



Shunyata Research Venom NR-V10, NR-V12, UK6

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power cables and distribution block

A good friend of mine manages a high end audio shop in Central London, and we often chat about system tweaks and other audio trivia. For quite a while now he has been urging me to try Shunyata Research mains cables. He powers his own system (which is worth about the same as my house at retail) using a Shunyata Denali mains block and Shunyata cables, and it does indeed sound amazing – as it should. However, that level of investment is frankly beyond my means, so I have been using alternative products from another very well regarded American vendor, and I have been very happy with the results. Definitely sonic improvements over what I had before, which is the only point of tweaking anything.

If you are of the “mains cables cannot possibly make a difference” school of thought, then we must simply respect each other’s point of view and move on. All I am reporting here is my own first hand experience, based purely on what I hear. I do not have the skills or equipment to attempt to measure this hardware. However, I do suggest that you take a few minutes to visit the Shunyata website where the company’s founder, Caelin Gabriel,

explains in a written article and on a video, the philosophy and science behind the Shunyata designs.



Fast forward to this summer (if you can remember that far back) and another friend put me in touch with Guillaume Boyer who distributes Shunyata in the UK, and who kindly arranged for me to receive two cables in the new Venom NR series, a NR-V10 and a NR-V12, the number denoting suggested use. The heavier gauge 10 is recommended for amplifiers and the 12 for sources and other peripheral equipment. He also undertook to get me a Venom UK6 mains block and at least two more Venom NR-V12 cables.

At the time of the arrival of the first two cables, I had replaced (temporarily!) my own Yamaha A-S3000 integrated amplifier with a Naim Supernait 3 which comes with its own branded mains lead. As luck would have it, my aforementioned friend came down for a visit so we plugged in the Venom NR-V10 in place of the supplied lead, having listened to an album we both know well first. It was one of those moments – we just looked at each other and laughed. What had been a really good sound suddenly became even better, and not in a subtle way. Bass became better defined and subjectively deeper, and tiny details which had previously gone unnoticed became audible and added to the musical story. The amplifier, which already had demonstrated terrific grip on the loudspeakers, seemed to gain even more rhythmic urgency. I don't mean the music speeded up, just that the drive and

energy seemed better defined. What had intended to be a quick swap turned into a two hour trawl through my record collection.



After about the first half hour, I swapped the IEC lead in my Gold Note PH10 phono stage's power supply for the Shunyata Venom NR-V12. Another very audible improvement was immediately apparent. At this point, both cables were plugged directly into wall sockets, and that was how we listened all that morning and again after lunch. The odd thing is that before introducing the Shunyata cables I had been really enjoying the listening experience, but when I then reverted back to the original configuration after some hours, everything sounded a bit flat, a bit less three dimensional and a bit less engaging. My friend then left to return home and I continued with my day to day listening. Whenever I replaced the two Shunyata cables and reverted to what had been there before I experienced the same sense of disappointment, the same sense that something had gone missing. So in the end I just left them in place and pressed on with my reviewing and listening.

The remedy

A couple of weeks later the distributor called to say that the Venom UK6 block and additional cables were on their way to me and the next day they duly arrived at Kelly Towers. Intriguingly, the Venom UK6 ships with four plastic feet as standard, but four stainless steel feet are available as an option and were included with the review sample. I

used it with the supplied plastic feet initially, standing on a pair of the polished granite worktop savers that I use for such things. I plugged the UK6 into the wall socket, moved the two existing Venom NRs from the wall sockets to the UK6 block and plugged the two additional Venom NR-V12 cables into my other sources, a Yamaha CD-S3000 and a Naim streamer. They too were in the Venom UK6.

When the time came for the Supernait to be boxed up and returned home, I lifted my Yamaha back onto the rack, and plugged in the Venom NR-V10. Despite having been powered off for several weeks I could immediately hear those same things I noticed with the Naim – more powerful bass and a slightly fuller sound. As the electronics warmed up to their normal state, the benefits of the Shunyata mains products remained very clear. The Yamaha has a rich sonic signature – it is not a pace, rhythm and timing fiend but nor is it languorous or lazy, which is why I like it. The Shunyata simply improved the its already excellent sound.



It was also clear that each of my source devices were benefitting from their new mains leads. As with the phono stage, I was hearing small details which had previously not been apparent. I think when we talk about the “noise floor” that is what we are trying to describe – the ability to hear things in a recording which had previously been masked. I then unscrewed the supplied plastic feet in the UK6 and fitted the four heavy stainless steel

ones instead. The sound improved a little again, gaining a modicum of extra weight and solidity. This is not a dramatic upgrade but it does make me wonder why Shunyata do not fit the stainless steel feet as standard and be done with it.

The Venom NR cables are pretty chunky, as you will see from the pictures. However, they are rather more pliable than the three-stranded ones which they replaced and are definitely less springy, so less prone to pushing lighter components around! The mains plugs are of the 180 degree type, so the cables rise vertically from the mains block. The IEC connectors click in to their receiving sockets with a positive action, which I like.

In summary

So how can I best summarise my experience with these Shunyata 'entry level' products? First of all, I shall really miss them when they go! What preceded them in my system were themselves a significant improvement on what had been there before, but the Shunyata products lifted my system's performance to a new level. How can the last metre or so of cable make such a difference to power that has travelled who knows how far before it arrives at my house and then comes through the consumer unit and onto the 13 amp socket circuit? I really don't know, but my ears tell me, and the ears of others confirm, that there is a very audible sonic gain to be had. If like me you have a system which you have worked hard to assemble and which you want to sound as good as it possibly can, then why not talk to your nearest Shunyata dealer about trying these things at home? My suspicion is that they won't get sent back.

SPECIFICATIONS:

Venom NR-V12/V10

Type: UK 13A to IEC mains cable

Length: 1.75m or custom

IEC terminator options: C15, C19

Gauge: NR-V12 – 12 gauge, NR-V10 – 10 gauge

Conductor material: OFE copper

Dielectric: fluorocarbon

Venom UK6

Type: AC mains power distributor

Outlets: Six outlet 13A UK

Dimensions (H x W x D): 125 x 520 x 90mm

Weight: 3.4kg