



Tellurium Q Black II XLR

It is pretty clear the Tellurium Q Black II XLR cable is a really impressive addition to this particular HiFi system that is absolutely singing...

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TELLURIUM Q BLACK II XLR

by Simon Wilce, Reviewer

In Formula 1 it is thousandths of a second, in cricket, it can be millimetres and in rugby it is kilograms. In HiFi, the difference is more often than not cables. And then there are cables, and there are cables.

Design

Any HiFi systems consist of interconnections, or cables, between the elements and we know that cables can act as electronic filters affecting output like tone controls on an amplifier, for example. The key to a decent system is to minimise these filters affecting performance.



Design - cont

Tellurium Q seems to understand this idea better than most and they are clear enough in their thinking to offer their cables as a choice between slight warmth to a system (called the Blue Range) and a more revealing and detailed offering (called the Silver range). The middle ground is under review here in the form of the Black range, seeking to offer a natural sound that will 'unlock what a well balanced system can do'. Their range of cables acknowledges the natural limitations of inductance and capacitance as well as the external factors that are imparted on the electronic signal and seek to simplify the customer's choice in cable selection.

Therefore, cleverly I would say, there are no technical specifications on the Tellurium Q website to pull the wool over the eyes of both customers and reviewers. This is brave, there is nothing like telling someone your cable is copper with 6-9s purity at a HiFi show or in a HiFi shop, I am kidding there of course. But I get it, totally. Tellurium Q says on their site and in the literature that, when it comes to cables, it boils down to two key questions, namely:

1. What quality of sound do I want?
2. What level of performance do I want?

Answering these two questions will both point you to the cable you need and the financial outlay that results, this may be where your problems begin.

I, for example, may tend towards a warmer sound over a precise sound as discovered with the Kudos Cardea C10 review just recently. However, with the same speakers, I have found that their clarity in the midrange demands greater accuracy. The Chord Étude appeared to be a willing and perfect partner. A better and cleaner cable will, therefore, facilitate this performance. The Black range would appear to suit my needs well, then.

The Tellurium Q Black XLR and Tellurium Q Black II XLR cables are both priced at £370/m.

Tellurium Q Black XLR is being upgraded to 'II' at no additional cost



Quality

For this review, I have both the Tellurium Q Black and Tellurium Q Black II XLR cables. The Black II is the replacement for the Black. Physically the cables feel quite different, the only similarities seem to be just the length of the collar noting the cable name and the terminals, being the well-known, studio standard Neutrik XLR connector.

The new Black II has a braided cover, possibly reducing physical noise imparted, in place of the rubber cover on the Black version. The Black II cables seem to be more relaxed and flexible.

In conversation with Geoff Merrigan, MD of Tellurium Q, I was advised there is nothing of the Black in the Black II which is pretty surprising if you think the signature of the cable should be an improvement on the previous whilst keeping the cable in the correct relative performance bracket in the Tellurium Q range. If everything is different, this is a remarkable feat. Geoff noted that whilst they do use empirical measurement, much of the development is determined by listening sessions conducted after their research on an array of speakers and amplifiers.

As for what's inside, who knows? I am not about to cut the cable in half with bolt cutters, they are too good for that!

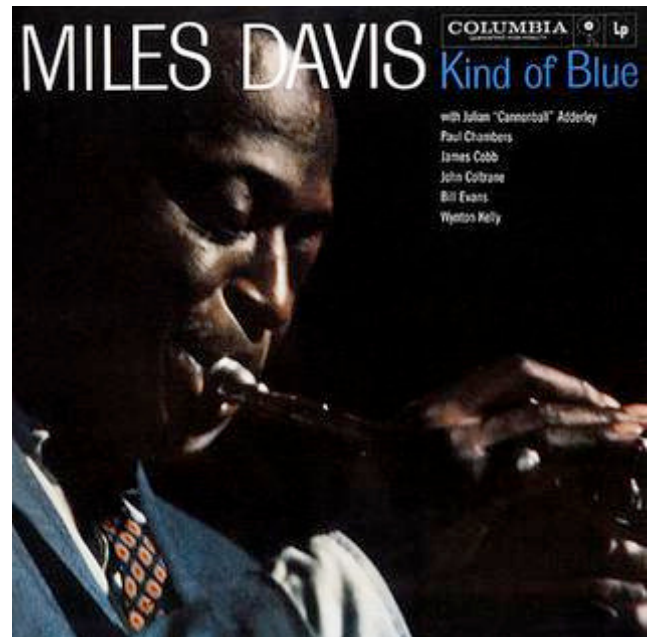


Performance

Set Up

I am testing the Tellurium Q Black II XLR using an Auralic Vega G1 streaming DAC, it has XLR out and is an 'Outstanding' streamer. I am driving a pair of Kudos Cardea C10 standmounted speakers that are proving to be particularly revealing for review purposes. They are being driven by a sparkling 'Editor's Pick' Chord Étude Stereo Power Amplifier, so the XLRs are between the amplifier and the streamer. I am comparing the Tellurium Q Black II XLR to the old Black and I am replacing a pair of QED Reference 40 XLRs. I am also using an Oppo BDP 105 as a CD player that also has XLR output.

Cable reviewing is always a tricky business but really it should be so simple if you are methodical. First, get yourself a revealing system (check), second, understand it (check), then, pick a selection of varied tracks for analysis (check), and then swap the cables in and out as required and make notes.



Listen to A Kind of Blue to find space between the instruments

Track Selection

With my set up is as above, my selected tracks are as follows Artist (Album) track, for the following reasons:

1. Miles Davis (Kind of Blue) So What (Qobuz, 24bit/96kHz); to find the space between the instruments, reveal width in the soundstage, and the cymbal at 1'35", sax entry at 3'29".
2. Miles Kane (Don't Forget Who You Are) Don't Forget Who You Are (Qobuz, 16bit/44.1kHz); listening for pace, bounce and rhythm
3. Malcolm McLaren and The Bootzilla Orchestra (Waltz Darling) House of the Blue Danube; orchestration, and rhythm
4. Peter Gabriel (So) Sledgehammer (Qobuz, 24bit/96kHz); drum attack intro
5. Billie Eilish & Rosalia Lo Vas A Olividar (Qobuz, 24bit/96kHz); resolution, low end
6. Hans Zimmer (Blade Runner 2049 soundtrack) 2049 (Qobuz, 16bit/44.1kHz); scale, low end
7. Weeknd with Ariana Grande Save Your Tears (Remix) (Qobuz, 16bit/44.1kHz); for the fun of it.

Sound Quality

QED Reference 40 XLR cable

The QED Reference 40 XLR cables are priced at around £130/m, around a third the price of the Black II and these QED cables are a good three years old, plus a bit. The cables are fine but really it is not until you try the real thing that you get what is going on here. I thought I was going to swap the three cables in and out per track, but it was fairly clear the Black and Black II were the best place to be and I could save myself a lot of time dropping the QED cables.

Tellurium Q Black XLR v Tellurium Q Black II XLR

The Black is a lovely cable, with bags more capacity to deliver the signal to the power amplifier. I have a very simple system here with not much going on (conditioned power supply, streaming DAC with preamplification, XLR cable, power amplifier, speaker cable, speaker) so the introduction of the Black has improved the system very clearly.

The clearest example is listening to the opening track 2049, from the Blade Runner 2049 film. With the Black the scale and depth in the soundstage are vastly improved, with the Black II this improvement is taken a natural step forward, though not in the same significant way, I could feel the added depth in the soundstage as the track evolves.

The Black offers excellent openness in Miles Davis' So What and the space between the instruments is widened with the Black II; the Chord Étude has the capability of translating this subtle improvement with the weight of its 70+ Watts per channel into an excellent midrange presentation by the Kudos Cardea C10s. I must say, I get similar results using the CD player as well which serves to reinforce my thinking.

The Black II is an improvement on the Black, but it is not night and day in my view. Nor should it be to fit in the well thought out range. I found the speed and sharpness of the Black II to be more noticeable on tracks like Miles Kane's fabulously bouncy Don't Forget Who You Are and the snappy snare at the beginning is pure musical joy. The same attack is revealed with Peter Gabriel's Sledgehammer.

I did not particularly find any improved resolution in the Tellurium Q Black II XLR over the Black (both are sparkling!) particularly in tracks like Billie Eilish & Rosalia's Lo Vas A Olvidar despite its higher bit rate but then again, the improvement and more natural vocal over that I had before was enough. Billie Eilish's vocal is such a revelation, no wonder everyone is falling over themselves to hear her sing.

“

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Overall

It is pretty clear the Tellurium Q Black II XLR cable is a really impressive addition to this particular HiFi system that is absolutely singing at the moment and as a mid priced XLR interconnect it should be on your radar as a minimum. It should at least be on your audition list if nothing else than to calibrate your thinking on Tellurium Q. As a HiFi enthusiast with no knowledge of Tellurium Q products before now, it has certainly changed my thinking. It will change yours too.

Love

Build Quality
Width offered by the Black II



Like

Added scale and depth
Low end revealed
XLR cables as a rule
Natural Sound

Wish

I'd heard Tellurium Q before