

Shunyata Research Delta NR-V2

Mains Cable

by: Chris Kelly



Regular readers of The Ear may remember that last year I gave a glowing review to the Shunyata Venom UK6 mains block and the Venom V12 and V10 NR mains cables, I have yet to hear anything at their price point which comes close to the performance offered. So when the good folk at Shunyata UK asked if I would like to compare the brand new Delta NR-V2 against its predecessor in the Delta range, it would have been odd if I had not agreed. In due course my friendly DHL driver was ringing the doorbell and, having socially-distanced himself, pointed to the box that he had left on the doorstep. In these strange times I brought it indoors and wiped it thoroughly with an antibacterial cloth, opened the box and did the same thing to the contents, which was a pair of Shunyata's round cable cases. I am not sure this ritual serves any real purpose but it has become standard procedure here. Wiping down the weekly grocery delivery takes ages, but I digress.

Visually the differences between the V1 and the V2 versions of these standard 1.75m length cables are not huge. A weighty cylindrical UK mains plug is attached at 180 degrees

to a substantial cable sheathed in a semi-matte material, while at the far end a similarly impressive IEC plug is ready to meet whatever receptor awaits it. Around the barrel of the V2 IEC connector is a red band, which proclaims that this indeed the V2 version. The whole thing looks menacingly purposeful, with no unnecessary bling factor, but there is a definite feeling of meticulous engineering and quality to it.

Set up

Listening to mains cables is always interesting because in some ways it is what we cannot hear that matters more than what we can. My reviewing regime for these two Shunyata Delta examples involved trying them both sequentially in my main amplifier, a Lyngdorf TDAI 3400, a Lyngdorf CD2 player, a Gold Note PH10 phono stage power supply and a Linn Lingo4 turntable power supply. I have a four socket mains outlet on the wall (thank you Barratt Homes) but I have no dedicated mains spur or other audiophile tweaks, with the multiway for my AV components using one wall outlet and the aforementioned Venom UK6 mains block another, there are two wall sockets available for plugging in individual components. I tried both of the Delta cables through both the mains block and direct into the wall.



In order to try and get fair comparisons, I tried to use the same music across the three different sources. I have a Naim UnitiServe that I use to stream WAV rips of CDs in my collection, and selected albums for which I also have a copy on vinyl. As an aside, this exercise also reminded me how much I have spent on the same pieces of music over the years. For instance I have several CD versions of Love's magnificent Forever Changes, a Mobile Fidelity SACD version, a Mobile Fidelity 45 rpm vinyl pressing as well as four different 33.3rpm pressings. The same is true of Pink Floyd's Wish You Were Here and Dark Side of the Moon, without the 45rpm versions (though if they were released my compulsion would be to buy them).

Sound quality

But back to the listening tests. I started with the V1 version plugged into the wall and then into the Lyngdorf, and streamed from the UnitiServe. I played the three albums already mentioned and several other pieces of rock, blues, jazz and classical. Compared with the cable which it had replaced, a Shunyata Venom NR, I thought the Delta V1 imparted even less background noise (which was hardly intrusive in the first place) and seemed to give the performances a slight but perceptible increase in clarity, and in the separation of instruments and voices. Micro details were easier to hear. I should say at this point that Lyngdorf claim that their power scheme inside the 3400 makes cable choice irrelevant, but I definitely heard these differences, subtle though they may have been. Switching to the V2 cable and running through the same playlist as before, I heard another, more perceptible, increase in all those things that I had remarked on in the first session. I then repeated the whole exercise, with the cables now coming from the mains block. I thought this was not quite as good but still better than with the Venom NR.

Next, I switched to physical media, first with little silver discs and then with the black plastic 12 inch ones. Now this was where things really got interesting. Playing the same repertoire, in the Lyngdorf CD2 the differences between the new and old version of the Delta cable were even clearer, with the music taking on what felt like extra dynamic energy with the Delta NR-V2. The improvement was easily audible and again, the best results came from the wall socket and not the mains block. I should say here that the CD2, playing through its stablemate amplifier, has rekindled my enjoyment of CD replay, and the Delta NR-V2 in particular simply increased my listening pleasure.



In the Linn power supply I found it hard to hear very much difference at all between any of the cables, so I did not linger in that phase of the listening experiment, but I might revisit it again at some stage. However, it transpired that I had saved the best for last. Listening to

vinyl via the excellent Gold Note PH10/PSU combination, the performance improvement between the Delta versions sounded like a significant cartridge upgrade. Deeper bass, more sparkling high frequencies and a palpable increase in the realism of vocals had me reaching for one record after another – by the time my wife got home that evening the lounge floor was covered in records. Female vocals in particular seemed to gain an extra degree of credibility and the sound stage on recordings like Lyn Stanley's Interludes was amazing.

So what do I take away from these weeks of plugging and unplugging the Shunyata cables? First, they are built to last. Most people will install a cable and rarely move it thereafter, but I was switching these in and out a great deal but they still feel absolutely as they did when they arrived. Second, when Caelin Gabriel, the head honcho at Shunyata Research, releases an update to a cable it is not to fulfil the pipe dream of some marketeer it is because he is committed to genuinely improving a design. Third, that at about £1,000 the Delta NR-V2 represents exceptional value for money. £1,000. Value for money. For a kettle lead? Well yes. If you use a traditional analogue amplifier, or any source component, installing one of these might just allow you to postpone that upgrade that's been keeping you awake at night – we all know that feeling. This is not a cure for upgraditis, but it might just take away the craving. Fourth, I seemed to get consistently preferable results with the cables in the wall and not in the mains block, although the latter is necessary and certainly does not in any way detract from my musical enjoyment.

This is not my first mains cable rodeo, and I know from feedback I have had from readers before that some of you think this is right up there on the same shelf as snake oil, all I can suggest is that you find a good dealer and discuss it. They may be able to offer you a home demonstration. They should certainly be able to let you hear this stuff in their own demonstration room. Either way, let your ears (and your wallet) guide you.