



Positive Feedback ISSUE 52
november/december 2010

REVIEWS
hardware



kaplan cable

GS MkII AC cords

as reviewed by Michael Wechsberg



Although I've been an audiophile (whatever that is) for many years I'm only a recent convert to the altar of power cables and their value in shaping the sound of audio systems. My conversion came about almost exactly three years ago when I purchased a PS Audio Power Plant Premier AC conditioner. Not only did the Premier transform the sound of my system in many gorgeous ways, but it made the sonic signature of the other power cords in my system much more obvious. I wrote about the Premier in my first review for *PFO* (Issue 34). Since then I have tried numerous power cords in various places in my system, and currently I employ a mish mosh of cables from several manufacturers. One thing I have learned is that one person's "perfect" power cord in one

MICHAEL WECHSBERG'S
SYSTEM

LOUDSPEAKERS

Marten Miles II.

ELECTRONICS

E.A..R 890 amplifier and
E.A.R. 868 preamplifier.

SOURCES

VPI Scout Turntable with
JMW-9 Tonearm, Dynavector
Karat 17D3 Moving Coil
Cartridge E.A.R. Acute CD
Player Music Hall Maverick
SACD Player.

CABLES

Harmonic Technology Pro-9
Reference speaker cables
Harmonic Technology Magic
Link Two and XLO Signature
3 interconnects Harmonic
Technology Magic Reference
2 and XLO Signature 3 power
cords.

ACCESSORIES

Black Diamond Racing
Isolators for VPI, Marigo Labs
TXi and VXi Mystery Feet for
electronics PS Audio Power
Plant Premier Power
Conditioner.

system may only be "ok" in another. Also, although some people believe that one attains the most coherent sound when all the power cords in the audio chain come from the same supplier, I have found this to be less than optimum (plus its more fun to mix and match power cords as well as interconnects and speaker cables, that is, if you get a kick out of that sort of thing).

This review is of an affordable (i.e., \$1500) power cord from Kaplan Cables based in Brooklyn, N. Y. The Kaplan GS Mk II cord is their latest and greatest and follows on from the original GS cable that some audiophiles may be familiar with. The cable appears to be very well made with two hefty conductors wrapped inside a sturdy black outer jacket. The cable is pretty heavy and relatively stiff so it might present problems when used with some light weight components. Kaplan supplies their cords with either copper or rhodium plated AC connectors. It is said the copper *connectorized* version is a bit warmer and the rhodium plated version a bit more analytical, but I only had the copper version to evaluate. Paul Kaplan sent me the following description of his cables:

The power cords are assembled from multiples of a custom cable I have manufactured here in the States in a 10,000' master reel. The multi-strand OFC annealed wires in each leg combine to larger than 8 gauge and can pass 250vac @ 60 amps continuously. The proprietary geometry is self-shielding and specifically addresses safety ground leakage, often an afterthought in many power cords, but critical for performance. All components used in assembly are evaluated for specific parameters, i.e. dielectric coefficient and dissipation factor, and used to guide listening evaluation design, and ultimately, final implementation.

Kaplan employs a special proprietary process to his cables, which he calls "whizbang", that can be applied at various doses. I haven't the faintest idea what that might be but suggest he find a better marketing term than "whizbang". Anyway, I actually received a pair of an earlier version of Kaplan cables (one copper and one rhodium) about a year ago to check out. At the time I decided not to review them as they didn't seem to do much for my system one way or the other. I mildly preferred the copper version as being a bit more musical. The GS Mk II cable is a much better cable than its predecessor.



The first Kaplan cable I received this time around had a "whizbang" treatment level of "8" on a scale of 1 to 8. I started out by using the Kaplan to power my Townshend Rock 7 turntable. When I first got the Townshend a few months ago I used a plain vanilla power cord because it was the only one I had long enough for my set up. I spent the next two months auditioning interconnects, and rejecting them all for sounding too bright. I bought a Kubala-Sosna interconnect because it tamed much of the high frequency emphasis without spoiling other aspects of the sound. A few weeks later I decided to change my shelving around allowing me to use a standard 5-foot power cord with the Townshend. The first cord I tried after this modification, an older mid-priced PS Audio cable, transformed the sound of my turntable system with greater clarity, a sweetened midrange and much firmer bass. For reasons that elude me, this turntable is astonishingly sensitive to the cord used to power the drive motor.

Inserting the Kaplan cable in place of the PS Audio resulted in a lighter and more delicate balance to the sound. The bass was very good but not as well defined, however, the midrange and highs were more transparent with midrange definition being particularly smooth and clear. Images were wide and solid and instruments had notable air around them. The most wonderful characteristic of the Kaplan cable was its very coherent presentation of the music. It was very easy to get drawn into the performance, something I especially value in a music system.

Transferring the cable to my E.A.R. 868 preamp produced the identical sonic signature I heard when it was powering the turntable. Light, airy, and very coherent. This cable is a real winner, especially at its price point of about \$1500.

After some initial feedback to Paul Kaplan about my findings, he thought the loss of

definition in the bass might be because the "whizbang" treatment was too much of a good thing. He asked me to try a second sample with a treatment level of "4". He told me another listener had a good experience using a level 4 cable to power his PS Audio Power Plant Premier. So, a few days later a second Kaplan cable arrived that looked identical to the first with no outward marking as to the treatment level.

The first thing I decided to do was try the first sample of Kaplan cable (level 8) on my Power Plant Premier where it replaced a similarly priced XLO Signature 3 power cord. Other power cords in the system were my standard cords from XLO and Harmonic Technology. I was surprised at the result. This time the bass definition was better. Not that I was getting more bass out of the system, just cleaner and less muddy. On some classical recordings I tried, in particular the Classic reissue of the RCA Living Stereo recording of the Khachaturian "Masquerade Suite", I was much more aware of the room sound. I also noticed an improvement in imaging with more stable positioning of voices and instruments and a slightly wider soundstage. Tonally, the sound was very good but a little drier than I was used to. This was particularly noticeable on piano passages in the music. Dynamics, coherency and drive were all very good to excellent.

The next thing I tried was to insert the level 4 power cord, the new one I just received, to power my E.A.R. preamp. I left the level 8 cord driving the power conditioner. The combination of two Kaplan cords sapped a little of the energy out of the low bass, but the sound was still quite good. Now the mids were a little less dry and more pleasant to my ear, but I thought the highs were a bit flat and lacking in air. I have to emphasize this was a tiny effect only evident on some of my best recordings. At this point of my testing I preferred using just a single Kaplan level 8 cord on the power conditioner.

The next, and final thing I tried was to remove the level 8 cord from my system and substitute the level 4 cord for my power conditioner. This produced the best result of all. The bass was well defined, deep and dynamic (just a tad less spectacular than the level 8 cord), but the greatest improvement was in the midrange and highs. Gone was the dry sound and back was the liquid, coherent sound that I love from my tube based system. Individual singers floated in the recorded acoustic in a beautiful and realistic way. Piano passages were now well placed in both tone and space and highs were crystal clear, close to the best I have heard so far in my ever-changing system. I especially enjoyed the solo violin passages by Oscar Shumsky in the "Masquerade Suite". His 1715 Stradavari is an astonishing instrument! There is also quite a lot of tympani in this piece of music which came across with just the right snap from way back in the soundstage. I also really enjoyed listening to Judy Collins in "Colors of the Day". Her voice and accompaniment were just right and in the room.

Now I could have kept playing with the Kaplan GS Mk II by trying it in various other parts of my system but I know when to stop at a good thing. In "my" system with my set of components the best place for the Kaplan power cord is on the PS Audio PPP conditioner. The level 4 treatment seems to work better for me than the more enthusiastic level 8 treatment.

I think Paul Kaplan will have to decide whether to offer his power cords with a single standard whizbang treatment or make multiple versions available. He could, for example, offer custom versions somewhat like the WyWires cables reviewed by Bob Levi and I in previous recent issues of *PFO*. However, the most important thing to appreciate is that the Kaplan GS Mk II is an excellent power cable at any price from someone who truly understands the relationship between power cable construction and sound. I strongly encourage you to give the Kaplan a try to see how it might transform your system. **Michael Wechsberg**

Kaplan GS Mk II

Retail: \$1495 for 5 ft, \$1695 for 6 ft (as tested)

Kaplan Cable

933 President Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215

USA

TEL: 1-718-789 8224

web address: www.kaplancable.com

Manufacturer's Response

I'd like to thank Michael for what I can only describe as a 'spot on' review.

I can't disagree with his comments on the level 8 treatment, and find the level 4 treatment (GS Mk II Amp cord) to be appropriate for both amplifiers and conditioners, and the new level 2 treatment (GS Mk II Source cord) for source components and preamplifiers. The level 8 cord will still be available, and is intended for certain passive power conditioners, like the Bybee Wire or my own Alchemist conditioner. With these conditioners, the cord passes some of its benefits onto downstream components when a solo GS Mk II level 8 cord powers the conditioner.

I'd certainly like to provide a single version of the GS Mk II cords. I could and it would be a significant upgrade over the original GS cords. Nevertheless, the benefits of having cords optimized for the specific component powered are simply too large to forgo the variations.

Given your description of the GS MkII Amp cord powering your PS Audio Power Plant Premier...

The next, and final thing I tried was to remove the level 8 cord from my system and substitute the level 4 cord for my power conditioner. This produced the best result of all. The bass was well defined, deep and dynamic (just a tad less spectacular than the level 8 cord), but the greatest improvement was in the midrange and highs. Gone was the dry sound and back was the liquid, coherent sound that I love from my tube based system. Individual singers floated in the recorded acoustic in a beautiful and realistic way. Piano passages were now well placed in both tone and space and highs were crystal clear, close to the best I have heard so far in my ever-changing system...

How could any vendor be anything but absolutely thrilled?

Again, many thanks,

Paul Kaplan
Kaplan Cable



Local Guides

All Local Guides

Alabama

Alaska

Arizona

 [ShareThis](#)

[POSITIVE FEEDBACK ONLINE © 2010 - HOME](#)

[BACK TO TOP](#)