

## Better DIGITAL connection

HDMI has been bandied about quite a bit lately, but apart from telling consumers that it is the latest and greatest digital A/V connection, there still is some confusion as to why this connection is becoming prevalent and what benefits it offers.

With this in mind, and before I get to the actual review of the Van den Hul HDMI cable, I will try, with the help of information gleaned from several web sites, to explain what the format is and why it should be used.

High-Definition Multimedia Interface (HDMI) in techno speak, is a cable that can transfer high quality, uncompressed multi-channel audio data and all consumer electronics video formats - up to 720 progressive - between DVD players, television sets, video displays, projectors and other compatible electronic equipment. The same interface also carries status and control information in both directions.

Translated, this means that instead of using, for example, a digital cable to transfer Dolby Digital and DTS digital data, six analogue cables for DVD-Audio or SACD, and three component video cables between a DVD player and AV receiver, one would simply use a single HDMI cable.

This cable would then transfer uncompressed digital audio - up to eight channels - and video data in superior quality. What's more, all-digital rendering of video and audio skips the quality losses, which are typically involved with the digital-to-analogue, and analogue-to-digital conversion processes.

Other benefits include the fact that the HDMI format has built-in content protection. This means that the major motion picture producers are able to distribute high definition digital content - better looking and sounding DVDs - without the fear that unscrupulous people will make and sell copies of the original. HDMI also supports intelligent communication between devices. This enables new functionality and a growth path towards a fully integrated home communication and entertainment system.

Whilst HDMI is a standard, and all manufacturers who use it pay some royalty, this doesn't mean that all HDMI cables are created equal.

If we now finally take a look at the Van den Hul version of the cable, we shall see that naturally it is fully HDMI standard compliant, but it is also for those with an eye to the HDTV future, Sky HDTV high-definition ready. Also included with the cable were a pair of HDMI to DVI-D adapters (\*).

(\*). Remark: The HDMI to DVI adapters are sold separately. —**A.J. van den Hul B.V.**



These adapters are designed to utilise existing DVI facilities of present generation equipment with the HDMI cable and thereby giving the future option of upgrading to the full HDMI format simply by removing the adapters. The adapters cost 239 Rand each. On the construction front, the cable features high purity, dense Silver coated Oxygen Free Copper conductors, high-quality HDMI 'Type A' connectors with heavy gold plated contacts, uses a double outer shield making it almost totally immune to interference, has shielded internal signal groups (which is stated to reduce cable crosstalk to almost zero), and has very low signal attenuation making the cable suitable for runs of up to 15 metres. The cable is also completely halogen free and has low jitter for stable picture and sound.

For the review, the VDH cable was compared to a cable supplied with a HDMI equipped system.

The first difference between the cables was that where the 'supplied for free' cable felt brittle and inflexible, the VDH cable was more supple, and generally looked like a better made cable.

Neither cable, as you would expect with the same-dimensioned connector, was difficult to attach to DVD player or receiver.

In use, it was the VDH cable that consistently delivered better audio and image quality. Admittedly the differences weren't huge (both cables were, after all, theoretically transferring the same data), but they were there.

On the audio side, the VDH cable delivered a slightly wider stage, and there seemed to be a touch more detail, Video differences were slightly more noticeable, with colours a little more natural looking and sharper.

Possibly the biggest benefit of using a higher quality cable like the VDH HDMI cable is one that can not be immediately appreciated: that of longevity.

Van den Hul claim, and I have no reason to doubt this based on my own experience with their cables, that their HDMI will deliver consistently good performance over a long period of time. As no-one really enjoys buying cables and throwing them out every year as they've oxidised, and performance has deteriorated, this is a major plus point.

Overall, one has to look at the purchase of any cable for the benefits it delivers and factor the price of the cable into the overall price of the system.

As most HDMI-equipped components fall more in the upper end of the consumer market, the added cost of a decent cable that does deliver better A/V quality should be looked at as an investment in the future of the system.

**Joel Kopping**

## • p e a k s •

### **VERDICT**

The VDH HDMI cable delivered a better audio and video performance than a standard, lower quality cable.

### **PRICE**

1.0 metre length	920 Rand
2.0 metre length	1055 Rand
5.0 metre length	1420 Rand
10.0 metre length	2105 Rand
15.0 metre length	2790 Rand

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