

QED XT25 | Speaker cable | **£6 per metre**

QED strikes the right chord

FOR Clarity and space; digs deep into texture and timbre

AGAINST Tough competition



In simple terms, the duties of a speaker cable are not unlike those of the sports coach. They aren't expected to make a system more talented, rather to draw out the maximum from each component and help them work together as a team.

If you want to highlight detail and insight in a wide-open space, QED has long been one of the go-to cable manufacturers, with the necessary acumen (and products) to help your system sing.

The XT25 is another beneficiary of QED's X-Tube technology, which first came to light in the company's Award-winning Silver Anniversary XT cables more than a decade ago.

Its basic premise is essentially the same as it was then: a hollow tube runs through the centre of the cable, combatting "skin effect" and "proximity effect", effectively aiming to make the most of the conductors, regardless of frequency.

Resistance is futile

Along with low DC resistance, low-loss dielectric and the almost entirely oxygen-free copper make-up, QED cables, the company claims, measure better with audible sonic improvements when compared with other loudspeaker cables. At this price, and in many other areas too, it seems to be absolutely correct.

It's worth repeating that, especially in terms of detail and space, the QED XT25s are clear frontrunners when measured against their direct rivals, such as the Chord Company C-Screen, which is marginally cheaper at £5 per metre.

We run these cables through two separate systems: our reference kit, comprising a Naim NDS/555PS streamer, Gamut D3i/D200i amps and ATC SCM 50s; and a more financially appropriate team of Cyrus CDi, Rega Elex-R amp and ATC SCM11 speakers. The QED's sonic signature remains consistent with both.

The XT25 offers the QED family sound on a budget

"When hooked up with the XT25, the airy freedom our system is given is a delight. The QED helps it pick out the delicacies in texture better, not to mention natural reverbs and physicality"

Take Lubomyr Melnyk's unerringly stunning *Corollaries*. The timbre of his piano is dealt with great delicacy, showing up the closeness of the microphones on which it is recorded. In terms of that kind of insight, it is difficult to see how our system's detail could be bettered by another cable costing £6 per metre.

Space plays an important part in this piece, not only in reflecting the physical expanse of the piano, but also in spotlighting each part of the haunting vocal

KEY FEATURES



X-Tube technology



Cold welded plugs



Oxygen-free copper

in *Pockets Of Light* as a separate strand of equal musical importance, without becoming overly detached.

The airy freedom either system is given when hooked up with the XT25 in particular, is a delight. In terms of outright expression, drive and punch, it doesn't always match the C-Screen, but the presentation is both subtler and more sophisticated. This QED helps our system pick out the delicacies in texture and timbre better, not to mention natural reverbs and physicality.

Outstanding organisation

The XT25's organisation is perhaps not as outstanding as with the C-Screen, but the latter benefits from a more insular, closer soundstage. It's more a case of differing abilities, than cable one being objectively better than the other.

Pairing would be a consideration. Though clarity is absolutely a forte for QED, a currently thin, cold-sounding system may not benefit wholly from the balance of the XT25. On the other hand, a warmer, less spacious set-up would certainly benefit from this cable's expertise.

We loved the more expensive XT40 for precisely the same characteristics shown by the XT25 - and that's the mark of a manufacturer that knows its identity. If you don't want to meet the cost of the former, this is a cable offering the same instantly recognisable QED family sound for those on a tighter budget, and yet it won't leave you longing for the upgrade.

WHAT HI-FI? says

Rating ★★★★★

SOUND ★★★★★

COMPATIBILITY ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VERDICT Even at this lower price, this QED cable doesn't disappoint. This kind of transparency is difficult for rivals to match