

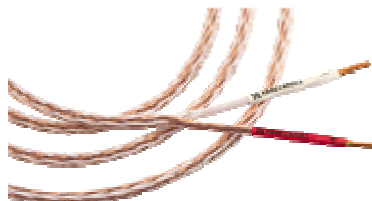


## Kimber Kable 8TC Speaker Cable Review

By Gene DellaSala — June 03, 2013

- Product Name : **8TC Speaker Cable**
- Manufacturer: **KimberKable**
- Performance Rating: 
- Value Rating: 
- Review Date: **June 03, 2013 11:45**
- MSRP: **\$21/ft + terminations**



### Specifications Kimber 8TC:

16 individual TCSS conductors – 8 clear and 8 white in braided configuration DUT: 8TC 2.5m bare wire ends

- (Cp) parallel capacitance: 821.0 pF @ 20 kHz
- (Ls) series inductance: 0.345  $\mu$ H @ 20 kHz
- (Rdc) dc loop resistance: 0.018  $\Omega$
- (Xt) total reactance: 0.044  $\Omega$  @ 20 kHz
- Frequency response  $\pm$  0.5 dB: dc - 300 kHz

### Pros

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- Great performance
- Dresses up a high end system beautifully
- Durable

### Cons

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- Expensive
- WBT connectors may not mate well with some amps

### Kimber 8TC Cable Introduction

Kimber Kable has been an Audioholics favorite exotic cable manufacturer for a number of years, and for good reason. They make a quality product that looks great, and measures great, without

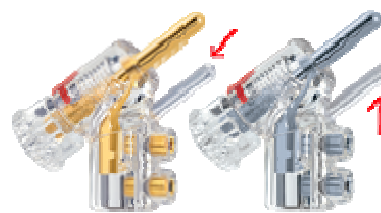


Kimber 8TC cable coiled on our Continental Theater Chair waiting to be hooked up

all of the voodoo that plagues this category of product. When I was perusing their website, my eyes took interest in their 8TC speaker cables. When I found out the \$50k/pair Status Acoustics 8T Speaker System I was reviewing was to be internally wired in 4TC Kimber speaker cable, I realized it would be a good idea to get some in for review. Do the Kimber 8TC perform as well as they look? Read the review to find out.

## Design Overview

According to their website, the Kimber 8TC speaker cables consist of sixteen individual TCSS conductors; eight clear and eight white, arranged in a large format braid. They go on to describe the wire as “hyper-pure copper utilizing their proven VariStrand conductor geometry.” I can’t really confirm or deny this statement and most exotic cable vendors try to sell the consumers on the purity of their copper. That being said, I’ve never seen a Kimber product oxidize (turn green) or corrode like you see ordinary 12AWG lamp cord do. Kimber claims their insulated dielectric is a high-pressure, low-temperature extruded fluorocarbon. That sounds fancy and important but what they are really telling you is they managed to efficiently pack a lot of wire density into a small area.



As with all Kimber products, you won’t find any voodoo—such as batteries slapped onto their cables. Instead they utilize proven braiding techniques by interweaving wires to reduce cable inductance while at the same time using generous amounts of copper to keep the most important metric in speaker cables at a minimum – resistance. The aggregate wire size is two 9AWG conductors. I measured an effective gauge of just under 11AWG but more on that later.

I love the terminations Kimber employs on their cables. From their standard banana to their compression WBT, they look wonderful and perform great as well. The only gripe I found was



Emotiva XPR-1 Amplifier Back Panel View

when using their WBT compression connector, the little plastic post was preventing me from connecting to the Emotiva XPR-1 amplifier I had under review at the time. I quite honestly don't understand why Kimber even has this piece of plastic which seems pretty unnecessary to me. I had to cut them off with a pair of wire cutters so that I could connect the 8TC cables to the Emotiva amplifiers. Be prepared to do this if you chose this termination for an amplifier with a speaker binding post like the one pictured below. Kimber's standard banana plug fit perfectly snug on all of my amplifiers and loudspeakers in my reference system. It's a less costly connector and you can avoid any potential compatibility issues if you just decide to go that route.

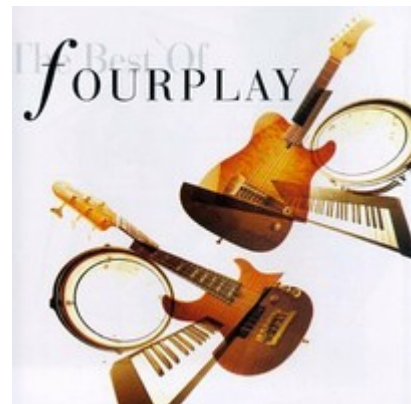
## **Kimber Kable 8TC Speaker Cable Sound Quality**

I connected the Kimber 8TC speaker to both my dedicated two-channel and multi channel systems. For two-channel, I ran unbalanced to my Marantz PM-11S2 integrated amp to the Pass Labs X350.5 amplifier with my Marantz TT-15S1 turntable and Oppo BDP-105 Blu-ray player as the source devices. For multi-channel, the Emotiva XPR-1 was connected up to my Denon AVP-A1HDCI processor for a fully balanced connection from source device to the speaker outputs! In both systems, my Status Acoustics 8T speaker system was used for evaluation.

I am not one who attempts to discern the subtle sonic differences cables convey in an audio system. I am a firm believer that only poorly designed cables can be sonically distinguishable, and then only under the right conditions. That being said, my listening tests focused on pure enjoyment of the sound quality of my reference system. At no point did I feel the Kimber cables were adding a level of realism I've never heard before with my standard 10AWG Blue Jeans zip cord. Never did I feel the midrange got more chocolatey or a magic veil was lifted. My wife never claimed she could hear the difference all the way from the kitchen while she was cooking up some chicken Marsala. I will tell you this however: The Kimber's visually dressed up my reference system nicely, something my industrial-looking Bluejean cables could never do.

### **CD: Fourplay – The Best Of Fourplay**

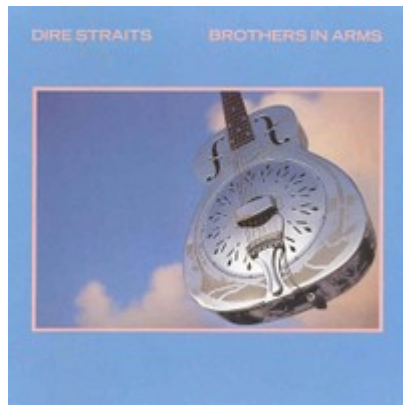
It's always a good idea to start off any critical listening session with a little Fourplay before really getting into the thick of things. Track #5 "The Chant" is a song I often use to separate the men from the boys in loudspeakers. The bass energy of the kick drums will either reward you with an adrenaline surge or have you covering your ears from the horrible sound of woofer bottoming right before it plays for the very last time. Of course this isn't a problem for my reference speakers or amplifiers for that matter. So I suppose I was testing for compression in the loudspeaker cables. LOL, not really, but suffice it to say, no compression, bottoming or clipping was detected. Instead, thunderous and tight bass was delivered from the Status 8T speakers and the Emotiva XPR-1 just pumped out clean power. The transient response was lightening quick, extracting all of the decay of the kick drums making it feel more like a live performance right in my own theater room than listening to an actual recording. The wood percussion instruments were delicately reproduced with all of the subtle nuances preserved.



### **CD: Dire Straits – Brothers in Arms**

One of my favorites for both musical content and sound quality, "Brothers in Arms" by Dire

Straits was one of the first fully digital recordings. I like to use this recording to hear how the product under test handles the more delicate nuances of a recording. Track #4 “You’re Latest Trick” is calming to the nerves. The saxophone sounded liquidy smooth and the depth of the soundstage seemed to extend well beyond the back wall of my listening room. Stereo separation was superb; gotta give props to the Emotiva mono-block isolation here. Cymbals were free of grain and I felt like my system was just playing effortlessly and the Kimber 8TC cables were acting as a nearly ideal transmission of the signals between the amp and speakers. By the time track #5 “Why Worry” began, I was in such a lucid state that I must confess I fell in and out of consciousness. The electric guitars were forward with great bite and realism that it just felt like a live performance. I was nursing a nice Belgium limbic to this track just thinking, it doesn’t get any better than this.



**Dire Straits: Brothers in Arms CD (Left Pic); Miles Davis: Kind of Blue (Right Pic)**

**LP: Miles Davis: *Kind of Blue* (180G)**

An oldie but classic recording that has stood the test of time, Miles Davis’ *Kind of Blue* never disappoints. How could you beat Miles playing with jazz legends Bill Evans on piano and John Coltrane on tenor saxophone, all playing improvised, making it truly a magical recording? Track #1 “*So What*” sets the mood for this album, which is just a feel-good laid back experience that is best accompanied by a good glass of red. Jimmy Cobb’s cymbal brushes were delicate and airy while the back and forth between Miles on trumpet and Coltrane on sax was exhilarating. It’s hard to believe such an old recording on vinyl could surpass many of today’s modern digital recordings with respect to dynamic range and tonal interest.

My reference system was producing power and dynamics of this recording to lifelike SPL’s with ease. Closing my eyes, I really felt like I was in a jazz cellar in NYC listening to this sextuplet grace me with their phenomenal performance. Track #2 “*Freddie Freeloader*” is my favorite song on the whole album. It just oozes coolness and if you’re foot isn’t tapping on this tune, someone needs to check your pulse. Bill Evan tickles the ivories with a surgeon’s precision. I got instant goose bumps when Miles’ trumpet kicked in. I just couldn’t get over how lifelike and vivacious it sounded, especially when Coltrane answered Miles in his solo. I was truly getting that “*better than being there*” experience found only from properly setting up and pairing the best electronics and loudspeakers in a great sounding room with exceptional source material.

## Kimber Kable 8TC Speaker Cable Measurements and Analysis

Using our Wayne Kerr 6420 Impedance Analyzer which graces our Test Equipment Laboratory, I measured all of the critical metrics which directly affect cable performance. I charted the results with some of the most recent speaker cables we've reviewed for comparative purposes.

### Cable Metric Definitions

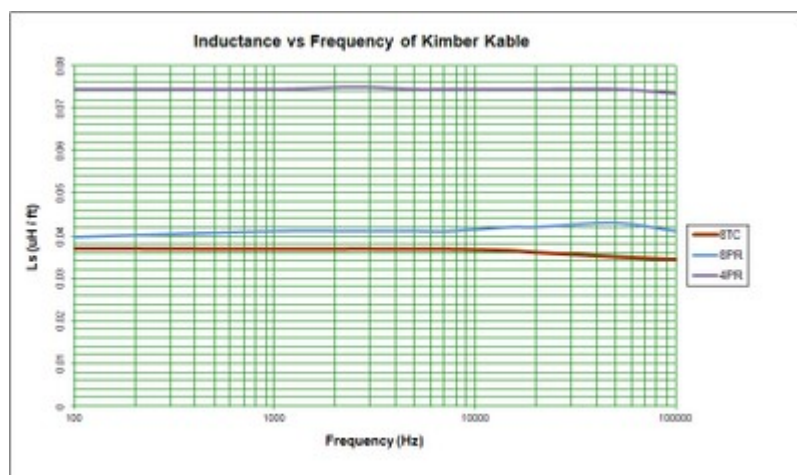
- Rdc - Commonly referred to DCR which is the series resistance of a cable at zero frequency.
- Rac -The resistive portion of the cables series resistance as a function of frequency due to skin effect.
- Rs - Total Series Resistance (mohms) measured tip to tip at one end of the cable while the other end is shorted. Note:  $R_s = R_{ac} + R_{dc}$  (minus instrumentation inaccuracies identified below)
- Ls - Series Inductance (uH) measured tip to tip at one end of the cable while the other end is shorted.
- Cp - Parallel Capacitance (pF) measured tip to tip at one end of the cable while the other end is open circuited.

Note about electrical cable resonance

### Editorial Note on Cable Measurement Test Set-up

All of the measurements were completed on a fully calibrated and certified Wayne Kerr 6420 Impedance Analyzer. The 6420 was calibrated for full frequency bandwidths and for greater accuracy, the measurements and calibration process was repeated twice for consistency.

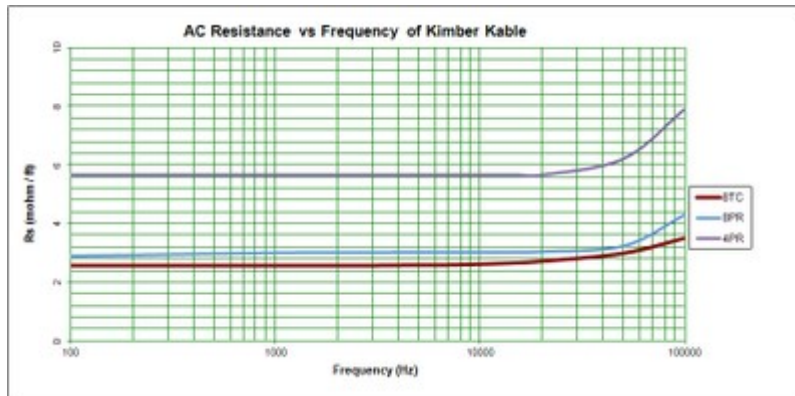
All cable lengths measured were 20 feet and divided by their length for a normalized per foot measurement.



### Inductance vs Frequency for Kimber 8TC, 8PR & 4PR

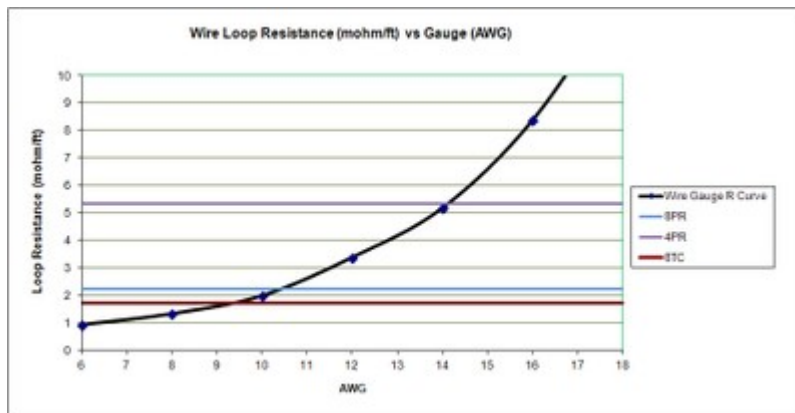
All 3 Kimber models of cable exhibit very low inductance. Due to the braided geometry of these cables, not only are they low inductance, but their inductance profile vs. frequency is ruler flat

for the entire audio band. By weight of comparison, the inductance of the 8TC and 8PR was a mere .037 uF/ft and .041uH/ft, respectively; which was nearly four times lower than the 10AWG Bluejeans speaker cables that I revere so much. Interestingly Kimber rates the inductance of these cables as .042uH/ft which is slightly higher than I measured but shows they are conservative in their ratings.



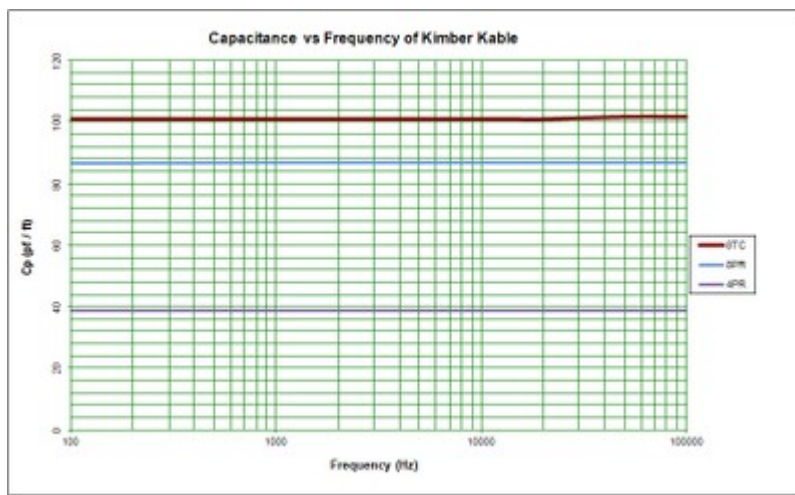
**AC Resistance vs Frequency for Kimber 8TC, 8PR & 4PR**

Kimber rates the DC resistance of the 8TC cable to be 2.19 mohms/ft while I measured slightly less at 1.72 mohms/ft.



**Resistance vs Gauge for Kimber 8TC, 8PR & 4PR**

The Kimber 4PR effective gauge is about 14AWG while the 8PR is 11AWG and the 8TC is slightly below 10AWG; the lowest of the bunch. The Kimber speaker cables exhibit a very flat AC resistance profile for the entire audio band. These cables don't start to show appreciable signs of skin effect (increased AC resistance) until around 50kHz which is well above the 20kHz audio band. At 100kHz, the AC resistance of the 14AWG Kimber 4PR cables is equivalent to the Bluejeans 5T00UP 10AWG cables while the 8PR and 8TC cables exhibit much lower AC resistance. While this is purely academic, it is noteworthy that Kimber products are by design less prone to skin effect than conventional zip cord cables. It's refreshing that Kimber doesn't post nonsensical arguments on their website overemphasizing how this parameter can cause deleterious effects at audio frequencies.



### Capacitance vs Frequency for Kimber 8TC, 8PR & 4PR

It is no surprise that when a cable is designed to be low inductance that its capacitance will be proportionally higher as a result. Unlike other cables that sandwich their conductors together, the Kimber manages to keep capacitance in check without the necessity of adding a zobel network on the speaker side of the cable to assure amplifier stability. Kimber's published capacitance spec is 38pF for the 4PR and 90pF/ft for the 8PR and 100pF/ft for the 8TC. This is about what I measured as well, as you can see from the graph above. The Kimber 8TC and 8PR cables exhibit about four times higher capacitance than standard 10-12AWG zip cord, and twice as high as its 4PR sibling. Again I don't see this as a show stopper especially since most people purchasing these types of cables are doing so for short runs (under 50 ft) and are likely using high quality amplification that doesn't have stability issues driving moderately high capacitive cables.

### Kimber Kable 8TC Speaker Cable Conclusion

The Kimber 8TC speaker cables, although rather pricey, probably offers some of the highest quality to value ratio I've seen in exotic cables. They measure considerably superior to standard 10AWG zip cord and they look a whole lot better too. From a cosmetics standpoint alone, some audiophiles may opt for a cable like this just to dress up their system and feel a sense of pride of ownership. Just like a Rolex watch doesn't necessarily keep time better than a Swatch watch, there is something to be said for build quality, cosmetic and brand appeal. Kimber has all of this in droves.



Kimber 8TC with WBT Terminations connecting to my Status 8C Center (left pic) and 8T Tower (right pic)

I've been using Kimber Kable products in various systems for many years now and have never been disappointed. I continue to use the Kimber 8PR in my primary reference system, and still think they are the highest value speaker cable product Kimber offers. But, the 8TC looks even nicer and offers even better performance. At almost 2.5 times the cost, you must determine if your budget can accommodate the 8TC cables. Price not being an issue, the Kimber 8TC will surely satisfy the audiophile both sonically and aesthetically. For those looking for a true reference cable that will do NO harm to the signal, the Kimber 8TC is your cable.

### Kimber Kable 8TC

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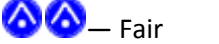

## The Score Card




The scoring below is based on each piece of equipment doing the duty it is designed for. The numbers are weighed heavily with respect to the individual cost of each unit, thus giving a rating roughly equal to:

$$\text{Performance} \times \text{Price Factor/Value} = \text{Rating}$$

**Audioholics.com note:** The ratings indicated below are based on subjective listening and objective testing of the product in question. The rating scale is based on performance/value ratio. If you notice better performing products in future reviews that have lower numbers in certain areas, be aware that the value factor is most likely the culprit. Other Audioholics reviewers may rate products solely based on performance, and each reviewer has his/her own system for ratings.

## Audioholics Rating Scale

-  — Excellent
-  — Very Good
-  — Good
-  — Fair
-  — Poor

Metric	Rating
Performance	
Appearance	
Performance	
Value	