



Kubala-Sosna Elation! Serisi Kablolar

My wife, Françoise and I have not had a holiday in two years. We therefore recently decided to go to the Seychelles – a small green jewel in the Indian Ocean. Great! This would be a wonderful opportunity to take photographs of some Hi Fi cables that I was about to review. So many cable reviews use the manufacturer's stock photographs. These are usually ok, but can be a bit boring, so I decided that the holiday would be an opportunity to try and do something a little different and also have some fun as well.

The cables in question are Kubala-Sosna's new top of the line "Elation" series. I carefully packed one mains and one balanced interconnect and we were off. Watching the cables pass through x-ray at Heathrow airport was very interesting. The security officer pulled them out of my bag, having just seen two huge metal snakes displayed on his monitor. You can imagine his surprise and disbelief when I said they were Hi Fi cables.

He gave me a very strange look indeed and after a careful explanation from Françoise and with very raised eyebrows from him, we were not arrested and allowed to continue our journey. When we first arrived, Françoise and I immediately went to a spa for a 3 hour "rain forest experience massage". This starts in a room created out of white cotton material and built on top of giant granite boulders. Huge trees surround the room and as the gentle breeze blows through, it carries the sound of the tropical birds and giant fruit bats fighting over mangoes in a nearby tree.

Watching the fruit bats fly to the tree and land upside down to eat the fruit reminded me of how my own Hi Fi world had recently been turned upside down. Why? Well for the past two months I have been listening in depth to Kubala-Sosna's new "Elation" cables and trying to put my finger on why they sound so amazing.

I have been using a full set of their speaker, mains and balanced interconnects and can tell you that their name "Elation" suits them perfectly. In an effort to get a handle on what they do, I decided to listen to them in a variety of systems. The first system I used belongs to Martin Brewster of Audio Reference. Martin is a friend and the importer of several interesting brands here in the UK. His loudspeakers are really very interesting. They are the Acapellas, which are one of the few speakers in the world to use a plasma tweeter. Many people who have heard this tweeter have ranked it as being one of the finest in the world and they would therefore be a perfect choice to use for my first assessment.

Martin gave me as much time to listen and set up the system as I needed and so; Let The Games Begin. When you have mains, speaker and interconnect cables to assess, do you put them all in the system at once or do you change them one at a time? Also what cables are you comparing them to? What music do you use? A handful of tracks which eventually drive you mad, or a wider cross section of music? The choices are endless.

Well, I decided to start by listening to the existing system with its current cable loom and a handful of familiar well known tracks. One in particular was really helpful; Carol Kidd's "All my Tomorrows" available on Linn records. Human voice is always a good place to start with any assessment and this track in particular helped to immediately reveal what was going on. The existing cables were Kubala- Sosna's old flagship series –

the "Emotions". Well I started with the interconnects and voila – "jaw dropping" is an over used cliché, but absolutely describes my first listening experience perfectly.

Ok, this is not right – something is wrong here. How can a 1.5m of cable reveal hidden air and space, make the sound field literally wider, add ambience and depth and make the track seem to play faster? The musicians were now playing more tightly together and overall I swear that Carol Kidd now appeared to be smiling while she was singing! No, no, no, this really is not possible with just a change of one interconnect in a Hi Fi system. All I could do when first listening was – like Carol – SMILE!

Ok, what about the speaker cables? Well the effect was just as the interconnects, but to a slightly lesser degree. It was also true when using the mains cables. A similar effect could be heard, but now that the entire system was wired with "Elation" everything was "locked in". It was as if the whole system was now built on a massive solid foundation. I tried changing things in a different order and I found that the real stars seemed to be the interconnects. The company claim, that relatively little playing in is needed to get the best from their cables. I therefore compared two cables with each other. I placed one on my Nordost cable burner for one week, (the equivalent of over a thousand hours of music) and then compared the cables.

Yes, there was a relatively small difference, but the non burnt cables after a week of playing music sounded the same as the ones that had been burnt. So, the company's claims seem to be true.

Time for a different perspective and to move on to another system. Enter my good Hi Fi friend Ray Hernandez. I have known Ray for several years and he has bought from me a lot of my equipment, so I am really familiar with what should be happening. His system is based on Watts and Puppies Series 8's, driven by a Boulder pre and power amp and with a really interesting front end, consisting of a CEC TL 1N Transport and DL 1N DAC. His turntable is the TW Acoustic Raven 1. Would I find the same results repeated using Wilson's old war horses?

A lot has been written about Watts & Puppies over the years. Claims of aggression and brittleness have abounded .Well whatever you think of them, they are the most widely sold speakers in their price range in the world and were therefore an obvious choice for the continued investigation. Ray's cables consist of Virtual Dynamics speaker and Kondo mains with Kondo KSL-LP interconnects.

Starting by replacing the Kondo's with the Elations and playing the same Carol Kidd track "All of my Tomorrows" resulted in the same leap forward that I had heard in the previous system with one major difference. The slight etch that I always associated with the Watts and Puppies was now gone. In no way was the top end rolled off, it is just that the spityness of Carol's s'es had become completely un-smearred and cleaned up.

Ok, now for some fun. With the Kondo cables in place, I played a track with Ray blind folded and asked him to point to the extreme left and right instruments. Quickly changing the interconnects to the "Elations" I then played the same track. Ray now pointed to the same instruments, but he now literally moved both his arms about a foot wider apart!

So what happened when we dropped in the mains and speaker cables? Actually, the images did not get wider, but the effect seemed to increase the air, space and timing of the music – almost like wiping an object clean and then polishing it. Again the interconnects seemed to be the real stars, with the entire wired system appearing to be more than the sum of the parts. An American reviewer is well known for coining the phrase "there was more there there". Well, I would change the phrase in describing the

overall effect of the cables to there being "more here, here". We really were closer to the musical soul of the performances.

Every aspect of every track we played was improved when using the "Elation" cables. The non scientific reaction for everyone who listened – was a huge smile! Certainly, the cables brought "Elation" to the wide variety of people who listened during all my sessions. One day, our DHL delivery driver dropping round a parcel, was made to sit and have a quick comparative listen. Same reaction, big smile followed by "what have you done?"

Well, now it is time to "Guild the Lilly". For some time I have been listening to the effect of using different mains fuses! No – do not call the funny farm, you really can hear the differences. Here in the UK, we use a 3 pin 13amp mains plug. Inside is a fuse and one day as the saying goes "the devil finds work for idle hands", I decided to gather together a group of fuses to see if they made any difference to the sound. I compared a gold fuse, made by Hi Fi Tuning, to a special Furutech cryogenically treated fuse and then to the normal supplied UK standard 13amp fuse.

The standard fuse sounded well a bit lack lustre, boring, tired, and slow – no jump factor. On to the gold fuse – Ah ha, this was more like it. The best word to describe the overall effect is probably that it was sweeter. Now for the Furutech. Well, it was even better again, with more drive, space and energy. What is going on? Of course the fuses will alter the impedance supply of the mains to the components. This lead me to thinking what would the components sound like with no fuse in the plug at all?

Time to change the British mains connectors over to the European Shuko plugs, which use no fuse at all. I bought a six way Furutech distribution box and changed the "Elation" mains cables fitted with British plugs with fuses, over to Furutech gold pinned Shuko connectors. Voila, another step forward. The best sounding fuse, is no fuse at all. All of the components themselves have built in fuses and the mains board in your home has a built in fuse system, so we really do not need the "belt and braces" of extra fuses within the system. Probably, joining the earths together of all the components plugged into one distribution box, also improves the overall system sound. However, please remember that your safety is vital, so do not play with your mains supply if you do not feel you are qualified.

Removing the extra fuses from my system really put the icing on the cake when using all the "Elation" cables together. Now then, what is inside these amazing cables? Well for a detailed discussion of their technology, you should visit the Kubala-Sosna website for a full technical explanation. But, I will tell you what I think is really going on. Do you remember Steven Spielberg's film "Jurassic Park"?

Remember the scene with the actors are climbing over the switched off electric fence. They were racing to get to the other side before the power was restored. The last actor to climb over was a little boy. He is just about to make it, when the power is suddenly switched back on – blowing him off the fence! With his hair standing on end and with smoke coming out of his mouth, he says "WOW!"

Well I think that Mr Kubala and Mr Sosna bought the cable which made that huge electric fence when the filming was over and put it inside their "Elation" cables. When that young boy with huge wide eyes says "WOW!" that is what you are going to say, when you listen to these amazing cables! They really are that good.

Mike Valentine