

Shunyata Research Hydra Delta D6, Delta XC & Delta v2-NR Power Distributor & Cables



If you have been reading The Ear for a while you may recall that back in October 2019 I submitted a review of the the Shunyata Research Venom UK6 power distribution block and the Venom NR-V10 mains cables. I said at the time that I would be very sad to see them go, and in fact Boyer Audio, the UK distributor of Shunyata Research products, very kindly suggested that I hang on to the review set for a while, an offer which was gratefully accepted. Of course, none of us had an inkling then about what was about to embroil the entire planet, but “a while” turned into the best part of two years, during which time I have been able to enjoy all the benefits of the Shunyata components and to rather take it for granted.

It was therefore with some disappointment that I took a call from Guillaume Boyer asking if I could now please box up and return them, but my selfish reaction was rapidly dealt with by his request that I replace the Venom UK6 with the Hydra Delta D6 and the Venom cables with Delta v2-NR and XC alternatives and review them. In other words, an upgrade. Now that was an offer that I could entertain.

The exchange was done but with timing that meant that I could do a direct comparison Venom versus Delta before the former winged their way back to their rightful owner.

Few topics in audio seem to spark quite such passionate debate as cables, and mains cables in particular. As I said in my original review, I am not here on a mission to convert cable sceptics, nor can I objectively measure the differences between a standard IEC kettle lead and various 'audio grade' offerings. All I can do is report honestly to you what I heard in my system. As our American friends are wont to say, your mileage may vary.



The most immediately obvious difference between the Venom and the Hydra units is that the former looks like a typical multiway mains distribution box, and as such sat in the gap behind the rack of equipment which it was serving. The Hydra on the other hand is intended to be mounted in the rack, and certainly it looks very handsome sitting on the lowest shelf on my Quadraspire XL. The Hydra Delta D6 is the entry point to what Shunyata call their Performance Line, which contains four different models, each with increasing levels of technology within. The construction is appropriately solid for a unit of this price, with a steel and aluminium chassis and a front plate of anodised aluminium. On the right hand side is an on/off rocker switch and below the logo a pair of LEDs which signal the units operational state.

On the back there are 6 UK three pin sockets and an IEC input for the mains. Inside that handsome exterior Shunyata has embedded a whole range of technologies, including some to which the company holds the patents that are designed to get rid of unwanted mechanical, electrical and RFI noise. A full description of all these can be found on the highly informative Shunyata Research website, which is a model of clarity and which explains how these complex technologies work in terms which are accessible to we non-scientists.

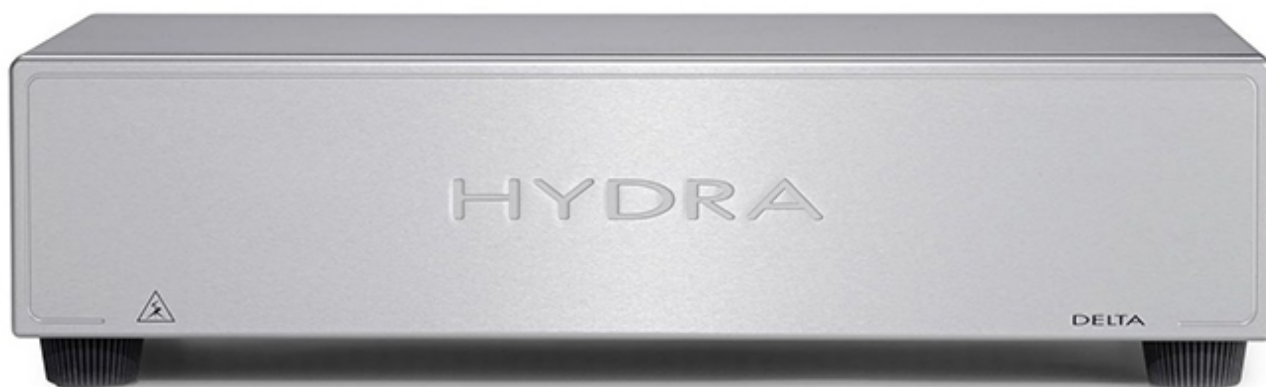
Listening

If you read my original review of the Venom you will learn that I felt that it offered an audible improvement on the mains block and cables which it replaced. However to get an immediate impression of how the Hydra could carry things forward I started by listening to two albums on vinyl and then the same two albums on SACD, first using Venom with Venom NR cables and then the Hydra with Delta XC cables. The amplifier was my Lyngdorf TDAI3400, loudspeaker cables were Audioquest Robin Hood and the interconnects were XLR versions on Audioquest Fire. Sources were my modified Linn Sondek LP12 with the Gold Note PH10 phono stage, and my Yamaha CD-S3000 SACD player. Loudspeakers used for

this part of the review were my own Harbeth C7ES3 XDs. The albums I used were Pink Floyd's Wish You Were Here and Dire Straits' Brothers In Arms, as I have them in both formats.



Through the Venom powered system, I enjoyed the sound to which I have become very accustomed over the past two years and with which I really have found no fault. It is very musical, very strong rhythmically and with a very even handed presentation of the whole frequency spectrum. There were no surprises here obviously.



After changing over to the Hydra and Delta system however (with XC from mains to distributor and v2-NR from distributor to components), and dropping the stylus on to side one of Wish You Were Here I felt as if there was suddenly more of everything. Deeper bass, a wider, taller and almost holographic soundstage, more separation between the instruments without any loss of coherence. The whole effect was as if I had cranked up the volume but I most definitely had not.

Switching then to the digital format, with the Delta cable powering the Yamaha, I was equally enthralled. All those things which had struck me through the vinyl replay were equally evident through the SACD, and if anything were slightly more noticeable. The Yamaha is a fine player but it definitely improved with the power which was being fed to it from the Hydra.

Brothers In Arms was, as most of us are aware, one of the albums which helped to accelerate the uptake of the CD format when it was released, for which some people have never really forgiven it. However, it is still a landmark recording and contains some exceptional music. I compared the Mobile Fidelity 45 rpm vinyl with the same company's SACD version and the differences were very small. While they both sounded excellent through the less expensive Shunyata mains system, switching in the Hydra and Delta units lifted things to a new level. I am not one of those 'detail is everything' people for me it is more about the emotional impact of the music. But here's the thing, through the Hydra I was hearing more detail and getting more emotional impact.

After that comparative listening I was able to box up and return the Venom units, secure in the knowledge that their replacements were going to give me a new benchmark for what my system can achieve. I have played countless records, CDs and SACDs in the few weeks which have elapsed since the Hydra took up residence and that initial amazement about how the sound quality has improved has of course worn off, because this is now the new baseline against which I shall judge things.



Conclusion

This audio malarkey is never dull. As I have said, I was more than happy with the sound that I was getting from my system before the latest Shunyata bits arrived – the dreaded upgraditis has not reared its head here for the last couple of years. However, I now know that my whole system had more to give than I realised, and that can only be attributed to the better juice with which I have been feeding it. The

things I said in my Venom review are no less true than they were then. That last one metre of the electricity's journey from the power station turns out to be crucial.

In the last two years we have become used to all sorts of new catchphrases, amongst which 'led by the science' has been prominent. Shunyata Research is clearly a company that is led by the science. Caelin Gabriel, the founder of the company, is clearly committed to pushing the boundaries of what can be achieved by the application of science to improve the listening experience. For those with the financial means and audio systems worthy of it, he has created a whole family of products whose sole purpose is to unleash the potential of your equipment. I strongly suggest that you seek it out and explore what it could do for you and your musical pleasure. As for me, I am dreading the next call from Mr Boyer!