

Gutwire Consummate interconnect cables

by Alan Sircom



There's a lot of hype in cables. Many brands have lavish advertising campaigns, produce extensive white papers that extoll the virtues of exotic materials or the use of a particular layout, and these form the basis of both the product design and any exercises in brand building. But not all shout quite so loud and brashly about their products; the Canadian brand Gutwire takes a more functional approach; it still stays firmly in the esoteric, making cables that are thicker than average and

use resonance control blocks and the like in their design, but Gutwire sticks resolutely to copper conductors throughout the range, and when it comes to blowing its own trumpet, the brand keeps a very low profile.

So, when it comes to Consummate – the new range-topper interconnect cable from the brand – you'll have to struggle to find anything approaching fanfare. The company's website simply lists them on a separate page as 'Top of the Line Interconnects' followed by a bare description of the cable's basic properties. No calling on arcane laws or trying to bend the more complex parts of the college physics textbook to fit your product. No midichlorians or wibbly wobbly timey wimey stuff. No wild claims. Just the facts.

Those facts are that Consummate uses 24 solid-core Oxygen-Free copper conductors of 24 AWG thickness. This gives a minimum 101% IACS conductivity rating (if that 'greater than 100%' figure gives you pause, it ►

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▶ actually means it exceeds the standard copper conductivity of pure annealed copper as laid down in 1914, so this doesn’t fall under the ‘wild claims’ rule). Insulation is a combination of air and silicone tubes. The conductors are then connected to Furutech CF-102(R) RCA or Xhadow XLR connectors by ‘cold soldering’ (cold welding by high pressure crimping). The one concession to ‘proprietary’ is the materials behind the shielding is a closely guarded secret and unique to Gutwire. There’s not even use of the words ‘optimum’ or ‘ideal’ in the specifications, and these specifications ignore the white vibration control blocks at either end of the cables. These are clever little things as they have grooves cut into their sides. A spot of head-scratching later, and you realise these grooves are there so that in the event of having to keep the cables close to one another, one channel can act as a cable riser/lifter for the other.

OK, so a deeper dive around the Gutwire site does unveil a bit of cable ‘lore’, in that it explains that cold-welding connectors was chosen through listening tests against soldered versions of the same cables, how the shielding was developed to reduce the ingress of radio-frequency and electromagnetic interference, how oxygen-free copper delivers the most balanced sound, and the importance of hand-made cables. These statements apply throughout the range, however, and are not unique to Consummate.

What is unique to Consummate seem to be two properties exhibited by this cable, and only this cable in the range. First, the cable takes an inordinate amount of time to run in and more importantly that is more an ‘in situ’ run in instead of ‘stick it on a burn-in device for a few days’ style conditioning. The running in process here requires a lot of hours playing music in the system it is intended to be used with, and although you get a taste of how the cable is going to perform from the outset, it is just a taste. There’s a lot more to come out of that cable over the next few hundred hours of playing. And yes, you read that correctly. You know more or less how it is going to sound from the outset and the basic character doesn’t fundamentally change, but the difference between that first hour and hundreds of hours later is marked. Also, because of that ‘in situ’ point, the cable will need to have its own mini run-in each time it’s removed from a system; not hundreds of hours, but if you want to hear it at its best, you are going to need to plug it in and leave it for a day or two playing music.

Secondly, Consummate is going to split opinion; UK readers might call this a ‘Marmite’ cable (the almost black yeasty spread is generally either loved or loathed by people and there’s very little middle ground). In other words, you’ll either feel this is the most sublime wire-based insight into the music you’ll ever hear... or a flat, almost unexciting view of sound. Curiously, this doesn’t appear to be system dependent, although that down-time as Consummate ‘beds into’ a system for a few days does make close A-B comparisons difficult. While Consummate doesn’t take over the sound of a system, its influence

is remarkably consistent and it either has a ‘tempering’ effect on a system (if you like it) or it smooths out the edges of music too much (if you don’t). To make matters even more interesting, the usual ‘guesstimation’ based on prior equipment choices doesn’t seem to figure here; normally, it’s possible to say with some certainty ‘if you like this product, you’ll also like...’, but with Consummate that just doesn’t happen; either you hear it and think it’s the best thing that ever happened in the cable world, or you quickly pass it over. All, or nothing.

In short, this review only counts for maybe 50% of those reading it. The other half will think it’s nuts. Regardless, I really liked what Consummate did with music. I thought it one of the most effortless, flowing, rhythmic, natural and least ‘cable-sounding’ cables I’ve ever used. Dynamic range and stereo image depth in particular were so good they made many other cables sound like they were harming the signal, while the level of detail simply portrayed the sound with good rhythm but without painting it in bright colours.

Sadly, the ‘bed-in’ time required for Consummate to come to fruition each time you change a component makes it unsuitable for a jobbing reviewer, and half the people who can afford Consummate who give it a serious listen will really feel my pain here. Can I recommend Gutwire Consummate interconnect? It’s all down to you! +

PRICE AND CONTACT DETAILS

Consummate interconnect cable:

£4,900/1m pair RCA/XLR

Manufactured by: Gutwire

URL: gutwire.com

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