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As I pored over a "white paper" on the latest snakes to enter the pit, I recalled seeing much of this information in physics texts and other white paper dissertations eminently drier than the great Sahara. What I found most interesting was that this snake applied unique and sometimes insightful applications of electromotive theory.

Are you bored yet? Bear with me - I promise I'll stick to the highlights. The company philosophy begins with the use of solid core conductors of a specific diameter (a.k.a. the Rectangular Solid Core® or "RSC®"). This is to avoid what is known as "skin effect," where the music signal undergoes both time and frequency distortions. Next is the company's explanation that dielectric families have "siblings, sometimes with quite interesting characteristics. Essentially, as a signal is passed through the wire, electrons in the surrounding dielectric, or insulator, become polarized -- or charged. The faster the dielectric is capable of returning to its original state, the less effect (absorbency) it will have on the signal. TARA Labs uses something called "Aero-PE," which they imply is the best amongst possible dielectrics, in this regard. Sorry - I may have read more into it than exists, as this was not a concise white paper. (Nobody trusts a journalist these days! As if I would print any of it. Really!) Wait -- there's more. Well, I guess it'll hold.

Rectangular Solid-Core: The Next Generation

The first generation RSC's got by me. (Mostly because they were way too

expensive - I am a mere mortal, after all, and these were "God's" cables - remember the ads? "The Cable God Uses"?) Today's Rectangular Solid-Core conductors have been improved in two areas. One involves metallurgy and the other electromagnetic properties. Metallurgy first: the Gen 2 RSC conductors utilize a proprietary Consonant Alloy, which TARA states is the most highly conductive copper alloy available, including "six-nines" (99.99994% pure) copper. How is this possible? The crystal lattices of the copper are "bridged" by some other material(s) that I can only guess at. (Aluminum? Indium? Unobtainium? I guess that's one way of keeping it proprietary.)

Electromagnetic improvements: the new generation RSC conductors have lower inductive reactance than a round conductor of equal cross-sectional area. The 24 AWG conductors measuring .0025 x .0011 inches each have a lower inductive reactance than a 30 AWG (smaller) gauge round conductor. Yet the RSC's have a higher current-carrying capability.

Do You Think God Will want To Upgrade?

How do you tell God her cables are no longer the greatest?

The new shielded interconnects use a 1/4-inch Teflon center tube to separate two PE-insulated RSC conductors and several solid PE "filler" rods. The Consonant Alloy material is extruded in an oxygen-free environment and subsequently insulated with polyethylene. Aside from acting as a dielectric, it limits oxidation of the conductor.

But - enough Claims & Hype! Let's see what these snakes can do with my system! If the first generation was good enough for God, then these snakes should be able to stand up to the scrutiny of the "microscope."

The tonal balance seemed a tad rolled off in the upper register; this led, however, to a softened and eased sound that never interfered with the timbral accuracy of reproduction, which was very natural. The end result was one of forgiving musical reproduction with very slight loss of "liveness." On Sara K.'s *Play On Words* (Chesky Records JD 105), her voice was ever-so-subtly softened, while the muted trumpet still had great brass bite.

The Reference RSC Gen 2's provided excellent timbral shading, displaying a tremendous taste of Tori Amos' vocal acrobatics and note-bending on *Boys For Pele* (Atlantic 82862-2). Instrumental inflections allowed the listener the ability to sense Amos' virtuosity on the piano, as well as on the harpsichord. Jamming on the *harpsichord?* Way cool! The harpsichord also proved that the TARA's were great at handling the quick transient attacks and let-go necessary for incisive plucking, with equally important natural decay of the notes.

Still, the strengths of the Ref RSCs were their impeccable timing and stable soundstage. Good image bloom and ambiance were present in all recordings. Overall, the TARA Labs Reference RSC Gen 2 interconnects are a very well balanced design that should prove compatible in most systems.

Those with money to burn may want to check out TARA's Master RSCor Decade. Silly as it may seem, though, I can't help wondering how much more satisfying it would be to spend that extra green on records or live musical events. Just call me a radical.

Does RSC Stand For "Rather Sweet Cables?"

These cables naturally utilize more RSC conductors than the interconnects, since speaker cables are required to carry more current. The Gen 2's use finer gauge conductors than the original RSC design, allowing for a more flexible cable, along with the previously mentioned improvements.



Tonal balance was a little rolled off in the upper register. This caused some loss of low-level information, but not a lot. It was just enough to produce a laid-back sound to the music. On *Arnold For Band* (Reference Recordings RR-66CD), there was a very very slight loss to brass bite. Some information was lost in the background as well. The subtle variations in tone and timbre became a tad obscure and homogenous. This was most apparent on *Boys For Pele*, where the subtle note-bending of Amos is kinda glossed over.

Both *Play On Words* and *Boys For Pele* displayed the RSC Gen 2s' affinity for defining subtle variations of volume within the music. *Arnold For Band* revealed the strengths and weaknesses of the Gen 2s' large-scale dynamic capability. There was only a slight problem with compression much smaller than most in this price category. Still, there was a lack of snap to the leading edges of transient attacks, such as with woodblocks and other percussion. Don't get me wrong! I am being rather picky. As I experience more and better cables, I find that I must become more discriminating in order to assign some semblance of hierarchy to the growing number of great snakes wiggling their way into the market.

Once again, the RSC Reference Gen 2s' strength seems to be timing and imaging. The rhythm allows for some swing and the excellent pace brought added life to Amos' CD. My feelings about the TARA Labs RSC Reference

Generation 2 speaker cables are that they had adequate resolution, were forgiving of equipment and source material, and were very sweet!