



A favorably priced model has entered the top WEL Signature series from Audioquest. The Wild Blue Yonder interconnect cable in our test lab is among the very best, a real treat for audiophiles.



## AudioQuest Wild Blue Yonder interconnect cable

# Going Wild

It is designer William E. Low who is behind cables in the WEL Signature series from Audioquest, which combine the finest materials with special features.

When Audioquest cables were introduced in earlier issues, I already mentioned that the material of the conductors and the dielectric are two important features of these cables. Wild Blue Yon-

der interconnects feature Perfect Surface Silver (PSS) conductors which – as the name suggests – have extremely smooth surface to avoid the often mentioned skin-effect. Due to the electromagnetic properties of conductors, high frequency signals travel near the surface of the conductor and do not penetrate deeper in the conductor. Cable designers focusing more and more on the sur-

face of the conductors because of the transmission of these high frequencies but the extraordinary surface qualities do not show up in the traditional cable parameters. Nevertheless, uneven surfaces are responsible for distortions and noise according to the „modern school“. The conductor is placed in a Teflon tube which has a wider inner diameter than the conductor itself. (In fact, this tube is

32% larger than the tube used in the Sky series.) This way we killed two birds at one stone. First, the surface of the conductor will not be damaged by insulation material directly applied on it. Second, we can take advantage of the excellent dielectric qualities of air. The twisted pair constructed from these Teflon insulated conductors received special shielding. Although RMI

and EMI picked up by the shield cannot reach the conductors but can cause a small amount of noise through the earth of power supplies and other circuits. This is why the Wild Blue Yonder interconnect received another seven layers of protection in addition to the traditional metal shield. The special shielding means that there are alternating layers of insulating materials and carbon-infused

conducting PE which absorbs most of the harmful RF and turns them into heat. Those who are familiar with Audioquest products the cold-welded connectors will not come as a surprise. The precision tools used guarantee perfect connection while keeping the structure of the conductor intact. (If the force applied is too weak, the contact will be too loose; if the force applied

is too strong, mechanical tension will build up in the conductor.) The plugs are machined from pure OFC and plated with 100 micron thick layer of silver.

We have to mention that the 72V DBS is also used in these cables. The polarizing voltage is applied between the shield and a conductor (separate from the signal conductors) running in the middle of the cable. Through this polarization the dielectric will provide more homogeneous parameters for transmitting the signal. (For details see Digital Házimozi

Magazin [Digital Home Theatre Magazine] Issue 59. page 26.)

**Let the hunting begin**

Test materials from my vinyl collection were Koncz Zsuzsa: Kertész Leszek, Pink Floyd: Wish You Were Here, La Biond: Sandstorm, Joan Baez – Any Day Now, Russian Tunes. There is no need beating around the bush. Working in a studio gives me the opportunity to listen to the authentic sounds of instruments regularly, so instinctively I listen out for details

such as transients and noises accompanying the formation of sounds by different instruments. The Wild Blue Yonder is offering an immensely pure, detailed, and amazingly natural sound. It is both dynamic and laid back, unusually neutral. I did not notice the “bright silver sound” often associated with silver cables. The steady and transparent stereo image puts the musicians in front of us and we can listen to them no end. It is truly soothing and relaxing, which I struck me even more when I put back my old cable.

Simply, there is nothing to criticize about this cable; except for the price tag perhaps... It really struck me how many new things I was able to discover in my own system with the Wild Blue Yonder. The XLR version brought extra benefits, which also resulted from the balanced circuitry. So if you have the opportunity to use balanced cables, do not even try the RCA version.

**A real trophy**

The Wild Blue Yonder interconnect from Audioquest is not your everyday capture.

Unpacking the cable from the blue velvet sack and removing the velvet covers on the plugs is a ritual itself. Although circumstances beyond our control gave us rather short testing time, we could not just plug in the cables and go on with our listening test. The beauty of these cables needs to be observed thoroughly, and connecting these cables is a ceremony. Of course, not everybody – me included – can afford these cables. Nevertheless, among cables I have heard in my system, the Wild Blue Yonder is the closest to

my “dream sound” of atmosphere of the venue, details, and “vitality”. This leaves one question open: what more can the WEL Signature offer?

Attila Kiss

Producer	AudioQuest
Type	Wild Blue Yonder
Length	1 m
Type of connection	RCA or XLR (3 pol.)
Price	4 200 EURO
Distributor	KáCsa Audio Kft. www.kacs-audio.hu

It is rare opportunity to board a bus operated by the Budapest Transport Company carrying audio cables, the value of which would cover another director's golden handshake at the transport company. I managed to do this last week when I left KáCsa Audio with two pairs of Audioquest Wild Blue Yonder (WBY) interconnects, along with a pair of Audioquest Sky and a pair of Neotech NA-13192 (NEI-1001) interconnect cable to try. Of course, I had my own cables from Music Timbre and Placette Audio, as well. To assure some objectivity I invited my friend Gabor, to whom I did not even tell what cables I were going to listen to. The primary goal of our listening session was not to decide whether the Audioquest WBY is worth fifteen times more than the Placette Audio's interconnect cable, three times more than the Music Timbre cable, or even 70% more than Sky from Audioquest. More importantly, I wanted us to try describing the differ-

# Thoughts of a Happy Customer

ences that swapping cables would bring and worry about whether that difference is worth the asking price later.

I was worried that a group test of five cables would be difficult but thinking back now it was easier than with two cables because practically every cable is “good at something”, or rather, it draws your attention to one aspect of the presentation. At the same time, I noticed that these attention drawing – at first very positive - aspects often start bothering me in the long run. I guess this is because other aspects get oppressed and cause that one aspect stand out too much. After long years of trying all sorts

of cables I came to the conclusion that I can only live with cables that do not draw my attention first, however strange it may sound. In the audiophile vocabulary we would call these cables “neutral” or “natural sounding”. The only trap is that this is what all cable manufacturers say about their own products.

With such thoughts we got down to testing the five pairs of interconnect cables. As my system is fully balanced, all cables were fixed with XLR plugs. The next four hours I was swapping the cables in and out between my pre and my power amplifier and we listened to the same few tracks over and over again. We referred to the

cables by the color of their braid to keep Gabor in the dark, a blind test if you wish. Although, I could deceive myself this way, surprisingly (or perhaps not) we came to the same conclusions about these cables. We listened to the cables in a randomly chosen order and we often returned to earlier cables time and again. To keep some order in this review, however, I will describe what we heard in the price order of the cables.

The interconnect cable from Placette Audio is the cheapest of the cables in the group. This cable had the most conspicuous bass reproduction, perhaps a bit a too much in my system. Female vocals had a nice warm tone, but instruments sounded a touch gloomy. We were not that much surprised by this since this was the only copper cable.

The Neotech interconnect costs four times more and the Music Timbre is another 40% on top of that. The Neotech gives details in spades; it is very good at frequency extremes, too. Nothing is lost here. I believe it is a perfect match for a warmish system that can tame the little sharpness found here. I can imagine the Neotech interconnects as a perfect match for tube amplification or warmer sounding transistor amps, such as Accuphase. Harsh sounding transistor amplifiers or electrostatic speakers may not match well. For the latter two I suppose the Music Timbre is a better choice which brings a fascinating feeling of the venue in the room with some extra creamy warmth. This may be because – compared to the Neotech – both frequency extremes are slightly rolled off. The kick drum doesn't rattle the floor that much and the trumpet has a velvety touch. I suppose this cable would be most loved in a digital system

that sound a little over-zealous and with music where the mid-range plays a key role.

The Audioquest Sky sounded a lot closer to the Neotech than to the Music Timbre. This somehow met our expectations as the conductors in the first two are made of high purity silver, whereas the Music Timbre has gold-silver-copper alloy conductors, with Teflon insulation in all. The Sky has a more relaxed sound than the Neotech. The details remain but they don't draw your attention. In a jazz trio the musicians sound more coherent, more than just the sum of three instruments. They don't draw your attention individually when it's not their role. This kind of presentation reminded us of the flow the Music Timbre brought into the music, but the Sky stays more materialistic. It doesn't blow extra smoke in the jazz bar.

The Wild Blue Yonder surprised us by doing nothing that would particularly draw our attention. It didn't provide better bass than the Neotech did and its imaging is not better than what Music Timbre offered. This is precisely what we were looking for. Just as through the Sky, music is detailed but laid back. Gabor expressed his suspicion: “the light blue (Sky) and the dark blue (WBY) must be from the same company”. If you listen carefully, you can hear what each musician is playing, but they are not separated from the rest of the band. The largest step forward from Sky is that each instrument simply sounds more authentic. Because this naturalness and neutrality is what makes a cable lovable in the long run, we found that the WBY is a larger step forward from Sky than the Sky was after the Neotech.

Is it worth the price, or the \$1700 it costs over Sky? This question is as meaningful (or meaningless) whether it is worth spending \$50,000

on the tuning of a brand new Ferrari – which gives enough income to several garages in the world? Of course the answer can be ‘yes’ or ‘no’ depending a number of conditions. For example, if your whole system is in the range of \$10,000, the answer is ‘no’, but if you are looking for a cable in this category or want to upgrade from Sky, don't leave the Wild Blue Yonder from your shortlist.

Zoltan Denes , contributor

**Music's for the Test:**

Sonny Rollins: Saxophone Colossus (LP), Mendelssohn: E-moll violin / Itzhak Perlman (LP), Women of the World: Acoustic (Emiliana Torrini) (CD), George Michael: Songs from the Last Century

**System:**

Analogue system: LP: Acoustic Signature Final Tool MkII, Mambo Silence Platter with upgrade, Moerch DP-Shell 6, Benz Micro Ruby 3 SE pick-up

Digital: C.E.C.TL51X CD, Lessloss DAC 2004MkII

Power system: Whest Reference Series Phono PS.30RDT, Audio Research LS26, MC2 Audio MC1250

Loudspeaker: Proac Response D80  
Cables: Power cord: Lessloss and Audio Note Japan KSL-ACZ, phono: Audioquest WEL Signature, Digital: Audio Note Japan KSL, Speaker: Neotech NS-2000

