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Cable Focus



Esprit Eureka Phono Cable

Magnifique

Neil Gader

About two years ago, my aging Sota Cosmos turntable received a long overdue factory-reconditioning. Upgraded to Cosmos “Eclipse” status, it was effectively a new table. Among the numerous improvements were a new electronics package and a magnetic bearing. Physically, it *looked* like my old Sota (more or less), but sonically, it was almost unrecognizable with more precise imaging, tighter bass, a wider dynamic envelope, and a much deeper dive into the pool of resolution and transparency. Outside of the turntable, however much had remained unchanged. The tonearm/cartridge tandem was the same tried-and-true SME V and Clearaudio Charisma V2. No concerns there. But one key link hadn’t been examined for a few years—the interconnect that ran from the tonearm to the Pass Labs or Parasound JC3+ phono stage (a five-pin DIN-to-RCA). I began to question whether I was realizing the best performance possible from my hot-rodged new rig? Had the cable world significantly moved on, sonically? As if I didn’t already know the answer.

As luck would have it, I was having an email exchange with Esprit Audio’s CEO and founder Richard Cesari. I’d favorably

reviewed a couple of Esprit’s fine cables (Beta and Lumina) in recent months, and he mentioned that he had a new phono cable from Esprit’s uptown Eureka line. Eureka? My thoughts exactly. I told Cesari to count me in.

In the Esprit Audio pecking order, Eureka slots in just below its flagship Gaia. Upon its arrival, I noted its superb construction quality from jacketing to the precision of terminations and connectors. Signal conductors are 6N copper. The dielectric structure is Nomex. For high frequency and RF noise suppression, the cables are filtered in the 10MHz range by 7N-silver-wire ferrite chokes that

have been wound by-hand in-house. The connectors are silver-plated copper, and this includes the Teflon-insulated, five-pin DIN plug.

In sonic performance, tonal neutrality across the frequency spectrum was a slam-dunk, no departures of any consequence here. But the character of this interconnect also conveyed something more—a sweet yet detailed warmth in the treble, elevated textural detail, and rich, meat-on-the-bone midrange resolution. Harmonics sang with the ease and flow that can only be the consequence of very low distortion. On the title track of Norah Jones’ *Not Too Late*, her voice and piano accompaniment were reproduced with the saturation, air, and bloom that define analog playback to my ear. There was no perceivable veiling or clouding of low-level detail or keyboard sustain. On another track from this album, cello and bass mirror each other with held notes and long sustains. Each retained its own pitch and resonance without smearing or smudging—just the clarity of two musicians playing together yet apart at the same time. Even more so than the high-resolution, streaming Tidal version of this recording, the 200-gram, clear-vinyl remastering from Classic Records seemed to have been dipped into a bottomless vat of harmonics.

Similarly, the spectacular Reference Recording *Nojima Plays Liszt* was a triumph of transient information and texture in the way it conveyed the pianist’s touch and emotion. Beneath Nojima’s hands was a micro-specificity of rising and falling keyboard amplitudes and pedal sustains

Cable Focus Esprit Eureka Phono Cable

Specs & Pricing

Price: \$4200/1.20m

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that was quite breathtaking. Soundstaging precision and placement were equally excellent. This was best exemplified when I rediscovered jazz pianist Michael Garson's *Serendipity*, a terrific all-analog LP from Reference Recordings from the mid-1980s. Unmatched for its sheer acoustic and harmonic naturalism, this is the kind of eerie, goosebump-inducing recording that time-travels the listener into the studio and makes it easy to pinpoint and picture each player's position, right down to specific height cues. Simply put, there's a lot of breathing room in this recording.

Image separation and timbral contrasts were also standouts. A prime example was one of my favorite go-to LPs, Dire Straits' *Love Over Gold*. Apart from the Mark Knopfler-fronted, epic

track "Telegraph Road," it's the more contained "Private Investigations" that is my favorite for a couple reasons. A canvas of sound cues, reverberant fields and fades, it mixes acoustic nylon string guitar with slashing electric guitar riffs, cavernous drum fills, an open ambient soundstage alongside with sound effects, footsteps, breathing, the twist of a doorknob. Throughout, the phono cable allowed each image greater distinction within the mix and room to inhabit the acoustic space, rather than being pressed shoulder-to-shoulder against the other.

Esprit Eureka revealed a richer more tactile, almost physical level of resolution. As I listened to the Police's Stewart Copeland's drums during "Murder By Numbers," alongside the tone and decay of each drum were the tangible ripple of energy from the drumheads and the airy rustle of brushed snares. These were more than mere sounds; there was the undeniable sense of the instrument's output touching your chest and gut. This sense of the tactile overflowed into the lower bass regions, as well, producing the same impression during the trombone and double bass duet from the overture of Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* Suite. Part of the fun of this track is the effort that the bass violin player employs to match his volume with an inherently much louder instrument like a trombone. You can feel the player digging into the strings with his bow to match that brassy energy.

When it comes to bass quality and extension, I recollect that at the dawn of digital many of us sat awestruck

at the technology's bass extension, drive, and control. Some dismissed analog as a quaint artifact, no longer competitive with the hot, new technology. Only later did we realize that the tight-fisted punch and control of these devices seemed to exist in a dry and lifeless vacuum that masked a loss of harmonic saturation—the resonant sustain and decay that were well-known strengths of the finest LP playback. Of course, digital has come a long way since, and my point is not to engage in any digital-shaming but rather to emphasize just how rich and palpable low-octave analog resolution can be when the bright stars of LP playback align.

By any standard these cables are superbly musical performers. Eureka brought forth from my vinyl collection tangible directness, higher saturation, and wider contrasts—elements that had ever-so-slowly gone missing over the years. And it is fairly priced, considering the degree to which it elevated the sonics of my LP rig. The end of the road? Well, let's consider. My estimable Sota LP rig registers in the \$20k range—not an insubstantial sum by any means. Then again, I can't speak for the owners of six-figure hyper-tables from the likes of Acoustic Signature, Basis, SME, TechDas, Walker—rigs that by their very existence suggest that finer and finer gradations of transparency can indeed be had, for a price. I can only speak honestly of my experience, and for me Esprit Audio's phono cable turned out to be that rare state-of-the-art moment. A Eureka moment, you might say. And yes, it is highly recommended. **tas**



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