

FURUTECH

AUDIO VIDEO – South Africa

HDMI-xv1.3 Review December 2008



The future is bright

Furutech humbly calls its HDMI xv-1.3 digital cable the highest specified HDMI cable in the world. But a closer look at the Furutech-supplied statistics does show a breadth of technical capability well in excess of the usual V1.3 HDMI standard.

For those who are still in the dark about HDMI: the abbreviation is short for High-Definition Multimedia Interface, and has been created as a fuss-free, high-quality data transmission method for both digital audio and video.

As we've found out in the period since the HDMI first made its appearance, there's more to this data transmission system than meets the eye. Compatibility issues, cable lengths and transmission speeds can all impact on just how well it operates, while digital jitter has also been mentioned as a potential shortfall.

Furutech's reputation for production quality is widely acknowledged, and this HDMI cable is no different. The attention to detail is obvious, the finish tactilely excellent.

The connectors are simply superb, with a smooth, anti-magnetic alloy finish and 24K gold contacts. What you don't see under the purple PVC sheath are the five layers of shielding, all protecting the 24AWG solid-core OFC copper conductor at the centre.

The copper conductor isn't just oxygen-free, but has been cryogenically treated at super low temperatures, which Furutech claims has a beneficial impact on the structure of the copper, and its ability to provide a clean and unobstructed signal path. The connectors are similarly treated.

As mentioned, the HDMI-xv1.3 is Ver 1.3b compliant, which means, inter alia, that it's fully compliant with the latest, high-definition surround sound audio formats – Dolby TrueHD and DTS-HD Master Audio – introduced in conjunction

with Blu-ray. This, of course, is in addition to DVD-Audio and Super Audio CD (SACD) support.

The video performance of the cable, on paper at least, looks equally promising. The Furutech is fully certified for true, high-definition video performance up to 1440p. It also offers video bandwidth of up to 21 GB/sec, and copes with 120 Hz scan-rate displays.

HDMI cable performance is influenced by its length, and that remains the case here, too: the 21 GB/sec bandwidth is only offered on cable lengths of up to 2 metres. At 5 metres, you can still expect 1440p performance at 10,2 GB/sec on a 120 Hz display.

Interesting as it is, the scientific bump still has to prove its true value in practice – and the Furutech has no problem in showing just how capable it is. Running directly from my Rotel DVD player to my Hitachi plasma, the xv1.3 provided ample proof of its video talents.

The picture had a smooth lucidity about it that invited extended viewing without losing any of its attraction or lustre. The viewing experience was completely unfatiguing, despite the cable's ability to extract and present picture information and colour depths not apparent before.

Shadow detail, in particular, benefited from the cable's transmission quality, delivering more definition and greater insight. In fact, the sense of being able to look further into the image, together with an element of three-dimensional realism, was a further trait of the Furutech.

Colours appeared vivid and natural, with out the overwrought brilliance that can look initially impressive, but ultimately becomes too brash, and I particularly liked the progressive tonality, which allowed seamless and smooth representation of different colour hues.

The picture was crisp and precisely rendered, but not to hyperrealistic levels,

VITAL STATS

Type HDMI 1.3b, Category 2
Certified video bandwidth Up to 21 GB/sec
Certified scan rate Up to 120 Hz
Main conductor 24 AWG solid core μ -OFC silver-plated
Shielding Five layers
Jacket Lead-free PVC
PRICE R3 600

VERDICT

Superior construction and full HDMI 1.3b compliance makes this a top-class HDMI cable, with a luscious, detailed image and clear, clean sound.

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and in overall terms, the viewing experience remained engrossing and enjoyable.

Sonically, the Furutech is also top class. It was able to deliver soundtracks with impact and excitement, allowing the full dynamics of effects to come to the fore, without compromising more delicate elements. Dialogue was well represented and projected, and always remained distinct, even against busier sonic backdrops.

Perhaps more importantly was the total absence of noise: it provided a perfectly quiet canvas against which the sonic delivery was vividly and compellingly projected.

Listening to music in multi-channel and stereo modes showed similar traits. John Mayer's two disc live set, 'Where The Light Is' sounded visceral and immediate, with the electricity of the performance and the buzz of the audience ensuring further presence and involvement.

Diana Krall's 'Live In Paris' made for similarly riveting listening, and here, the surround sound soundtrack, which can sound less cohesive and thus less satisfying in some systems, displayed a level of unexpected cohesion that made the experience satisfying and enjoyable.

The Furutech HDMI-xv1.3 makes the most of the HDMI format, and rewards capable ancillaries with an unencumbered transfer of data that translates directly into viewing and listening pleasure.

The vagaries of HDMI make the choice cable even more pertinent than in other applications, and the Furutech delivers comprehensively on all fronts.

Deon Schoeman

