

Aqua duct

The Clarus Aqua cable is complex but meaningful, says Tony Bolton

A couple of months ago I reviewed the Clarus Crimson interconnect and speaker cable (see Soundbltes August 2012) and found them to have a very open and detailed sound. They have a more affordable sibling, the Aqua series under review here.

The same technologies which are subject to five patents acquired over eight years of research, are applied to both ranges of cables. This is based around research carried out by company CEO, Jay Victor, who believes that different frequencies require different cable topologies to transmit them effectively. To this end a single large gauge conductor is used to cover the bass frequencies. The midrange signal is carried along a flat ribbon cable and the treble uses what is described as a "spiral ribbon conductor". This consists of thin foil strips of high grade OFC copper which are wrapped around a core of polyethylene strands. These are then covered by a layer of polyethylene insulation to prevent strand interaction. Each of the different types of cable are also insulated from each other. The speaker cable has terminal blocks at each end where the combination of cables are gathered together before being terminated in the company's own design of plugs. The difference between the two ranges is down to conductor gauge and the degree of silver plating involved.

Like their more

expensive counterparts, these cables are quite stiff so careful routing is required to avoid tight bends. Smaller components and speakers may need securing to their stands or shelves to avoid them being moved by the weight of these cables.

After 48 hours of running in using the Blue Horizon Cable Burn-In Accelerator I installed the interconnect between my Leema Agena phono stage and Tucana II amplifier, with the speaker cables running from the Tucana II to my Chario Ursa Major loudspeakers.

The first record on was Gershwin playing 'Rhapsody in Blue'. This was recorded onto a piano roll by the composer in 1925, and in 1976 the roll was then replayed accompanied by a modern band for this recording. By the '20s, the better quality piano rolls included intonation in the recording so they actually contain the personal interpretation of the performance. For this recording a Duo-Art piano grand was used, with the orchestration following Gershwin's original score for a jazz band accompaniment, rather than the full orchestra we are familiar with today.

The opening clarinet glissando, followed by the first piano chords came out of the Chario's with the energy and speed of an express train and led into quite a vivid and exciting rendition of the record. I enjoyed the wide open sound which gave me a panoramic window through which to view the performance.

The dynamic range of the recording was well described although it did not have quite as much depth and detail as it did when played

through the more expensive Crimson loom.

For a contrast I then put on 'Columbia King's LP Tapestry'. With over 25,000,000



world wide sales I am sure it needs no introduction from me.

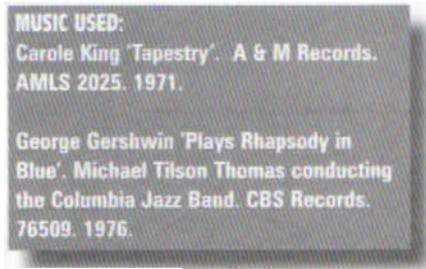
Suffice to say the natural artifice of

her voice shone through, sounding raw and fresh, with the instrumental accompaniment placed all around it on a very well lit soundscape that was moderately wide and quite deep.

The only drawback that I found was the condition of the record (I would describe it as VG+) was also displayed in the same unrelenting detail. The wide bandwidth and explicit nature of these cables can make them a bit of a double edged sword.

They are very good, but will not suit every system or source. They require exemplary behaviour from all parts of the audio chain, otherwise you will be left in little doubt about where the shortcomings lie. As I said in the Crimson review, I would hesitate to plug these into equipment that already has a forward nature. Valve amps of good breeding would be suitable companions, or well designed solid state equipment. If they are partnering a turntable then Ortofon cartridges would be a better combination than Lyras, the latter being a little too explicit in the higher frequencies for a really comfortable listen in this environment.

A very good loom, but partner with great care.



MUSIC USED:
Carole King 'Tapestry'. A & M Records. AMLS 2025. 1971.

George Gershwin 'Plays Rhapsody in Blue'. Michael Tilson Thomas conducting the Columbia Jazz Band. CBS Records. 76509. 1976.

VERDICT eeee

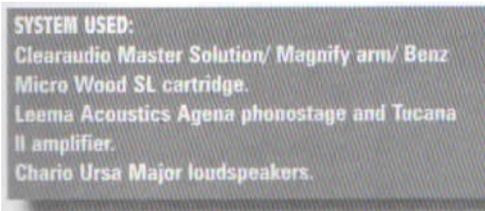
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- FOR
- extremely open sound
 - spacious soundstage
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- AGAINST
- could be too graphic for some systems
 - very stiff



SYSTEM USED:
Clearaudio Master Solution/ Magnify arm/ Benz Micro Wood SL cartridge.
Leema Acoustics Agena phono stage and Tucana II amplifier.
Chario Ursa Major loudspeakers.

