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# Kaplan Cable GS Speaker Cables

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by **Henry Wilkenson**

I met Paul Kaplan, CEO and designer of Kaplan Cables, some years ago at several audio club meetings. We were reacquainted through our mutual friend, Wes Bender. Prior to our meeting and s starting his company, Paul had several interesting careers.

During his college days, he became the college radio station's only 1st class FCC Engineer. After graduation, he went to work as a Research Associate at the Johns Hopkins Medical School's Department of Physiological Chemistry. He ran their macro-molecular characterization lab performing experiments, and applying new mathematical techniques to biochemistry.

After leaving John Hopkins, Paul went on to a new job as the head of quality control for the manufacturer of pacemaker batteries. Besides learning electrochemistry, computerized real time data acquisition, quality

control techniques, more importantly, he learned just how difficult it is to manufacture quality products properly. Fortunately, all of this experience led to Paul to become a manufacturer of high end power cords (many roads lead to high-end audio). Now he has added a line of speaker cables, the subject of this review.

I first had the chance to listen to Paul's power cords during a listening session at my colleague, Marty Appel's house. To put it mildly, we were all quite impressed with what we heard. Afterward, several of Paul's cords took up permanent residence in Marty's system, as well as my own system. Sometime during the session, in a conversation with Paul, he told me that he had started producing speaker cables. My hand went right up for a review sample. In short order, I had a pair ready to install in my system.

## Set Up

The GS cables are a little on the stiff side but not as with some other cables, to the point where they could be mistaken for pipe. With a little care, they can be routed into place without too much trouble. The GS cables are typically terminated with 8 MM Vampire direct gold plated, OFC (oxygen free copper), spade connectors. The spade connectors are cold forged welded with greater than 12,000 lbs of pressure. As far as the actual constriction and other materials, Paul will only say that the cables are constructed with "proprietary materials" in a proprietary configuration". At my request, the pair that I received was terminated with the optional Furutech locking banana plugs. Some audiophiles may have an issue with banana plugs but, these are not your typical plugs. Because these are heavy duty locking banana plugs, they make a very secure connection. Because of the Furutechs, the installation couldn't have been easier.

## Listening

After installing the GS speaker cables, I was quite impressed with how good they sounded. I usually take particular notice of any component that sounds really good right out of the box so to speak, and these cables definitely fall into that category. Still, I gave them a good one hundred hours of burn in before doing any serious listening.

The next thing that I noticed was the huge sound stage that the GS' created. Recordings that I previously thought had a good sound stage were much better after installing the GS cables. The width and height was as greater than anything that I have ever heard in my system. It wasn't as though the GS' were imposing any artifacts rather, they were allowing what was in the recordings to be fully realized.

The stage depth was somewhat better than my Wasatch cables in terms of layering front to back. This was surprising because stage depth isn't a strong suit with my system. This is primarily due to my smallish room and the compromises that I have had to make with regard to speaker placement. The images within that wide stage were well placed and clearly focused. They were never etched rather, they had a somewhat softer focus that sounded very natural to my ears.

The treble is extended but not to the point of calling attention to itself. Cymbals are presented with a good sense of dimensionality. I can clearly hear the metallic ring of the brushed or the struck cymbal. Again, this all depends upon the source material.

The mid-range lands slightly on the warm and full side of the street. Instrumental timbers are rich and full. The sound is not euphonic nor is it clinical or cold. To my ears, they strike the right balance between warmth and detail that makes my system much more musical than with other cables that I have listened to.

The bass is extended, full but not overly ripe. There was no bloat or other aberrations; rather I would characterize it as being tuneful and well textured. Ray Brown's "Solar Energy" [Pure Audiophile-PA-002], is a good example of acoustic bass. The body and tumbrel weight of Ray's instrument was quite enjoyable to listen to.

George Duke's "Illusions" [Warner Brothers – 9 45755-2] contains some very heavy synthesized bass lines. The cut, "500 miles to go" has a throbbing rumbling bass line that could be used for a lease breaker. The GS' in no way hindered the low end. At the same time, the mids and highs were clear and open.

Claire Martin's "Old Boyfriends" is a well recorded CD [Honest – Linn Records- HON CD 5028], that really shows off Claire's talents. The GS', reveal the clarity and textures of her voice. There was no trace of hardness exaggerated sibilance.

Whenever I listen to Betty Carter, I am taken by the very wide range of tonal colors that she creates with her voice. On her CD, "I'm yours, you're mine", [Verve-314 533182-2] this inventive and virtuosic Jazz singer displays the full range of vocal abilities. The GS' put her virtually in my room with her soaring and twisting phrasing.

John Lucien's "Song for my Lady" [Columbia PC-33534] Shows off John's rich and melodic vocal phrasings. This is an older recording and some of the instruments such as the drums are muffled to a large degree. This is typical of many recordings of the era. However, John's rich baritone is full, textured and very natural sounding.

## **Enter The Zen**

The differences between the GS Cable and the Acoustic Zen Absolute speaker wire were quite clear from the outset. At first listen, you might think that the Kaplan GS' are not as transparent. In short order, I realized that the Zens were quite a bit brighter than the GS. They didn't blister your ears but they gave everything the same sense of "air" that comes from that brightness and a more forward perspective. In some instances, brass sounded "peaky" causing me to constantly lower the volume. On Cannonball Adderley's LP "Something Else", [Blue Note – BST 81595] I have often found Cannonball's horn to have a peaky hardness to it when he played the high notes, on this recording. With the GS' in place, the hardness disappeared. It was replaced with a slightly more rounded quality that made this recording much more enjoyable. I also heard more detail in the way of room ambiance. That's a neat trick; removal of hardness and an increase in detail.

Listening to Charles Mingus' "Tijuana Moods" [Classic Records, LSP-2533, 45 RPM], was another pleasant surprise. The GS' allowed all of the openness, transparency, clarity and transient speed and that is in this recording to be fully heard. In this regard, I had all that I could want and then some. The castanets on "Tijuana Moods" seemed as though they were in the room with me. With the Zens in place, the tonal palate shifted upward and the perspective came forward. The mid-range took on a slight increase in hardness. I much preferred the presentation of the GS'. Overall the Kaplan GS cables exhibited more tumbrel weight and solidity. By the way, for the differences between these two pair of cables, you will pay about 1K more for the Acoustic Zen's'.

## **Conclusion**

Several years ago, I went into the Jeff Catalano's High Water Audio room. Jeff's room differed from everyone else's in that he was using an all analogue system. Systems in other rooms demonstrated either

more top end extension or more mid-range transparency. Other systems had lower end slam and extension or better imaging. That said, a group of us keep coming back to Jeff's room to listen to music. This was due to his system's compelling musicality. In fact, we stayed in his room listening long after the show had closed for the day.

You may ask, what has all of this to do with the Kaplan Cable? After struggling to find ways to describe its sound, I find that compelling musicality describes it best. My preferences are for a system that exhibits rich, dense timbres without etch or glare or hardness. I cannot abide a cold clinical system that strives for Hi-Fi artifacts. I find these systems to be somewhat uninvolving.

Because of the GS' chameleon like character with regard to having a sonic signature, this has been a very difficult review to write. The difficulty is in describing something that has no discernable "sound" of its own and, at the same time displays an incredible sense of musicality. But this sense of musicality does not come at the expense of accuracy or resolution. Brass instruments played 'full on' sound as they should; aggressive when played so, with no mellifluous softening of the edges and or harmonics. When the brass is soft and full bodied, Clifford Brown for instance, (I'll again spare you the red wine comparison), This is exactly what I heard.

There are other cables out there that one might prefer subjectively for one sonic characteristic or another. At first listen, the treble of the GS cables may not appear to be as "extended" as other cables, but in fact, there is no loss of extension, detail or resolution. Simply there is a lack of the brightness that inevitably results in listener fatigue. No one area of the sonic spectrum is emphasized over another. If you are seeking speaker cables as tone controls, the Kaplan Cable GS speaker cable is not for you. The performance of the GS Cable however, is far more than the sum of its "non-sonic" parts, if you will. They are simply put, very honest and very well balanced.

After inserting these cables in my system, I noticed that my listening sessions became far more frequent, more enjoyable and often extend into the wee hours of the morning. I attribute this to my systems' new found musicality. I experienced the pleasure of rediscovering my record collection. Record after record revealed information that I hadn't heard previously nor, experienced so pleasantly.



If you are primarily interested in listening to and enjoying music, as opposed to hearing sound effects and, if you are looking for speaker cables in this comparatively reasonable price range, then you have to seriously consider the Kaplan Cable GS speaker cables. Because of my experience with these cables, I will have to tell Paul not to expect them back. On the other hand, I am nominating them for an Audiophilia Star Component Award, the first I've ever awarded. Given these conditions, I highly recommend these cables.

*[It is with great pleasure that we award [The Audiophilia Star Component Award](#) to the Kaplan Cable GS Speaker Cables. Congratulations! - Ed]*

## Associated Equipment

VPI IV Mk IV turntable W/Rega RB-700 Tone arm

Sony 777ES SACD Player Modified

VAC LE Pre Amp

NuForce P-09 Pre Amp

Gilmore Raptor Power Amps

NuForce 9SE Power Amps

Virtue Audio Mono Block Power amps.

Dynaudio 3.3 Loudspeakers

Wasatch Ultima Speaker Cables, Acoustic Zen Absolute Speaker Wire, Acoustic Zen Absolute, Von Gaylord

Audio Chinchilla and Siltech Interconnects

P.S. Audio Power Plant Premier

## The Kaplan Cable GS AC Power Cord

Manufactured by Kaplan Cable

933 President Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215

USA

1-718-789 8224

[website](#)

Price: \$1,595 Per 6' pair

Source: Manufacturer Loan

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admin [09.20.10 at 10:58 am](#)

Great review, Henry. Glad you liked them. Kaplan is getting good press around here. I must hear them sometime.

Cheers, a

[Bryan Pape](#) [09.20.10 at 3:13 pm](#)

I have been using Paul's power cords for a couple of years now and they are excellent. Everything else went back in the box.

Congrats to Paul on what seems like another winner.

Bryan

roy harris [09.20.10 at 6:23 pm](#)

hi henry:

when you describe the speaker cable as “warm” sounding, do you mean, subtractive in the upper mids and lower treble, coupled, with a peak in the mid and/or upper bass ?

Andy Fawcett [09.23.10 at 8:49 am](#)

G'day Henry. A good read, thanks, and I'm glad you've found the musicality you were looking for.

Paul's website isn't up yet, but when it is I hope he'll be more forthcoming with information. Yes, of course he's entitled to protect his proprietary secrets - but if you're asking someone to lay down more than \$1500 for a set of cables, I do think they're entitled to have some idea what it is they're paying for.

admin [09.23.10 at 8:57 am](#)

Until the website is up (momentarily, I would assume!), you can get the cables [here](#).

[Paul Kaplan](#) [10.01.10 at 12:52 pm](#)

Andy,

Sorry for the delayed response; I just got back to the States after 8 days of internet free bliss. My website will be updated with actual content soon after RMAF.

As to what is inside the GS speaker cables, a whole lot of finely stranded copper. There is enough to put 50 amps delivering 15 kW continuously without breaking a sweat. It's not POCC nor 6Ns. If I'd found them to be advantageous, I'd be using them. The reason for the overkill is not measurable characteristics, but simply that is what sounds best in the GS's topology, a very low inductance, moderately low capacitance configuration. Each leg is comprised of multiple cables, dead soft annealed, that I have custom made in the States, in a 10,000' master reel. This was a result of multi-year evaluation of differing wires, cables and configurations from both objective (measurements) and subjective evaluations. I'm not implying that this is the only way to get the sound qualities I desire, but for me, it was the most cost effective solution for both me and my customers.

The website will contain more technical descriptions as well as the obligatory White Papers.

Regards,  
Paul Kaplan

KaplanCable.com

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