## **Chapter Sixteen** As We Sail Into the Mystic(al) - Part 2 ~~~(Or...Cable, not Cabal. Very Different. Really. Truly. )~~~

Like many folks, I spent the vast bulk of my life getting up and then going somewhere and then coming back and then going to sleep and then getting up and and then going somewhere and then... oh, you too? Yeah, like I said, many folks. First school, then more school, then work, then more work, then...

...at some point, maybe even before you get to where other people start making excuses for whatever weird (to them) habits you engage in, you realize, "Now what?" You think of welcoming retirement, or dreading it, or maybe "Retire? Me? Never!! I LOVE MY WORK! (Or don't care to admit that after doing things the same way for seeming forever that said lifestyle has become hardwired into brain and body.)

Then one day, a revelation happens. Usually not planned, a matter of fate, happenstance. Your perspective alters, the hardwiring softens, or the wires make new connections, sever old ones. You look, or listen, and...

"Whoa. Cool! The guy at the stereo shop was right, this tube amp sounds way better than my old transistor gear! Worth every penny. Okay, dollar. Okay, way bunches of dollars. Dude, come over and check it out, it's awesome!"

So you do, and, you listen, and...Oh jeez. What was he listening to before? I mean, this isn't bad,

it's respectable, but for three grand? My Dynacaffeine solid state amp has waaaayy more detail, and it was only six hundred! I can't say anything, or it'll bum him out, and he's a bud. Besides, his ears, not mine. Oh, crap...

"Hey, dude, whaddaya think, ain't it wicked tasty? Man, my old Merange was decent, but this...why did they ever abandon tubes?"

"Well, yeah, does sound way decent, but there is good solid state stuff out there too. You can get good results from either. Only thing with tubes these days is getting good ones. It is an old technology, and a lot of the manufacturing finesse they had in the heyday has been lost. Eventually, you'll need to replace them and then...be careful, or the sound may change.'

Yeah, the stereo shop guy did say that this make only uses premium ones from some superfussy European vendor. Said they're the best in the world. Mmm. Oh, hey, another thing I wanted to ask you about. The guy also said I should consider new cables for my rig. New interconnects and speaker cables. Cost about a grand all told for the best ones. Whaddaya think, should I sprina?"

"Uhhm, no. Wire is wire. Pretty much, anyway. You might want to upgrade those speaker cables, they are a mite thin for a 200 watt amp, and the length you're running them. And I have some good interconnects I can fix you up with. Your preamp and amp have some balanced outputs and inputs. Cables for those will lower your noise floor and they're reasonably priced."

"Do they have those 99.9999% virgin mined quaternary copper conductors? I heard that's the

"Uhhm, no, Not necessary. The electrons don't care, really they don't. The only weak point of what you have now is that they're very old cables, and the shielding is just so-so, typical for the day. Your connections that allow you to use balanced cables, that's what the pro audio people use. Where you don't have them, like on your turntable, go for some dual-shielded, low capacitance cables."

"Oh. Uhmm, okay, dude, you are the expert, that's why I wanted you to hear this new stuff I got.. Pretty good though, huh? I really love it!"

"That's all that counts, buddy. If you're happy, happy is way good. Mm...would you be interested in some history of wire, and how it's now this big thing in some modern audio circles? I happened to be researching it recently, came across some old electronics catalogs, and wow...I had forgotten a lot over the years. It's fascinating. Or I think so, but you know me, eh?"

"Sure, dude, whataya got?" ( Dude returns at a future time, nifty pictures in hand ).

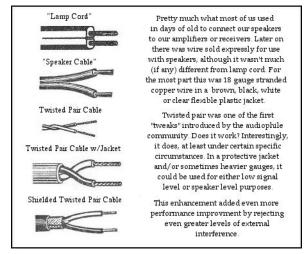
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"Here, look at this, is a hoot! 1971, and the biggee s of the bought my first volteter from ears before, maybe 12 at ne. Heh-still it, by the still works! y, did you realize just any kinds of and cables were, still are? Look at dex, there's '17 pages worth!"

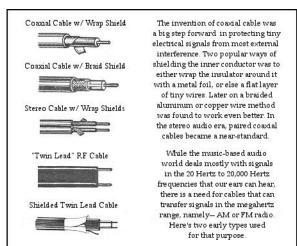
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"All those are different kinds of wire?? Unreal... Bus Bar wire? They have wire especially for bars in bus stations? Ooo, teflon cables, those are good, right? Says they're shielded, that's good, right? Wow...'

"Uhhm, let's get to that later on, okay? Let me cover some basics first as relates directly to audio gear. Here, I've been collecting scans from the catalog that shows all the common cable types in use, and added some notes about them: The first collection is about the simplest cables, with just two wires, in some different forms:"



"And here in the second collection are coaxial cables and also two types used for connecting your FM tuner to an antenna. Have you noticed, by the way, that there don't seem to be any 'magic' cables for TV or radio antennas?"



There aren't? No, nobody ever mentioned that. Radio doesn't benefit from any special kinds of wire either?"

"No, the technology behind how radio or television signals pass through cables is very well understood, and no one has recently re-written those laws of physics. For the most part, audio cables aren't much different, and the same laws apply. Always. The key things for audio are low capacitance, low or controlled inductance, and low resistance. The latter is the main thing for speaker cables, proper shielding along with the other parameters is key for interconnects.

"Dude, you are sooo smart!"

"Nah, just been around doing the same thing over and over for a long time. But I did pay attention while I was doing that, and picked up on a few realities. Like those exercise walks I've been taking for the past few years, you know? You have any idea how cool looking a lot of the real old houses are in town? And those architects and builders did that all without any magic bricks. Gotta love it. Hey, wanna take a break, go for a walk?"

**AUGUST 2022** 

"Sure, dude, we can get on with the tech talk later. Beautiful day outside and no time like the present."

No, there isn't. Happy tunes,

-- CJ

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