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EQUIPMENT REVIEW

Blue Horizon Proburn cable conditioner

by Adam Blake

There are those who think cable sound is nonsense, so the idea that 'burning in' can influence that cable sound is nonsense squared. This is not their product. I suggest they look away now.

Blue Horizon is the company Keith 'IsoTek' Martin formed in that brief time between leaving and restarting IsoTek, during its 2008 wilderness period. The company is said to exist to make real 'blue sky thinking' (hence the name) in audio, and the Proburn is the result.

The Blue Horizon Proburn is designed to speed, automate and improve the burning in of cables. It delivers high level signals from anything between DC and up to the gigahertz-range to anything connected to it (don't be tempted to try and actually hear this by plugging the Proburn into an amp and speakers, as you'll kill your system). The idea is these signals shake down your cables and aren't the sort of noises you will ever get close to generating through normal music playing; even test tones won't do, apparently.

A compact, well-made box, the Proburn holds two sets of phono sockets and speaker terminals, but only one set of XLR terminals, because these cables can be joined together. Bi-wired speaker cables could be a problem. Blue Horizon

is also designing breakout box 'funnies' to connect mains leads, BNC connectors, turntable phono leads and more. Little red and yellow flashy LEDs under the tinted top panel show what's connected and a big, bright, blue LED under the same shows it's working... to people on the International Space Station. An external power supply hooks the Proburn to the mains. It comes supplied with a little vial of Clean-IT contact cleaner in the box, a sweet taste of another potential audiophile addiction.

Blue Horizon suggests a minimum 24-hour burn in on any copper wire product, more for silver cables. There's no timer on the Proburn, but apparently it's not possible to 'over-burn' cables. The unofficial advice is 'let it run for a week'.

We tested this by using new sets of reasonably exotic phono interconnect and speaker cables, played just the once to determine changes in performance. Suitably 'conditioned', the sound appeared to improve on the already natural sounding cables, making it more open and even-handed. We also

compared two sets of years old, well-used, but still good interconnect cables (and two pairs of some very cheap XLRs) and the conditioned set sounded like they'd grown more bass, the soundstage increased in width and the treble seemed more alive. It's hard to say with any reliability how big a change or how it will improve a specific cable – it just seems to bring out the best in a cable, and the specifics of that 'best' largely relate to the cable being conditioned. But it's consistently 'best', because I've zapped a few different cables already, and none got worse in the process. And, although I did hear Danny Kaye singing 'the King was in the altogether...' during my listening sessions, he was very much in the background. Honest.

It won't turn giveaway cables into audiophile masterworks, but it does seem to help a cable sound more like it's supposed to sound. I could repeat the claims made by Blue Horizon about what Proburn does to cable, about how the signal penetrates the conductors and how it rearranges all the electrons in the dielectric, but I am frankly sceptical of the explanation. Truth is, I have absolutely no idea why it does what it does, but it does it all the same. The next stage to see if cables need reconditioning every couple of months as Blue Horizon suggests, so check back in a couple of issues! +

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

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