

Speaker Cable | £11/m | whf.cm/ReferenceXT40i

QED Reference XT40i

A reasonably priced cable that will help your system sound as clean as possible

If there's one thing hi-fi enthusiasts understand more than normal civilians, it is the value of good cables. Whether it's speaker wire or the interconnects between a source and stereo amplifier, the difference between a quality product and those bundled in free of charge at the dealership is chalk and cheese.

Take the QED Reference XT40i speaker cable - for £11 per metre, it will audibly unlock otherwise unrealised potential in anything from a micro-system right up to mid-priced separates. It may also limit the latter somewhat, but if you've spent any kind of money on your system, you will hear the difference this QED makes compared with cheap speaker wire.

Long-term readers are likely to have already come across this cable's predecessor, with the Reference XT40 having received a *What Hi-Fi?* Award in 2014. But QED has done more than add an 'i' to the name and hit republish.

Mind the gap

The company is introducing its brand new Air Gap dielectric to this 99.999 per cent oxygen-free copper cable - a technology that increases the separation of conductors inside the cable and thus the amount of air between them. This halves the dissipation and capacitance characteristics inside the cable and, according to QED, improves the timing and rhythmic accuracy through your system, while retaining the cross-sectional area ideal for long cable runs.

The Reference XT40i also retains QED's X-Tube formation, where cable conductors are gathered in a tube-like shape around a hollow insulating rod to equalise current densities, delivering low inductance and presenting a consistent and even load to the amplifier.

QED is offering pre-terminated lengths of 2m, 3m and 5m Reference XT40i cables for £110, £130 and £170, which feels like a good deal and seems even better once you've heard what the Reference XT40i can do for an entry-level or mid-range system.

Even plugged into our reference kit, it is apparent that QED hasn't abandoned its reputation for helping to produce a clean and insightful presentation.

KEY FEATURES



Low-Loss Air Gap Dielectric



X-Tube Technology



99.999 per cent
Oxygen-Free Copper



WHAT HI-FI?



For anyone whose hi-fi is built upon clarity and analysis, these cables could be just the ticket. At times, our system is almost begging for granular synthesizer pieces, something into which it can sink its teeth and taste each bold square and sawtooth wave. Or if not, then the creeping of a bow across the strings of a cello, or the excess air as it breezes through the mouthpiece of a tenor sax.

QED excels in helping hi-fi kit describe the shape of an instrument, the room it is in and how its sound has been recorded. With the XT40i cables plugged in, our system performs with an improved sense of timing and a more definite eye for accuracy, as well as attention to detail.

Nothing is allowed to slip, with notes and percussion hit with precision and intention. It isn't as though previous efforts have been altogether imprecise, but there is an unerring confidence about the way our speakers play here.

In these regards, QED cannot really be beaten for the money. Its closest rival around this price is the Audioquest

Rocket 11, named our Accessories Product of the Year in 2019. It is more expensive, at £12.50 per metre, but even using that, our system is reluctant to divulge as much information.

A lyrical bent

It offers more of a musical whole, which is to do with dynamic expression, those leading notes that turn accurate timing into a traceable rhythm and help portray a more lyrical, human bent to the music.

It's also to do with organisation, and how each instrument is tethered to and interacts with others. The trade-off is that lack of comparative clarity - but that's a compromise we'd willingly make. Equally, others will prefer to go the other way, and we can see why. You'd have to spend £18 per metre on Chord Company's Rumour X to mix the two.

If you're looking to upgrade your system by investing in speaker cable this side of £15 per metre, you should hear the difference this can make. The QED Reference XT40i is a clear winner in more ways than one.

WHAT HI-FI?

RATING ★★★★★

SOUND



COMFORT



BUILD



FOR

- Offers system great clarity
- Great price

AGAINST

- Analytical balance may not suit all

VERDICT

The Reference XT40i is very much a QED cable: you'll struggle to get your system sounding cleaner at this price