

AudioQuest NRG en Wind Powercords

*affordable powercords of
exceptional quality*



AudioQuest NRG and Wind Powercords

The new AudioQuest Wind Series is the new mid segment of the recently renewed assortment of powercords by this American manufacturer. The AudioQuest NRG series remains - under their familiar name but with new technology - the entry level. The AudioQuest Storm Series represents the absolute top. All new powercords are designed by Garth Powell, AudioQuest's resident specialist in the fields of (clean) power supply and power transport.



Technology

Since our favourable review of the Garth Powell designed Storm Series, that series has been expanded with Source models of the AudioQuest Tornado and AudioQuest Hurricane, and the new **AudioQuest FireBird High Current** and **AudioQuest FireBird Source** to fill the rather large gap between the AudioQuest Hurricane and the AudioQuest Dragon. For this review we will not get into those powercords, but we were very curious if the promises about the new NRG Series and Wind Series made by AudioQuest would hold up in a listening test.

A low brow commentary

By now it should be known that we don't like to digress about technology in our reviews. Usually it's pretty dry stuff and in most cases there is no clear connection between technical specifications and sound quality. And reviews get unnecessarily long because of it. But for this review we need to make an exception. AudioQuest's new powercords have some interesting technical properties that are of direct influence on their sonic performance, and in one case they even determine how these cables should be used to profit fully from their technology.

Zero Characteristic Impedance

The first technology in the new AudioQuest powercords that needs explanation is Zero Characteristic Impedance. The DC resistance of a cable determines how much power can pass through a cable, and it gets lower when the gauge of the cable gets higher. Besides DC resistance there is also a characteristic impedance (amplitude dependent resistance). To explain that, we have to compare the conductor in a powercord to a tube filled with gel. When you drop a marble (representing an electron) into that tube, the speed at which it falls through is determined by the viscosity of the gel. The lower the viscosity of the gel, the faster the marble will fall through, regardless of the tube's diameter. That viscosity is the characteristic impedance. But that gel also has the nasty property that its viscosity gets higher when peaks in the music (high amplitude) demand higher power. That is why the characteristic impedance is of significant influence to the amount of power that can flow through a powercord. In this analogy, Zero Characteristic Impedance means that there is no gel in the tube at all, so the marble meets no resistance whatsoever. And that is a property you like to see in a powercord.



Ground Noise Dissipation

AudioQuest powercords were the first cables in AudioQuest's assortment to which Garth Powell's (now patented) Ground Noise Dissipation was applied. It is well known that the power grid itself is polluted with all kinds of (high frequency) noise and distortion. But our system's ground - which is there for our safety - is also polluted. By radio waves from satellites, cellular signals and WiFi, to name but a few. Ground Noise Dissipation ensures that these parasitic signals do not enter our hifi components over their ground connection, but are led away (dissipated) over that same ground connection. Garth Powell has found that he can make that happen by using the (proven!) directionality of cables. That makes it possible to lead unwanted signals away from the component in a natural way, and dispose of them over the system ground (that we will refer to as 'earth' from now on). That is why all new AudioQuest powercords have a grounded power plug, even the two-core NRG-Y2 and NRG-Z2 which are meant for double isolated components that do not need ground connections, like most standard cd-players. But that is also why the new AudioQuest powercords work best when you plug them into a grounded wall socket or a Niagara Power conditioner. When you don't (or can't) use your powercords like that, you will still profit from the Zero Characteristic Impedance.



Listening

For the listening test we used our familiar Linn Klimax set with Wilson Benesch Trinity loudspeakers. We used Interconnects and loudspeaker from AudioQuest and Crystal Cable, and the new powercords were connected to the Linn DSM streamer. Of course we made sure that we connected them in the correct phase (EU consumers, unlike UK and US consumers, can 'flip' their connectors). The rest of the cabling was not changed over the course of the review, and as always we selected just two tracks to make it easier to pinpoint the differences. The first track was Beluga, opening the album Suber by Zen Baboon, a minor electronic masterpiece with oodles of atmosphere and a very spacious production. The intro is layered, with the elated voices of playing children placed deep into the mix. Their tangibility and intelligibility tells us about the 'resolution' of the sonic performance. At a little over 2 minutes a slow beat drops, together with an incredible beautiful and deep bass that has to sound colourful and supple. The second

track - as a counterbalance - is completely acoustic, recorded in a small church. It is a wonderful recording of Guitarist Knut Reiersrud and organ player Iver Kleive by the Norwegian label Kirkelig Kulturverkstet. The album is called Nåde Over Nåde, the chosen track Da Høsten Kom. At the beginning of the track there are several seconds of silence in which you can hear the room itself. Then the acoustic guitar begins, hesitantly, almost solemnly, with a simple theme to which the organ starts very softly after a few seconds. When Kleive opens the low registers shortly after that, any organ lover (like ourselves) will get goosebumps. When he pulls the alto-flute register after a minute and a half it's time to break out the box of Kleenex...



Standard Powercord (OEM)



A lot of (actually most) hifi components come with a standard 'Made in China' OEM powercord. We know that some manufacturers apply some selection to them, but in analogy to the spare wheel of your car they would be a 'Space Saver'.

The performance of Zen Baboon was surprisingly nice, but most of that had to do with the quality of the recording and the rest of the set. We heard a pleasantly warm, reasonably spacious and relaxed image, but because we knew both the recording and the set very well, we could also hear the missing potential. The children's voices, for instance, were veiled and so deep in the mix that we could hardly make them out. The Reiersrud and Kleive recording sounded spacious, but we knew that it could have been a lot bigger and more luscious. The organ was at a reasonable distance in the recording, but a lot of tone and texture were missing.

AudioQuest NRG-Y3

The black/grey AudioQuest NRG-Y3 is the successor to the NRG-X3 from the previous series. It contains semi-solid conductors made from Long Grain Copper (LGC) and it has a silver plated, directional shield braid with a drain wire that leads Ground Noise to earth. It is reasonably flexible and has a very compact IEC connector. Because of that connector, this cable can also be used with very 'flat' components like the Linn Klimax series used here, or any Devialet Expert model.

The leap forward in quality was stunning. The Reiersrud track grew enormously in spaciousness and detail. Those who still doubt the positive effect of better powercords after hearing this improvement should find

another hobby. Like bobbin lace or something. The organ gained a certain softness and the little 'puff' of the opening valve at the start of each organ note was much more audible. The guitar got a lot more tone as well, causing better interaction with the room. The Zen Baboon track became a lot more spacious and detailed as well, without any trace of sharpness. The music had better fluidity, became more layered, and small details like the children's voices were clearer and easier to point out in the mix. The total image moved forward a bit and had more pressure, but sounded very relaxed at the same time. For its asking price we found the AudioQuest NRG-Y3 to be an absolute no-brainer.



AudioQuest NRG-Z3



The black/red AudioQuest NRG-Z3 replaces the NRG-2 of the previous series. Contrary to its predecessor it is completely built from semi-solid Perfect Surface Copper + (PSC+) conductors and it also has a silver plated directional shield braid with a drain wire that leads Ground Noise to earth. It is a little stiffer than the NRG-Y3 but it has the same compact IEC connector that fits Linn and Devialet components.

Reiersrud and Kleive sounded more lively with the NRG-Z3, there were more spatial cues. By now, the reverb of the guitar was clearly connected to the instrument and the organ felt like it was really there, with more pressure, tone and texture. This was another big leap in quality and we had not expected that, based on our previous experiences with power cables. Needless to mention that we were pleasantly surprised though. Zen Baboon had - besides more warmth and tonal colour - more detail in the background of the image. Small sounds, like the children's voices, were painted more clearly and stood more forward the mix. This time we found ourselves sitting a few meters closer to the scene, and because of that we could hear that the children were probably playing at a swimming pool. The bass was flexible and deep and rolled across the room beautifully.

AudioQuest Wind Series

Monsoon

The black/blue AudioQuest Monsoon is the entry level of the Wind Series and replaces the old NRG-4. It contains heavier gauge conductors made from Long Grain Copper (LGC) and Perfect Surface Copper+ (PSC+) and is fitted with the familiar Ground Noise Dissipation System, a multi-layered shield that absorbs high frequency noise before it enters the conductors by which it gains access to your hifi system. The more luxurious IEC connector has a very compact profile, so it will also fit brands like Linn and Devialet. The outside diameter of the cable is larger and it is less flexible than the NRG Series cables, but when we heard its audible effect that little difference in manipulability was easily forgiven.

Stepping up from the NRG-Z3 the Monsoon turned out to be an even bigger improvement than switching from the NRG-Y3 to the NRG-Z3. The guitar in the Reiersrud recording got more attack and tonal colour and the sound became more 'airy'. For the first time we could clearly hear that the

organ had wooden pipes, which counts for a huge improvement in texture. We could hear the wind flow through the pipes, in a manner of speaking. The Zen Baboon track gained dramatically in quietness. This was the Next Level of detail and spaciousness. We could almost hear what the playing children were saying, that's how close they were now, and we found ourselves in an enormous bubble of warm sounds, in which the image stretched to a point somewhere behind us.



AudioQuest Wind Series Blizzard



The black/light grey AudioQuest Blizzard is even thicker than the AudioQuest Monsoon, so stiffer as well, but it has the same luxurious small-profile IEC connector that fits flat components from Linn and Devialet. The AudioQuest Blizzard is the successor of the old NRG-10, but it is a tad cheaper. Like the NRG-10 it is built completely from Perfect Surface Copper+ (PSC+) conductors, and it is the first cable in the new series that is fitted with a DBS module containing 'Black' level RFI suppression. Besides that it also has the familiar Ground Noise Dissipation System, a multi-layered shield that absorbs high frequency noise before it enters the conductors. It is the current flagship model of the Wind series, but rumour has it that an Uber-Flagship model, the [AudioQuest Silver Cloud](#), is on its way by the time this review gets published, but because of its mix of PSC+ and PSS+ conductors (silver is very expensive) it would be outside the scope of this review of affordable powercords anyway.

With the AudioQuest Blizzard attached to the Linn DS Streamer the most noticeable difference in the Reiersrud recording was that the guitar projected more energy into the surrounding space, which became easier to 'hear' because of it. The bass from the organ sounded a little fuller and more powerful. That gave so much more sense of 'being in the room' that we could almost smell the typical church-aroma of candles and stale incense. The listening experience became more intimate and more direct. The Zen Baboon recording still had its great sense of quietness, but the music became more fluid and sumptuous. With a tad more detail and spaciousness, but the tonal differences were much less spectacular. Maybe because they already left very little to be desired. What did improve slightly were things like placement, timing and structural coherence. Those are much harder to get right in the reproduction of music, and because of that they usually make a bigger difference when you listen to more expensive components and cabling.

Concluding

At times it can be difficult to come to a surprising conclusion when you review AudioQuest cables. Our American friends really know their stuff and that is how they successfully create a clear differentiation between the models in each of their cables' series. That also applies to their new NRG and Wind Series powercords. The buildup of quality is logical and consistent and that gives a comfortable feeling of certainty. You know what to expect when you listen to a more expensive cable: more of the same. With emphasis on 'more'. And of the positive properties, obviously. But also of the less favourable, honesty dictates to say. When you prefer thin and flexible cables, for instance, these are not for you. Even though we ourselves could happily live with them, you should take into account that it will not be easy to apply the more bulky AudioQuest Monsoon or Blizzard when your components are tightly fitted into a closed-back cupboard. Another thing to keep in mind is that you should ideally use these cables with a grounded

wall outlet. When you don't do that, they will still be great powercords, but when you ground them they give truly stunning improvements that we would normally associate with analog interconnects or loudspeaker cables, rather than powercords. Subjectivists will know what to think (power is power and a good transformer will filter all power line gunk anyway) so they can keep using their Chinese OEM powercords to listen to their music. But as far as we are concerned the improvements from these new powercords are so obvious that an open mind can be more important than a good pair of ears.

The very affordable AudioQuest NRG-Y3 already brings a spectacular improvement when compared to a standard powercord, and the slightly more expensive NRG-Z3 betters that with ease. When you can live with a little more bulk and stiffness the AudioQuest Monsoon and AudioQuest Blizzard will get you to a level of performance that is frighteningly close to the - even better but also more complex and more expensive - Storm Series power cords. Add the benefit that the Monsoon and the Blizzard will fit super-slimline high end audio with their compact IEC connector and all we see is advantages. Who's next?



Music and Information

More information and prices about the AudioQuest NRG and Wind powercords can be found in our online store:

[AudioQuest NRG en Wind powercords](#)

Spotify

[Zen Baboon - Suber](#)

[Knut Reiersrud & Iver Kleive - Nåde over Nåde](#)

Tidal

[Zen Baboon - Suber](#)

[Knut Reiersrud & Iver Kleive - Nåde over Nåde](#)





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