

Nordost Blue Heaven and Heimdall 2

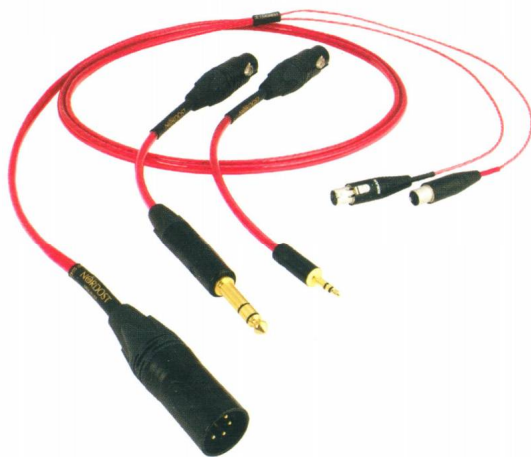
Nordost needs no introduction in the high-end audio world, but enthusiasts whose interests center on loudspeaker-based hi-fi systems may be surprised to learn that the Holliston, Massachusetts, company is now offering two ranges of specialized headphone signal cables. The top offering is the Heimdall 2 headphone cable (or headphone cable system), while at a somewhat lower price/performance point is the firm's Blue Heaven headphone cable.

The Blue Heaven features a seven-strand litz configuration where each strand consists of four 34AWG 7/42 conductors formed from 99.9999% pure "solid core OFC" (oxygen-free copper). Each conductor is treated to the firm's signature Micro Mono-Filament technology—a process that involves "wrapping each conductor with a strand of FEP (fluorinated ethylene polypropylene) material before the finished strand is encased in an extruded FEP insulator." To increase cable strength and control unwanted resonance, an Aramid "strength member" is also added. The amplifier ends of all Blue Heaven cables are terminated with a gold-plated 3.5mm stereo mini-plug fitted with a threaded 6.35mm stereo phono adapter, meaning the cables will work with most any amp offering traditional single-ended outputs.

Like the Blue Heaven cables, the Heimdall 2 headphone cables feature a seven-strand litz configuration. A key difference, however, is that the Heimdall 2 headphone cable uses heavier-gauge 32AWG 7/40 conductors formed from an even purer (99.99999% pure) grade of oxygen-free copper. The Heimdall 2 cables also use Nordost's Micro Mono-Filament technology.

Nordost's Heimdall 2 headphone offering is a multi-part cable system that consists of a 2m-long main cable (terminated with a 4-pin male XLR connector on the amplifier end), plus two shorter adapter cables. One adapter cable is terminated with a 6.35mm stereo phono plug while the other is terminated with a 3.5mm stereo mini-plug. In practice, this means the Heimdall 2 headphone cable system will work with virtually any single-ended or balanced output headphone amplifier on the market.

The defining sonic characteristics of the Blue Heaven headphone cables are an open and airy-sounding midrange presentation with plenty of transient "snap" and definition coupled with detailed and extended highs. The Blue Heaven's bass is solid and taut with both good transient speed and pitch definition, but there is no added bass "lift," weight, or warmth (meaning these probably are not cables you would choose in order to "warm up" your headphones). Happily, though, the HiFiMan Edition X V2 has thoroughly adequate low-end weight and warmth of its own. What the Edition X V2 headphones do need, however, turns out to be exactly the qualities the Blue Heaven cables have on offer: an added touch of midrange transparency and definition, coupled with heightened high-frequency detail and extension. As a result,



when you put a set of Blue Heaven cables on the Edition X V2 headphones, their sound pulls noticeably closer to that of the very revealing flagship HE1000 V2.

Frankly, the Heimdall 2 cables had two tough acts to follow, partly because of how good the Blue Heaven cables are, but also because the standard cables that ship with the HiFiMan HE1000 V2 are excellent. Even so, the Heimdall 2 cables yielded several worthwhile sonic improvements, including more tautly defined but no less impactful bass, an across-the-board and evenly balanced increase in resolution, and a really impressive quality of top-to-bottom harmonic integrity.

Nordost's Blue Heaven and Heimdall 2 headphone cables have taken up residence on my HiFiMan Edition X V2 and HE1000 V2 headphones, and both sound all the better for it. Try these cables with your favorite headphones and see if you don't get similar results. Highly recommended.

Chris Martens

SPECS & PRICING

NORDOST BLUE HEAVEN

Type: Headphone signal cable

Cable construction: Seven-strand litz-type configuration, 99.9999% pure OFC

Headphone side: Various termination options available

Amplifier side: Gold-plated 3.5mm stereo mini plug fitted with screw-on, gold-plated 6.35mm stereo headphone plug

Available lengths: 1.25m or 2m

Pricing: \$399/£334 1.25m

NORDOST HEIMDALL 2

Type: Top-tier headphone signal cable

Cable construction: Seven-strand litz-type configuration, 99.99999% pure OFC

Headphone side connector: Various termination options available

Amplifier side, main cable: 4-pin male XLR

Amplifier side, adapter cable no. 1: Gold-plated 3.5mm mini-plug

Amplifier side, adapter cable no. 2: Gold-plated 6.35mm stereo phono plug

Available lengths: 2m, main cable

Pricing: \$799/£649