



hardware

nordost

Norse Series Bi-Wire Jumpers

as reviewed by Victor Chavira



Several years ago I had the pleasure to review the recently introduced Frey speaker cables by Nordost. Frey proved to be the finest, most transparent speaker cables I have ever listened to in my system. Unfortunately, even with a manufacturer's discount, the Frey cables were prohibitively expensive. Nevertheless, I soldiered on with my reference single run of Analysis Plus Oval 9 cable. The Oval Nines are very low coloration high value cables. I even managed to make a pair of jumpers from the ends of the cables when I replaced the factory spades with WBT's. The sound was satisfying and allowed me to appreciate music and evaluate components. Although the knowledge that a higher level of performance never left. This fact was especially true after listening to Dave and Carol Clark's system during one of our regular TGIF evenings of great food and music. Granted, the Clark's have invested many more thousands of dollars into their rig but the sound of my system is not that far off the

VICTOR CHAVIRA'S SYSTEM

LOUDSPEAKERS
Marten Design Miles II.

ELECTRONICS
Magnum Dynalab MD-209 receiver and a EAR 834P phonostage.

SOURCES
Oppo BDP-83, Apple Mini-Mac and a LINN Axiss turntable with the Adikt cartridge.

CABLES
Nordost Quattro-Fil interconnects, Analysis Plus Oval 9 speaker cables, Locus Design Group Axis USB cable, and El Dorado power cords.

ACCESSORIES
Pi Audio UberBUSS power conditioner, Vibrapods, Townshend 3D sink Table, and Echo Busters.

mark except for one critical area. Music in the Clark's system is utterly transparent and remarkably grain free. Music seems to originate from locations unassociated to the speakers. Could I replicate such extension and transparency without spending thousands of dollars on new speaker cables? I had to find a reasonable and affordable way to expose more of the Marten Miles' untapped potential.

Enter Nordost Norse Series bi-wire jumpers. The Norse Series jumpers are six inch solid conductors terminated in either spades or Z-plugs. The conductors are spiraled by monofilament-like candy canes and encased in a thin clear Teflon tube. At this time, I'd like to recall two unrelated conversations I had with two different audio designers about how small changes can produce great effects. The first person was a speaker designer who was constructing a 'one of a kind amplifier' to evaluate his work. He discovered that replacing a two inch wire from the output devices to the binding posts with single crystal oxygen free copper resulted in significant improvement and enhanced his ability to fine tune his speaker designs. Another time a designer of power conditioners revealed that switching a four inch buss bar with specialty copper elevated the performance of his product to signature level. I hoped Nordost's jumpers would have a similar effect on my system.

The small box of 'broken-in' jumpers arrived one late afternoon by UPS. I promptly switched my homemade jumpers for the Nordost. Then I powered up the system with great anticipation. I discovered that indeed, transparency and extension improved appreciably. I now felt closer to the music rather than the usual row "S" perspective of my listening sessions. A quick change back to my jumpers confirmed that they were attenuating ambience, cohesion, and depth of perception resulting in a less engaging musical experience. Back in went the Nordost and I spent the rest of the evening listening to play list after play list as if for the first time. The Nordost Norse series jumpers were certainly a considerable improvement over my jumpers and solid value as well. Still, I went to bed wondering if even more performance could be revealed.

The next morning I decided to try an arrangement from Nordost's website called diagonal bi-wiring. Diagonal bi-wiring connects the red speaker cable to the bass/mid post and the black cable to the treble post. Then jumpers connect bass to treble in the usual fashion. I tested this arrangement out of curiosity and the results were pleasantly surprising. Whereas the Nordost jumpers alone increased depth of perception and improved resolution of fine details, diagonal bi-wiring the speaker cables greatly enhanced my understanding of musicians and instruments in specific locations on the soundstage. The effect was as if my two and a half way towers were replaced by a group of mini-monitors arranged like players on a baseball field with me sitting at home plate. I've only ever witnessed such sensation of space and cohesion of images with electronic room correction devices at audio shows. For example, while listening to "Morning Mood" from Grieg's *Peer Gynt Suite no. 1* as played by Leonard Slatkin and the St. Louis Orchestra on Telarc, I became aware of the space between flute and oboe with the flute closer to the foreground than the oboe. The massed strings were now spread out across a large arch that defied the left and right speaker towers in my vision. Low bass definition and extension also benefited from the combination of Nordost jumpers and diagonal bi-wiring. When the Cincinnati Pops recording of *Intermezzo from Caverlaria Rusticana* played next, the room overflowed with rolling waves of deep organ pedal tones.

Piano recordings exceptionally illustrated the positive effects of the new cables and connection. Rudolfo Brito's piano from his CD of works by Ernesto Lecuona sounded absolutely *present* in the room and bolted to the floor. Low left hand notes resonated with long overtones and right hand melodies shimmered like reflections of light in a crystal. The listener was continuously reminded that one piano note is composed of three taugt steel strings interacting in harmony. Some notes decayed into silence

while others stopped abruptly as the pianist manipulated the pedals. In contrast, Alfred Brendel's piano sounded warmer and less vibrant, but none the less engaging from his CD of *Beethoven Late Piano Sonatas* on Philips. Just the fact that I am able to discern these differences is a remarkable testament to the Nordost jumpers and the diagonal bi-wiring. Prior to this experiment, all piano recordings I listened to sounded relatively the same. I had previously only listened mostly for melody and composition. That has changed now that Nordost has opened other avenues of appreciation.

Nuance and tonal accuracy were also revelations of the Norse series jumpers and diagonal bi-wiring. *The Colors of Latin Jazz: A Latin Vibe* is a Concord Records compilation from their catalogue featuring the vibraphone in a Latin jazz format. One of my favorite tracks is "Stepping Stone" by Ray Vega. Ray Vega is a horn player and I always assumed he was playing trumpet on this track. However, upon listening with the Norse, I clearly detected the warmer deeper timbre of flugelhorn and not the trumpet! Again, each instrument occupied different spaces within the foreground or background of the soundstage. Bass rumbled along with greater definition and pace. Sonic surprises like the aforementioned were present to a lesser or greater degree with every playlist or CD I listened to. The petite pieces of wire had an extraordinary effect that was disproportionate to their size or cost.

As I conclude my observations of the Nordost Norse Series bi-wire jumpers in the context of my system, I firmly believe they belong in the category of a component upgrade rather than a fine tune or tweak. Installing the jumpers alone peeled away a layer of cellophane that spanned across the plane of the speakers. Music sounded more transparent and focused. By these merits alone, the Norse series were clearly superior to my home made jumpers. For reasons I cannot technically explain, my Marten Miles responded marvelously to diagonal bi-wiring. Perhaps their two and a half way crossover design is ideal for the benefits of diagonal bi-wiring. Whatever the reason, music opened up like an exploded view of an object. I could now "see" all the hidden elements that contributed to my favorite recordings. Most of all, I felt very happy listening playlist and CD's often nodding my head and smiling over some newly discovered detail in the recording or performance. That is the essence of this hobby. Therefore, Nordost's Norse Series bi-wire jumpers receive my most enthusiastic recommendation. **Victor Chavira**

Norse Series bi-wire jumpers

Retail: \$150 a set

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web address: <http://www.nordost.com>

