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The Quest for better HDMI

AudioQuest claims it has cable solutions for the pro install market

Despite having been in use for five years, HDMI continues to be a hot topic in the AV industry. While consumers quickly adopted the format as the *de facto* tool for delivering hi-def signals, there have been several problems that have left players in the pro-install world grumbling.

One man who thinks he might have at least some of the answers is Xiaozheng Lu, Senior vice president of product development for cable specialist AudioQuest.

Lu is adamant that you really do get what you pay for when it comes to the price of HDMI cables. A big misconception about quality comes from the 'cliff effect' (the way a digital signal suddenly drops off after a specific distance, rather than gradually reducing in quality like an analogue signal). 'Some people believe that as long as the signal does not exceed the "cliff", even cheap cables will provide a high quality image' says Lu. 'But even when cable length is within the "cliff" there are data errors already occurring.'

To this end AudioQuest recently introduced its new Series 10 HDMI cable in the US, promising 'virtually error-free' performance up to 35m. To back up its claims, the company took a BER (Bit-Error Rate) test machine along to the CEDIA Expo in Denver and compared its cable to several leading competitors (although it had to compare with 23m cables, as none of the other manufacturers offer 35m HDMI's).

'Our new cable showed zero errors,' boasts Lu. 'Another leading brand showed a quarter of a million errors. Another big brand eight million errors. And one from a medium-sized



There are misconceptions about HDMI quality, says AudioQuest's Xiaozheng Lu

company 1.5 million errors. In identical test conditions across 23m, this is a huge difference.'

So you shouldn't always believe the eye and judge HDMI by what is shown on screen. After all, many TVs employ built-in error correction technology that can compensate for some problems in still images, but which struggle with fast-movement and pans. Only something like a BER machine can give accurate results about digital signal performance, says Lu.

The Terminator

Addressing another industry concern regarding HDMI, AudioQuest has developed a Field Termination kit for the cable. This allows installers to cut HDMI to fit, rather than be forced to buy and use a longer cable (such as 2m when only 1.6m is needed) in a run. The quality of the Field Termination, claims Lu, shocked the brand itself. 'We surprised ourselves when we discovered that the electrical performance is better than the factory-made cable we have. So now we've started using this production method in the manufacturing line to make the pre-made cable perform as well.'

Chop-chop: AudioQuest's Field Termination kit lets you cut HDMI cables to length



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