

Tellurium Q Silver III cables

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A Tellurium Q review is both easy and difficult to write. It's easy because it's all about how it sounds, but difficult because you don't get to rely on what it's made of or hang its performance on some kind of 'white paper'. And when it comes to comparing the company's new Silver III cables to the outgoing and popular Silver II cables, things get decidedly problematic.

You see, both Silver II and Silver III loudspeaker cables look extremely similar to one another. The speaker cables have a flexible black plastic outer sleeve, a spacer separating the conductors, and are terminated with the same plugs and heatshrink. Aside from how they compare sonically, that is all we get from Tellurium Q.

Why? Because Tellurium Q doesn't reveal what's going on beneath the outer casing. The reason for this is threefold. First, it discourages some of the least scrupulous copycats;

those wanting to clone Tellurium Q at least have to buy a set of cables and reverse engineer them from first principles, which is not easy.

Second, they want to avoid the 'red ones go faster' associations, which erroneously link specific materials or processes to sonic characteristics. For example, the notion that 'silver' (the metal, not the company's cable) is 'bright' and 'shiny'-sounding seems as much to do with listeners' perceptions of silver's visual properties as with its sonic signature.

Finally, while Tellurium Q knows how and why a cable does what it does, making those reasons public is often met with scorn; not by those who actually buy good cables, but by those who instead prefer a spot of uncalled-for gatekeeping. And anything that irks the gatekeepers, even by its absence, is fine by me!

However, Tellurium Q is not entirely silent on what makes one of its cables perform as it does. The secret lies in how it handles phase; like many of the more down-to-earth cable makers,

Tellurium Q holds that all cables are, in some sense, intrinsically electrical filters. This is not a contentious statement; at its most basic, a cable's objective performance is described by its resistance, capacitance and inductance, and changes in all three in an active circuit affect the sound.

Running with the 'every cable is a filter' concept means the best cables are the ones that filter the least, and Tellurium Q aims to make its cables introduce as little phase distortion as possible. It cites Bell Labs' experiments on phase distortion and vocal accuracy... way back in 1930, as an explanation. Tellurium Q employs its secret sauce of conductors, shields, dielectrics, sleeves and terminators to reduce phase distortion.

The hierarchy

There's a kind of 'good/better/best hierarchy' at each level of Tellurium Q products. Setting aside the basic 'Blue' line, the mainstream group of cables is 'Ultra Blue', 'Black' and 'Silver', with 'Silver' at the top of that tree. After that come 'Blue Diamond', the 'Ultras' (Black, Silver), the 'Diamonds' (Black and Silver again) and 'Statement' at the apex. In each group of three, 'Blue' is the warmer and richer-sounding, 'Silver' is the more detailed and revealing, with 'Black' in the middle. These also exhibit a 'stay in your lane' nature; matching products at specific price points until you get to the moonshot »





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» level of the top products. And in this way, order is preserved. Until now.

Leap forward

Silver III represents both a significant leap forward in performance over Silver II and lends itself to more upmarket equipment partnerships. So, significant in fact that Tellurium Q decided a matching set of interconnects were in order.

I was given both Silver II and Silver III loudspeaker cables to compare, and a set of Silver III interconnects to complete the system. Silver II is very good, in fact. It has an unforced, slightly lean character that's a perfect match for audio electronics at the £3,000-£5,000 per component level. It trades a little information for poise and composure, but there's nothing wrong with that at this level.

Until you try Silver III.

That 'poise' softens the sound; it's easy to listen to, but Silver III's added sense of life and speed quickly tips the scales in its favour. However, that speed and insight don't come at the expense of added brightness or of undermining the tonal richness or

harmonic structure that drew people to Silver II. If anything, the additional information Silver III can resolve only serves to enhance that musicality and harmonic grace. In addition, whereas Silver II had a distinct performance ceiling, Silver III raises the roof.

All of which means that, whereas Silver II required a cable upgrade if you started spending more on your system, Silver III will stay with you longer. Having checked several of the latest generation of Tellurium Q cables against their predecessors, this seems to be a common theme; the cables are improving across the board, and they are also allowing more high-end performance.

But perhaps more importantly, they do this beyond the direct comparison with TQ's existing cable range. I doubt anyone is upgrading from Silver II to III; they will either be upgrading from one of the cables below it in the Tellurium Q range or from another brand. In both cases, Silver III's resolution and clarity, its vocal articulation, and its expanded soundstage all make the right noises. And its rhythmic properties are excellent, too.

Most of all, any listening tests add the word 'body' to the page. The sense of solidity in the sound within a soundstage, with greater dynamic energy and seemingly better grip over the loudspeaker from the amplifier, makes this one of the best cable systems in its class. And it really is a system, too; the tonal characteristics of the interconnect and loudspeaker cables work in great harmony.

Tellurium Q Silver III is one of those easy recommendations. At its price, it's hard to beat for overall value. It takes what made Silver II so popular and adds so much more. +

Price and contact details

Silver III interconnect cables: £422.77/m (RCA) £570.02 (XLR)

Silver III loudspeaker cables: £130.35/m

Manufacturer Tellurium Q

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