

Black and Blue

Tony Bolton finds that computer-based music need not be a bruising experience when he listens to two USB cables from Tellurium Q.

Although I use vinyl as my main music source I also have a reasonably large collection of music stored on my computer. Normally I play this via a USB lead connected to the Teddy Pardo Teddy DAC (see Hi-Fi World Sept and Oct 2011) which upsamples S/PDIF signals to 24/192kHz but runs at 48kHz sampling rate for USB input signals.

I have already discovered that different USB leads, even budget ones, offer different tonal takes on the sound. So I was curious to try two leads from Tellurium Q from the opposite price points of their range of cables.

I am unable to tell you much about the materials used or the construction of the cables since Tellurium Q are very tight-lipped about such things, not wishing to make their understanding of the technology public.

So all I can say is that the cheaper lead is covered in a blue dielectric while the stiffer Black Diamond cable has a woven material covering it. There are differences between the plugs, the latter feeling a bit more substantial.

One thing that I do know about Tellurium Q leads is that they take a very, very long time to run in. At the time of writing this, each lead has over 150 hours usage and I am still noticing subtle improvements in the detailing and shape of sounds, although most of the major changes took place within

the first 50 hours of use.

Comparing the Blue lead with the best cables that I have in the house was an eye-opener. I found that I was getting a smoother and more detailed treble response, a

“the speed of the attack of notes at all points of the frequency range was superb”



very fast delivery of the bass and an open soundstage that displayed a certain amount of depth that I am not used to hearing from a USB connected source.

The smoothness of the treble was tested when playing some of the less well presented recordings available on youtube.com. Music that had been nearly reduced to a raucous noise with ordinary USB leads, became somewhat disentangled and listenable to.

Playing the same pieces through the Black Diamond lead produced a sound that surprised me. There was really deep bass, a mid band with enough projection to display singers somewhat forward of the mass of instruments, with a treble sound that was grain free and that seemed to reach stratospherically high.

The speed of the attack of notes at all points of the frequency range was superb. Drums in particular had a solidity to the sound that was quite impactful, and which travelled through the granite slabs that my speakers sit on, and then through the floorboards towards me. This is something that I have never experienced from laptop sourced music before.

Neither of these cables are cheap, but they do offer performance that is commensurate with their pricing.

The Blue offers particularly good sound-per-pound, but if you want the ultimate in performance then it is worth spending the extra cash for the Black Diamond.

It is simply the best USB cable that I have ever heard.

HI-FI WORLD

BLUE USB £186.00



OUTSTANDING - amongst the best

VALUE - keenly priced

VERDICT

A detailed and nicely timed sound that opens up computer audio.

FOR

- detailed soundstage
- smooth treble
- fast bass

AGAINST

- nothing at the price

BLACK DIAMOND USB £660



OUTSTANDING - amongst the best

VERDICT

An expensive lead that offers a full-bodied sound with a snap to the beat, excellent mid-band projection and a deliciously smooth top end.

FOR

- wide perceived bandwidth
- fast attack to notes
- open soundstage
- mid-band definition

AGAINST

- price

Tellurium Q
+44 (0) 1458 251997
www.telluriumq.com