

Paul Rigby – The Audiophile Man

BLACK RHODIUM QUICKSTEP SPEAKER CABLES: BY THUNDER, THEY'RE RELATED!

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Looking for a pair of mid- to high-range speaker cables? Paul Rigby takes a close look at Black Rhodium's Quickstep cables

Black Rhodium offers an array of cables at varying prices but was recently drawn to dealers comments on the continuing popularity of its Thunder cable product. Despite the release of other cables that might have been equally appealing. According to company owner, Graham Nalty, "We examined the differences between Thunder and our other cables and made some tests. We identified certain exclusive features of Thunder and we have designed a range of loudspeaker cables based on those exclusive design features."

Hence the entrance of Quickstep fitted with Graham Nalty Legacy Range GN-1 straight Line Contact rhodium plated plugs and hand built at the Black Rhodium factory in Derby.

Some of those features includes an added inter-conductor distance due to braid over conductor. The idea being to reduce magnetic distortion while the hoped for reduction in Transient Phase Distortion was handled by using thicker insulation than is usual in speaker cables, increasing the distance between conductors and thereby reducing the magnetic field seen in each conductor wire as a result of the magnetic field created by the current in the other conductor wire.

The cable also uses RFI suppression technology originally developed for higher end cables with the intention of protecting the signal wires from picking up radio frequency interference generated from radio, Wi-Fi, mobile phones and central heating systems. Additional security of the connection between the cable and plug is provided by a set screw that clamps the outer insulation of the wire. Question is, do they sound any goo?

SOUND QUALITY

I began the sound tests with slice of disco funk from Earth, Wind & Fire's Let's Groove on CD. This group was a busy outfit on stage and within their arrangements, there is plenty going on here and it takes quite an hi-fi system to sort everything out. Even behind the conglomeration of the principle voices and instruments, there are plenty of subtle and tiny effects that pop up here and there.

My first impression of the Quicksteps lay in the lower frequencies. The cables offered an organic bass. There are contemporary models out there that treat bass in a slightly digital, if not clinical, fashion The Quicksteps avoided this trap by retaining the weight of the bass but softened the punch, removing the rather solid state, dry and soul-less, impact and introducing a slightly softer, almost valve-like impact that is much more akin to how a real drum sounds.

This tonal realism was also evident in the many subtle effects heard within the mix such as the introductory bell sweeps at the introduction. Cables with a rather harsh delivery can introduce a brittle effect. Almost as if someone is not gently tapping bells but breaking large icicles. The Quickstep cables presented the bells as a soft sweep which was very pleasant indeed.

The signature backing brass section also benefited from this effect. The trumpets retained their attack, providing sharp interjections throughout but they sounded like they were played by humans instead of a robot, there was a distinctly natural aspect to their presentation.



Finally, the organic and more open approach to the delivery gave the lead vocal and associated harmonies an added richness, providing enough information to enhance the emotional impact of the song.

Turning to vinyl and Ella Fitzgerald's take on the Latin-esque classic, Hernando's Hideaway, the rather organic approach to the Quicksteps was exactly what the backing orchestra needed. Instead of the potentially stilted and rather stiff limbed approach that a clinical cable sound can give, the more easy going Quicksteps allowed the orchestra to swing its socks off, giving the presentation a positively sexy, swerve. Fitzgerald's naturally jazz-like delivery fitted in to the swing-time very easily. The ensemble, as a result, sounded like they were having a ball and enjoying themselves immensely.

More specifically, I was pleased to hear how the secondary percussion responded to the Quicksteps. Both the xylophone and the castanets had a warming, wooden tone but still managed to be sharply responsive with that essential accurate bounce of wood being struck.

CONCLUSION

For the price, the Black Rhodium Quicksteps were surprisingly balanced in tonal terms while the design offered a naturalistic reflection of the music that was entertaining and supremely musical in its approach. These are cables that never dominate but allow music to flow.

BLACK RHODIUM QUICKSTEP SPEAKER CABLES

Price: £400 for 3m

Website: www.blackrhodium.co.uk

Tel: 01332 342233

GOOD: balanced mids, naturalistic presentation, tonal realism, bass authenticity

BAD: nothing

RATING: 8

