



Tellurium Q Black Waveform HF & Black Diamond Waveform HF

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Even as I sit down to write this piece I can hear in my head the tooth-grinding in the 'cables-don't make a difference' faction of the audiophile community. My advice is simple – life is short, so if this does not interest you move on to the next article. If you are still here, I shall assume that you are sufficiently open-minded to discover what my experience has been in this set of listening tests. Please remember that my reviews are subjective and based on what I hear in my own non-specialist listening room – I have no way to measure what I am hearing.

In the controversial world of cables, those used for the transmission of digital signals are particularly problematic. After all, how can a relatively short length of copper or silver have any impact on how something sounds to us? It's only passing a series of zeroes and ones from one RCA socket to another isn't it? Well the answer to that is not quite as obvious as it may seem. Timing is everything in life, of course, but in music it is especially critically. If a system doesn't 'time' well, the music loses coherence and our attention wanders. Digital clock modules are sold, sometimes for eye-watering sums, because digital engineers know that timing is at the heart of what they wish to achieve. Will a cable replace such a clock? No. But if it can deliver the digital stream from the source to the DAC with the minimum of noise and distortion then the DAC has less work to do before passing the signal to the amplifier which has to be a good thing.

I have in my system a Lyngdorf CD2 player and a Lyngdorf TDAI amplifier, and as reported in these pages I enjoy a very positive experience with that combination, especially when I switched from the analogue outputs on the CD2 to its coaxial digital output. I finished by alluding to the fact that after the initial listening, all done using a modest cable, there would be a second phase of listening using 'better' interconnects, to be reported on another day. That day has come.

I spoke to Geoff Merrigan, the owner of Tellurium Q and asked if I could borrow one of their DRCA (Digital RCA) cables to find out if I could actually hear a difference between digital cables. Geoff suggested that he send two cables from his range, and in due course I received a Black Waveform HF and a Black Diamond Waveform HF cable from him. To put this into some context, the Chinese made cable I had been using cost less than £100, while the two Tellurium Q ones retail in the UK for around £400 and £900 respectively.

For a company that seemed to arrive fully-formed in 2010, Tellurium Q has successfully carved out a reputation for building high quality cables for all audio requirements using a very easy to follow three range model, Blue, Black and Silver. The two DRCA cables here are, as their name suggests, from the middle group, whose mission statement, according to the company is to offer 'smooth, fine detailed and great resolution while actually reducing apparent harshness. Music is presented as a coherent, organic whole, with a jaw-dropping sense of realism and naturalness'. It was going to be an interesting exercise to see if in my system those lofty ideals could be met.



Sound quality

Starting out with my original cable, I played the same music to which I had referred in my original review. I now had a baseline sound in my head and switched in the Black DRCA and played half a dozen tracks from the same pile of albums. Hmm, that was very interesting. The sense of realism, of immediacy, was increased, and not in a subtle way, there was definitely more micro detail coming through, for example handclaps, perhaps a rhythm guitar part or a second voice, which had not been readily apparent on the first listen. The music seemed to come from a darker, more silent space. Whatever it was, after a day of listening I realised that I was now enjoying everything I played more than I had the first time. Bear in mind that I had been more than happy the first time, so this was a definite 'upgrade', as it were.





The next day, I repeated the same sequence, but this time with the Black Diamond Waveform HF carrying the zeroes and ones from the player to the amplifier. I was only on my second coffee of the day so thought I would start with some jazz, and loaded *Time Out* into the CD player. I retired to my listening chair and pressed play. As Blue Rondo a la Turk started, any sleepiness in me instantly evaporated, Brubeck and the other musicians were right there in front of me. Any sense of 'digital' was gone – this was pure music, flowing effortlessly and with terrific realism, from a 'lowly' 16/44.1 CD no less. The double bass was almost holographic – the wooden body palpable in its immediacy.

I played through the same pile of albums as before, but instead of picking individual tracks I played the whole album, totally engrossed in the music. It was my most satisfying session with the Lyngdorf pair since they had arrived in my system. For somebody who has always maintained that his preferred way of listening to music is through a vinyl replay system, here was the startling realisation that digital can be every bit as enthralling. Indeed, I would say that my listening is now split about 50/50 between vinyl and CD, which is not something I ever thought would happen.

After several days with the Black Diamond in place I switched back to the Black cable. It was good, but the Black Diamond was just so much better at stepping aside and leaving me with just the music. Is it £500 better? That is a tricky one but I am afraid I have to say that I would definitely pay the extra for the increase in musical pleasure which I get from it. The lower noise floor, the increased detail, the added sense of realism and the extra musicality would sway me, in a system where CD replay was still an important source of music, as ironically, it has once again become in mine. If you baulk at spending that amount though, the Black is still an excellent cable.

As always, I urge potential purchasers to find a friendly dealer and go and listen for yourself. Your system will be different from mine, so make sure it works in yours. Choose the cable that you can afford and that sounds 'right' to you. You probably spent a while deciding on your loudspeaker cable, and your analogue interconnects if you use them. Take it from me, your digital cable choice will have just as big an impact on the pleasure you get from your system. I wonder if Geoff will notice if I take my time in returning his cable? Meanwhile, enjoy the music and stay safe.