

Making a NAME for itself

For many, the notion of spending good money on the cables hidden behind that hi-fi rack or AV stand seems silly. After all, isn't a cable a cable? And just how much better can a special audio or video interconnect perform, compared to the perfectly adequate cables in the box?

However, it's a fact that good cables and interlinks can make a substantial difference to the final sound or image of your system - especially compared to the cheap and nasty versions usually supplied with DVD players, TV sets or AV receivers.

Dutch electronics engineer and cable guru A.J. van den Hul has been one of the pioneers of the specialist audio interlink and cable market.

Mixing sound (excuse the pun!) scientific principles

with real manufacturing innovation and advanced technology, Van den Hul has consistently produced some of the world's best interconnects and speaker cables.

At the core of the Van den Hul cable philosophy is a special oxygen-free copper dubbed matched-crystal OFC - an extruded copper virtually devoid of impurities and optimised for efficient signal transfer. Also typical of many Van den Hul products is the use of pure silver as a protective conductor coating.

More recently, the company has also produced non-metal, pure carbon interlinks, as well as several hybrid products.

Vinyl record fans, of course, will know that Van den Hul also produces a range of superior phono cartridges, including the legendary Grasshopper and the more recent Colibri.

The Name is Van den Hul's latest interlink, and finds itself at the more affordable end of the specialist audio interlink market. For your almost 500 Rand, you get a 0.6 m stereo pair finished in a pale yellow, with superb 24-carat gold connectors.

Those familiar with Van den Hul products will immediately notice some familiar features, including the Hulliflex halogen-free jacket, which is also said to be more mechanically and chemically inert than the more usual PVC.

The jacket hides a single, 1.1 mm solid core conductor. The conductor is made of matched-crystal oxygen-free copper, which has been heavily coated in silver. This combination is another Van den Hul hallmark, and has been widely used in many of the marque's products over the past 20 years.

Other technical highlights include a dual-layer shield consisting of multiple strands of silver-coated oxygen-free copper, and high-efficiency internal insulation.

The result is a particularly versatile interlink, mainly because of its accurate 75 ohm impedance rating. Thus, The Name is not only suitable for use as an analogue stereo interlink, but also as a digital transmission cable, or for feeding video signals.

In other words, The Name could be used as a composite video cable, as an SPDIF coaxial digital cable, or as a conventional, unbalanced stereo interlink between a CD player and an amplifier, for instance.

Brand new and out of the box, The Name was first employed in a conventional stereo role, and immediately sounded pleasant, with no unusual sonic artefacts and a clean, clear sonic approach. Detail was well looked after, while imaging and stereo focus convinced, too.

However, over the next week or so, the interlink continued to improve. Tonally, it gained depth and texture, especially at the lower end of the spectrum, while treble became sleeker and more precise, without any hint of brittleness.

In soundstage terms, The Name increasingly opened up, allowing the music to blossom and adding scale and depth to the performances. As a result, imaging became more three-dimensional, with accurate positioning of individual performers, linked to a sense of air and space.

I also liked the pace of this cable, which showed none of the laid-back tendencies I remember from some Van den Hul designs. The delivery was crisp and rhythmical, with loads of urge and energy.

In a video role, I was impressed with The Name's ability to provide clean, natural hues with no unusual colouration.

Obviously, the composite interface remains flawed, compared to S-Video or component video, but resolution was good, with no sign of smearing or oversaturation.

The Name also acquitted itself well in digital transfer terms, doing a sterling job between the coaxial digital output of our Pioneer DVD-575A DVD player and our Yamaha AV receiver.

Perhaps the most unusual aspect of this interlink is its versatility. Here is an interconnect that will perform well above the norm in analogue stereo terms, yet provide similar talents in a video transfer role, and also allow accurate passage for



digital information.

That it's been painstakingly constructed to ensure long-term longevity is a further bonus, and ensures that value is very much a part of the overall equation here, too.

Deon Schoeman

• p e a k s •

VERDICT

Smooth, engaging and musically hearty performance from Van den Hul's latest creation. Good with video, too.

PRICE

485 Rand (0.6 m stereo pair)

Audio Video South Africa, March 2005

While A.J. van den Hul B.V. provides the information contained in this document to anyone, we retain (joint) copyright and/or publication rights on all text and graphic images. This means that:

You **MAY NOT**: Modify or re-use the text and graphics, distribute the text and graphics to others, or "mirror" this document's information on another server without the written permission of A.J. van den Hul B.V.

You **MAY**: Store the document on your own computer for your own personal use, print copies of the information for your own personal use, and refer to it in your own documents or on your website.

A.J. van den Hul B.V. reserves all other rights and is not to be held liable for the contents of this document.

www.vandenhul.com