

Review: Kimber 4PR/8PR Bi-Wire Speaker Cables

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I never thought I would be writing a review on speaker cables as differences between wire is a contentious issue. I've never been one afraid of disagreement, but in all honesty I've never heard any change I could honestly attribute to interconnects or speaker cables. And really, in my heart of hearts, I didn't want to hear differences in cable. The thought put fear into my wallet, not to mention my engineer orientated brain.

As part of recent system finalization, I've decided to replace the old Canare Quadlink speaker wire. I did this for several reasons. I had a fear that the spades could short against each other in the tight confines of the Threshold amplifier and I also wanted a bit longer reach than the six foot length afforded. My Magnepan 1.6/QR speakers can also be bi-wired, removing the metal straps between the high and low inputs. With that in mind, I ordered an eight foot pair of Kimber Kable 4PR/8PR Bi-Wire speaker cables terminated with bananas.

Upon arrival, I removed them from the supplied packaging and was impressed by the construction quality. Though the 4PR / 8PR cables are Kimber's most budget cable, the termination and braiding job was well done. The 4PR consists of four brown and four black conductors braided together to make a 14awg cable. The 8PR is built the same way with eight cables per leg, producing a 10awg cable. I removed the Canare wire from the system and also removed the hi/lo straps from the Magnepan speakers. Installation of the Kimber cable was a breeze as I used the 4PR set for the tweeter and the 8PR set for the woofer panel. I then settled down to give my system a quick listen.

Initial impressions were certainly interesting and not at all what I expected. At this price point I expected no change at all, but was instead greeted with a brighter but edgier treble. Bass extension also seemed deeper, perhaps the 10awg cable helping with

the high amount of current I use to drive the Magnepan speakers. Deciding some more break-in may be required, I let the system play in the background in the evenings while I worked out.

A few days later, I had time for some further listening, which revealed the Kimber 4PR/8PR to be one smooth cable. There is a warm coherency from top-to-bottom and the bright edginess of the treble disappeared. The speaker drivers, a slightly strange term to use with Magnepans, seemed to now play as-one. The lowest bass, never a strong point on the Magnepans, was better too. Though the differences were not staggering compared to the old Canare, the changes were still audible.

So there you go - my prejudices once again have been shattered. I never thought solid-state amplification could cut it and now I'm hearing differences in cables. I think part of the reason for this change comes from finally having a better front end, revealing speakers and a certain amount of stability. Before, I was always trying new amplification (often DIY), speakers and moving to different rooms. Such circumstances clouded my ability to discern subtle changes as the amount of given variables were too high. Now once I get the chance, I will be willing to spend the dough on some even more expensive cables. Somewhere I hear my wallet screaming.

System:

preamp: Threshold FET-10/HL

phono preamp: Threshold FET-10/PC

amplifier: Threshold S/500

analog: VPI HW19 MkIII - Rega RB300 with Incognito wiring - Dynavector 10x5

speakers: Magnepan 1.6/QR

speaker cable: Canare Quad

Interconnects: Cardas Crosslink and Belden