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Eleven Questions for David Salz, Founder & Designer, Wireworld

Where did your fascination with audio come from?

At about eight years old I started taking audio equipment apart and repairing it. I really liked listening to music, so radios and tape recorders fascinated me. In fact, I liked recording music and our family had a few pianists (my two sons are pianists now). So I've always been around live music.

So it was a natural inclination?

Well, I'm kind of a natural designer. I've always wanted to know how everything works. A lot of my knowledge comes from hands-on experience—taking things apart, studying them, repairing them—and I've maintained that approach through my career making cables.

When did you become aware of high-end audio?

I was in the car stereo business, which quickly turned into the high-end car stereo business, years before it was popular. I'd always owned home audio, and I wanted to be in that business too. I had fairly good reference system back then with Audio Research and Magneplanar, and I started testing upgrade cables and selling them. I was becoming frustrated with the effects I was getting with one-meter interconnect cables. I would change cables and the sound would change, but I could never really get rid of the bad effects. I decided to dock my Audio Research preamp and amp together without an interconnect. I actually ended up soldering the internal output cable from my ARC 6B Revised directly into my amplifier.

Thus voiding the warranty.

As soon as I went back to sticking an interconnect back in the sound quality dropped tremendously. I've never actually changed my methodology. I still have a reference that runs without any analog cable at all. I can just insert a cable and that makes it very clear what's going wrong, and what still needs to be done with the cable. The idea of designing cables according to theory rather than by objective evaluation makes no sense to me at all. I think that's what separates me from other cable designers.

What is it that drew you to wire rather than speakers or electronics?

It seemed wrong to me that what should be the simplest component in the chain should be causing such serious problems. I recognized that the work being done on cables had more to do with packaging than with the development of real solutions.

Is there one thing that consumers just don't get about this segment of the market?

The problem is if you're listening to your system and trying to determine what the "right" sound should be, then you would have to listen to your system without the effects of the current cable you're listening to. So what we have is a lack of a proper starting point. And that makes the trade-offs in terms of what you're gaining and what your losing unpredictable.

Do you still spin vinyl?

I'm not nearly ready to give up my vinyl but I'm listening to digital more, for convenience.

What do you think accounts for this resurgence of analog?

I think it's purely a fidelity issue based on the limitations of digital—the density of information is too low, and the effects of jitter are not really allowing us to hear the potential of

the best formats we have. These issues detract from the music in more ways than the limitations of analog do.

Do hard drives and solid-state drives offer some hope?

That's what I've been listening to the most lately, 24-bit/96kHz and higher audio. I've been doing a lot of development in digital cables including the USB format because there is still quite a bit of jitter created by the cable in those applications.

What's the greatest challenge for the high end?

Differentiation. In our modern world of communication more information is available, but it seems that whoever makes the most noise gets listened to. The high end is a quiet voice in the overall world of home entertainment. The view of too many people is that our products aren't real. I think there are opportunities, because consumers have reached a level of sophistication with their video and sound quality. As the focus returns to sound quality I see a resurgence in the high end.

What do you do for fun?

I'm a sailor and I also design sailboats. I'm applying the same concepts that I did with cable design.

What still inspires you?

I love the feeling of bringing people closer to music. I love hearing from people who are using my products—that they're feeling much more when they listen to music and that they appreciate what I've done. **TAS**

