of loudspeakers using the most expensive components and drivers (check out *Wilson Audio*) it is fairly useless to invest in expensive audio cables.

Balance is the magic word here. A fine mid-range hi-fi set with some fine mid-range cables brings balance and connects its components with only strong (inter)links.

Instead, invest in some good music, preferably on an all analog carrier like vinyl or music cassette. These are the things making us really happy people.

Next month I'll elaborate some more on the differences between makers (creators) and users of audio cables.

Renzo

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