

kubala-sosna research

the Emotion line of cables

as reviewed by Robert H. Levi



ROBERT H. LEVI'S SYSTEM

LOUDSPEAKERS

Avalon Eidolon and REL Stadium III subwoofer.

ELECTRONICS

E.A.R. 324 phono preamplifier, E.A.R. 890 amplifiers (ran as monos), NuForce Reference 9 SE amplifiers, Pass X1 preamplifier, and an E.A.R. 834L Tube Line Stage.

SOURCES

VPI Scout/JMW 9 tonearm, VPI SDS Controller, ZYX R100H phono cartridge. E.A.R. Acute CD player, ModWright Sony 999 SACD/CD Player with Signature Truth, Mod/Bybee Filters and Revelation Cryo Silver Umbilical. Alesis Masterlink 24/96 Recorder/Playback Deck, Theta Pro Gen.5a DAC Modified for 24/96 Playback, and the Benchmark DAC 1 revised. Grado Statement Phono Cartridge. Pioneer DVL 919 LD/DVD Player. Magnum Dynalab MD-108 Reference Tuner, Marantz 10B FM Tuner, Day Sequerra Reference FM1 Tuner, AQ 7500 FM Antenna, Stax 7t Electrostatic headphones, Grado Reference 1 headphones,

and a Grado headphone amplifier.

CABLES

Kubala-Sosna Emotion, Harmonic Technology CyberLight, Dual-Connect, interconnects, Dynamic Design THB Nebula, Soundstring, Kimber Select balanced, Kimber TAK phono AG, Kimber Hero balanced and single ended interconnects, and Acoustic Zen Silver Reference Two balanced interconnects. Kimber D-60 Digital Interconnects. Kimber Select 3038 Silver, Kubala-Sosna Emotion, and Harmonic Technology Magic Reference Silver speaker cables. Kimber Palladian, Tara RSC and Decade, Tice, Soundstring, and Kubala-Sosna Emotion AC power cords.

ACCESSORIES

Monster Reference 350 Mark Two v2 Power Conditioner, World Power Power Wing, Tice Clock, and Audio Prism Quiet Line IIs. Cable Cooker 2.5, Winds Stylus Pressure Gage, Bedini Ultra Clarifier, VPI Record Cleaning Machine 16.5. Audio Magic's Quantum Physics Noise Disrupters.

With spellbinding truth of timbre and see-through, full-bodied definition, the Kubala-Sosna Emotion cables connect you with the recorded performance. Your loudspeakers seem to become perfect point-source radiators, as music takes on a realism that is always desired but rarely achieved. Though the Emotions are expensive, I could not find a system—solid state or tube—that did not reach new heights of musical involvement when they were in place. The midbass (say 200 to 500Hz) is absolutely, positively state-of-the-art, giving music a foundation I have not heard with any other high-end cables that sell for under \$9000 per meter. They are that good!

Kubala-Sosna cables are American-made. Howard Sosna, an oral surgeon, loves music and has designed them to his very high standards. Joe Kubala, also a dedicated audiophile, handles the business end of the company. The Emotions are Howard's statement design. I'm told that they are all-copper, and that their extremely low impedance is the heart of the science behind their awesome performance. The RCA connectors on the interconnects are top-of-the-line Neutrik Pros, with elegant, spring-loaded shields. Though thick and rather heavy, the Emotions are amazingly flexible and easy to work with. I have listened to many, many cables, and these are the most user-friendly I've encountered.

In addition to my own system, I listened to the Emotion cables in several other top-quality systems. Howard Sosna has Avalon Eidolons like mine in his reference system—no wonder his cables are stunning with the Avalons! I also heard them in systems that included Reference 3A DaCapo, Marten Design Miles III, JM Labs Utopia and Cobalt, and Paradigm Reference loudspeakers, using pentode, triode, and solid-state amps. Kubala-Sosna claims that little break-in time is required, and I can confirm that the Emotions sound superb right out of the box. Nevertheless, I put fifty hours on them before critical listening.

Let's start with the interconnects. Their deep bass is tight, very melodious, and detailed. It's fast, yet warm, with just a touch of richness. The deep musical line was not overstated, but it was certainly powerful. The Emotion interconnects will be perfect with solid-state amplification and modern tube designs that produce very deep bass, but unlike leaner-sounding cables from Nordost, Silversmith, or Acrolink, they will not compensate for older, thick-sounding tube amps. I heard tons of deep, accurate bass in both of my listening rooms.

The heft and power of the Emotion interconnects is the best I've experienced. Couple that with 3-D definition, imaging of the first magnitude, and a naturalness of tonality second to none, and you get state-of-the-art midbass. Musical verisimilitude can only be achieved when the foundation of the notes is properly expressed. You learn this when you install one of those lean super-cables and the music becomes all highs and upper mids. Other cables may provide similar weight and energy in the midbass, but they usually murk up the mids and lower highs, obscuring definition and blurring imagery. Not so with the Emotions!

The midrange is not far behind the midbass. Though a tad rich, the mids pop beautifully and sensuously, with gobs of air. Center fill is exceptional, and the soundstage is enormous. This is row-M sound, which I think is ideal. There is no lack of focus, with zero etch and grain, unlike other cost-no-object designs. The midrange sounds real. Voices sound like they are produced by real live people. The Emotions remind me of the first time I heard Magneplanars, with the music more

alive-sounding than I'd ever heard. Almost no effort is required on your part to feel and enjoy this life-like sound—the Emotions require less tweaking than any other top cables I've tried. Only the Harmonic Technology Cyberlights give you the same kind of you-are-there sound, but of course, they aren't metal. In the world of metal cables, the Emotions are the plug-and-play choice if you demand the very best, and are blessed with deep pockets.

The Emotion interconnects communicate music correctly, and the effect is truly not equipment-dependent. Hooked up to my superb E.A.R. Acute player, the Emotion interconnects were spine-tingling, exquisite, and organic. I was shocked at the improvement that these \$2700 cables wrought in the sound of my ModWright Sony 9100 CD/SACD player. Never has the ModWright player sounded more involving, analog-like, and robust. I don't know how this happens. The Emotions seem to do less to corrupt the natural flow of the musical line than any other cables in their class. They are slippery smooth, and their lack of grain enhances long listening sessions.

The high end of the Emotion interconnects is delicate, and though slightly recessed, very realistic. There is a lot of natural air and space between images, but the sound is less forward and intimate than it is with the Nordost, Kimber Select Silver, or Acrolink 6500 cables. With the Emotions, your tweeters sound like they are more thoroughly integrated into the midrange. I absolutely love this! No thinness is apparent. Bells and triangles sound very accurate—not sizzly, as with other high-end cables. I find myself focusing on the midrange, not the highs. Kubala-Sosna made a conscious effort to replicate the sound of live music in the Emotions, and I feel that they have succeeded. I frequently go to live acoustic performances, and listening to music through the Emotions is the closest thing to being at a concert that I've ever experienced.

Please don't take this to mean that the Emotion interconnects are not revealing. The highs will scorch your ears if the source (or CD) is shrill or etched. The thing is, the Emotions are not hyped-up, or lean in any way. Their musical line is clear, relaxed, ultra-textured from top to bottom, and extraordinarily defined. They are unsurpassed in musical cohesiveness and definition, unless you are willing to spend more than \$9000 per meter for the Jorma Primes. The Emotions are so intrinsically satisfying that I truly missed them when I had to send them back to Kubala-Sosna six months ago, and rejoiced upon their return. By the way, the balanced and single-ended Emotion interconnects sound identical, and the XLR connectors are excellent.

I also tried the Emotion interconnects between my VPI 9 tonearm and my E.A.R. 324 phono stage. Using the ZYX Airy 3 and Grado Statement cartridges, I got extended, full-bodied, stellar performance from the Kubala-Sosnas. This is the first time that I've found standard interconnects that perform on a par with the best specially-designed phono cables. I have the Kimber Silver TAK and the Hovland phono cables living in a drawer right now. That's how good the Emotions sound! I'm amazed.



The Emotion speaker cables are more than the sonic brothers of the interconnects—they are as transparent as any speaker cables I've heard. I've spent an enormous amount of time listening to these cables, and I'm still not sure what they sound like. Every time I detect a coloration that I attribute to the speaker cables, it turns out to be something in the front end. They work well with other brands of interconnect, but can pass unwanted colorations right through to your speakers, so be warned. When they are used with the Emotion interconnects, the sound is extremely close to ideal—even, smooth, and alive. The Emotion cables seem to get out of the way of the music. For about triple the money, the Jorma Primes, with their Bybee Golden Goddess filters on board, are a bit better, but at real-world prices, the Kubala-Sosnas are a much much better value.

The Emotion AES/EBU digital cable is very interesting. On paper, a balanced digital cable should be ideal, but I've always preferred SPDIF. I've never heard an AES/EBU cable that I liked, until now. I put the Emotion AES/EBU cable between my Alesis Masterlink and a hot-rodded Benchmark DAC, and Kubala-Sosna's low-impedance design was a winner! The two digital components sounded more like a great one-box design with the Emotion. I also tried the Orchid AES/EBU cable from Kimber, but it closed down the top end. When I went back to the Emotion, all was right. In the world of digital separates, the cable is as important as the electronics. The Emotion AES/EBU is killer, and the equal of any SPDIF interconnect I've heard. For this kind of performance, \$1000 is a realistic price.



Last but not least, I compared the Emotion power cords to my reference cords. I could do an entire review on these, but here's the bottom line—the Emotion power cords are as good as the more expensive Kimber Palladium cords and the \$2000 Shunyatas. They are as revealing as the Harmonic Technology Magic Silver cords (also \$2000) and as a bonus, are a bit smoother on top. The Palladium may be a tiny bit quieter, but it sounds less tactile and textured. The Shunyata sounded bolder, but a bit lumpier and less even-natured. At \$1000 for a 6-foot cord, the Emotion is a winner. I tried it with my tube amps and loved the results. Even the transport section of my ModWright Sony 9100 improved markedly with the Emotion cord. The best news is that every component I hooked up with an Emotion cord sounded more organic and detailed. Although there is always the chance of finding an amazing power cord/component combination, the Emotion cord was the obvious choice more often than any other power cord I had on hand, in two different systems.

The Kubala-Sosna Emotion interconnects connected me to the music like no other interconnects I've heard, at anywhere near the price. Their mids and highs are rhythmic and harmonic extensions of their gorgeous bass and midbass, with alive, reach-out-and-touch-it definition. Their midbass is trend setting and state-of-the-art, forming the basis of an extraordinarily accurate and realistic musical event. It's hard to believe I am just talking about interconnects, but the Emotions are system-transforming, and they involved me in the music like never before. The Emotion loudspeaker cables are equally superb, and even more neutral, with no identifiable sonic fingerprint. I also found the Emotion's ultra-low-impedance design superb when applied to the AES/EBU digital connection. The Emotion power cords are as winning as the interconnects, and consistent top performers. If you love music as much as I do, and want the very best cables available, I suggest that you listen to the Emotions. Joe Kubala and Howard Sosna are audiophiles and music lovers who have taken connectivity to the next level. The Kubala-Sosna Emotions receive my top recommendation in their price range, where they are THE best of class. **Robert H. Levi**

- Over \$4000 per meter:

Jorma Prime (balanced and single-ended)

Acrolink 7N-DA6100 (single-ended)

- \$2000 - 4000 per meter:

Harmonic Technology Cyberlight with Battery Pack Four (balanced and single-ended)

Kubala-Sosna Emotion (balanced and single-ended)

Nordost Valhalla (balanced and single-ended)

Dynamic Design THB Nebula (balanced and single-ended)

Acrolink 7N-A2500 Mexcel (single-ended)

Silversmith Palladium (balanced and single-ended)

Kimber Select WITH Bybee Golden Goddess "Super Effect" RCA IC Tails (single-ended)

- \$1000 - 2000 per meter:

Stereovox 600-SEIii [balanced and single-ended]

Dual-Connect Gold

Kimber Select Silver

Acoustic Zen Silver Reference Two

- \$450 - 1000 per meter:

Harmonic Technology Magic Two (balanced and single-ended)

Harmonic Technology Pro Sil-way Three (now in + version)

Xindak Gold

Kimber Select Copper

- \$250 - 450 per meter:

Soundstring Pro

Eichmann Express 6 Series 2

- Under \$250:

Kimber Hero