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Subject: 4 Pi - any "doping" suggestions to make the JBL look nicer?

Posted by [repeatafterme](#) on Sun, 12 Jun 2022 23:55:30 GMT

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Hi,

I just finished a pair of 4 Pi's. Thanks, Wayne. They sound great.

I bought a used pair of the JBLs and, while they sound good, they look terrible. Kind of a rat-like color that does not impress SWMBO. I'm looking for suggestions to make them look darker and less rat-like. I've heard one guy suggests using MinWax wood hardener for this purpose, and to make them last longer. I've also seen people who have used hair spray, diluted varnish, contact cement, all sorts of stuff.

Any ideas appreciated.

Alan

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#### File Attachments

1) [719384F4-18E9-4149-AC51-220183E92C07.jpeg](#), downloaded 594 times

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Subject: Re: 4 Pi - any "doping" suggestions to make the JBL look nicer?

Posted by [Barryso](#) on Mon, 13 Jun 2022 12:12:43 GMT

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Those are beautiful cabinets. Your workmanship is wonderful.

Grill cloth would be a cheap solution. Just pull them off when doing serious listening.

Wayne might know how to treat the woofer cones ... I don't. I'd be scared to do some sort of damage.

In a totally unrelated issue what is on the port? Is that a small bit of fabric or is the port full of foam?

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Subject: Re: 4 Pi - any "doping" suggestions to make the JBL look nicer?

Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Mon, 13 Jun 2022 15:45:04 GMT

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Yeah, Barry's right, I'm concerned about treatments on the cone. These 15-inchers used as midrange need very specific cone damping and the shape of the cone, ribs and the material used

all play a big part in its behavior above 600Hz or so.

What I've seen in genuine JBL cones is they are uniformly gray with a slightly darker voice coil dust cap. They keep that shade of gray indefinitely when used indoors. But when they are exposed to sunlight, they tend to lighten and sometimes not uniformly. Not sure what causes the non-uniformity - whether it be from intermittent partial shading, from changing humidity or just that the pigment shading doesn't fade uniformly. I don't know what does it, but I've seen it happen - pretty regularly - on speakers used for prosound applications where they travel.

Sadly, the only thing I can really recommend is a recone. It costs a couple hundred bucks to recone a 2226H with genuine JBL cones. That's a lot to pay for aesthetics, but it does have the additional benefit of ensuring the speakers are 100% good as new. But really, your speakers appear to be uniformly gray so I'm not sure that's even going to satisfy. I think you just would prefer a darker cone. And that's not how JBL speakers look - they're gray.

So I think probably the grille solution Barry suggested might make the most sense. Certainly the pocketbook likes it better.

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Subject: Re: 4 Pi - any "doping" suggestions to make the JBL look nicer?

Posted by [grindstone](#) on Mon, 13 Jun 2022 19:46:17 GMT

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It's a Feature, man! Take your pic by that thing :) Find a brand your wife loves and say it's the same as that logo--it announces to the world that you are people of refinement who chose not to settle.

Seriously, I know this is outside the box, but I wonder if anybody ever asked JBL?

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Subject: Re: 4 Pi - any "doping" suggestions to make the JBL look nicer?

Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Mon, 13 Jun 2022 22:22:48 GMT

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The problem is - if you think about it - it's a loaded question. Consider the question, "What product(s) can we apply to change the color of the cone without changing its characteristics?" We would be asking the manufacturer to recommend a modification that they cannot control.

The best they could do would be to offer a qualified "maybe," and I doubt they would even do that. Their response would probably be something more like "that will violate the warranty and may adversely affect performance." I would be fairly uncomfortable even asking them.

I do know a JBL tech that sometimes suggests (fairly trivial) modifications - where appropriate to solve a particular problem - saying they do not affect the sound. They're things like removing protective meshes, decorative gaskets and magnet covers and other things like that. The most

"invasive" one that actually works without ill-effects is a dust cap change.

I can confirm that this one specific third-party dust cap can be used as a replacement for the cap in the genuine JBL 2226 recone kit. It does not adversely affect performance - I've measured it. But I haven't found any other mods or aftermarket parts that I trust, and I've seen several.

So in most cases, I do not recommend mods or third-party parts. I've seen too many response charts from drivers with third-party cones that looked horrible. Nasty jagged response or nose-dive above 600Hz. But that one particular case - the substitute dust cap - doesn't cause any harm.

I would expect that JBL engineers would not condone the third-party dust cap replacement though. They would not trust that the non-JBL dust cap would act the same as the one they provide. They would rightly suggest staying with genuine JBL parts to maintain the performance and integrity of their design.

Likewise, I wouldn't expect JBL to condone any sort of doping be applied to the cone. That's pretty likely to change its characteristics. The materials used - and their consistency and thickness of application - would almost certainly be factors, and what we're considering here is something done in the field by some sort of hand-applied process. So I think probably this isn't something we can expect the manufacturer to advise.

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Subject: Re: 4 Pi - any "doping" suggestions to make the JBL look nicer?  
Posted by [repeatafterme](#) on Sun, 19 Jun 2022 03:00:21 GMT

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Thanks, Wayne. I came up with a novel, but vintage solution that I hope you will approve of. I'll post it soon.

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Subject: Re: 4 Pi - any "doping" suggestions to make the JBL look nicer?  
Posted by [repeatafterme](#) on Sat, 25 Jun 2022 02:36:19 GMT

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Well, here is my solution. These are replicas of the old Altec Valencia grills, often seen on the Heathkit versions. They were created by Stephen Merryweather. He has some in stock if anybody else likes this sort of vintage look. I don't know whether they affect the sound, but upon first few listenings, I can't hear any differences. That may change as I get used to these speakers and more picky. If that happens, then I still have the rat color problem.

## File Attachments

1) [4 Pi finished valencia at SM.jpeg](#), downloaded 525 times

Subject: Re: 4 Pi - any "doping" suggestions to make the JBL look nicer?

Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Sat, 25 Jun 2022 14:19:22 GMT

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I do love that style! Looks like the 1960s, sounds like the 2020s! Gotta love it!

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Subject: Re: 4 Pi - any "doping" suggestions to make the JBL look nicer?

Posted by [ppkstat](#) on Sun, 26 Jun 2022 10:36:34 GMT

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I am sure these JBLs are excellent drivers but they look absolutely atrocious. This was one of the reasons I chose to build a 3 instead of a 4pi.

Funny thing is that gray in general is a nice, neutral color that is very easy to match to the surroundings. How they managed to make the driver to look like a dirty rat is hard to understand, it takes talent. The black coloured glue for the dust cap and tinsel wires doesn't help a lot either. I do get that these are PA drivers that weren't meant to be mounted behind grills but still.

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Subject: Re: 4 Pi - any "doping" suggestions to make the JBL look nicer?

Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Sun, 26 Jun 2022 14:24:33 GMT

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I guess I'm the odd man out here but I love the color of the JBL 2226 cone. I just love the looks of that speaker.

I'm used to gray cones - seems like most drivers are gray - and black is kind of a new thing to me, starting with fabric dome tweeters, then on subs with hard weighted cones. I do remember some paper cones in the 1970s that were died black or very dark gray, but most were gray in my recollection.

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