

INTERCONNECTS

ECOSSE NU DIVA

Silver thread

Experiencing the differences between various cables and interlinks never ceases to amaze me. There is, admittedly, a certain black magic attraction to it all – a kind of fascination linked, I suppose, to the inexplicability of it all.

While science does recognise that differences between interconnects exist, it still can't satisfactorily explain how pieces of wire can make such a big difference to the sound of a stereo or a home theatre system. Indeed, some scientists refuse, point blank, to accept there are any differences at all.

Different doesn't always mean good or bad, however – just different. And as is so often the case, subjectivity also plays an important role: what sounds great to the ears of one listener may not have quite the same charm in the opinion of another.

All of which brings me to the Ecosse Nu Diva – a slinky, silver, sexy interlink (if an interconnect could ever be called sexy) that's a pretty recent addition to the Scottish cable maker's product repertoire.

As much as the bump supporting this cable includes a detailed scientific explanation of its sonic characteristics, which in turn might lead to the listener assuming a certain excellence, the proof is quite simply in the actual performance. And that's the thing with cables: listen carefully to what you're hearing, and not what you expect to hear.

The Nu Diva is based on Ecosse's much-lauded 'Conductor' interlink, but employs silver-coated versions of the latter's Ultra-High Purity Oxygen-Free Copper (UHP-OFC) conductors. However, the conductor still consists of a twisted pair in a rope-lay configuration.

The conductors are wrapped in a protective polyethylene layer, and then immersed in a foamed polyethylene dielectric, followed by both a conductive PVC tube and a silver-plated UHP-OFC braid to provide a dual-layer shield against electrical interference. The cotton filler addresses modulation effects caused by microphonics, while a soft PVC jacket provides the final, protective touch.

One of the technical aspects Ecosse subscribes to is the so-called cryogenic immersion of its cables. This entails subjecting the conductors to temperatures of between -185 and -200 degrees C during a stepped process lasting several days, which Ecosse believes makes for a denser, more uniform conductor.

The Nu Diva, like other Ecosse interlinks, came pre-fitted with the quite marvellous

Mach I connectors, which are also silver-plated to ensure a snug fit and good conductivity. Even the lead-free silver solder is special, since it is low in contaminants, retains an ultra-low impedance and creates a high-strength joint.

So much for all the technical background: for most of us, it's the sound of the cable that matters most. The Nu Diva was inserted in my system, initially running between my Rotel RCD-991 CD player and Vincent SA-93 Plus pre-amp, and allowed a good few hours to settle in.

During the remainder of the review period, I also tried it between the Electrocompaniet ECP-1 phono stage and the Vincent, and also as the single-ended feed for an Audio Aero Reference SACD player on review at the time.

At first, it is all too easy to underestimate how good the Nu Diva really is: the music flows with an almost casual ease, and the overall approach is so smooth and untroubled that one could consider the sonic results innocuous.

But the whole idea of an interconnect is not to get in the way of the music, to afford it the best possible transition from source to destination, and not impose a sonic signature of its own – an aspect that many cable marques



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VERDICT

It's easy to underestimate this apparently unassuming cable – until you start analysing the way it presents the music. Clarity and coherence are its primary features, together with a strong sense of musical credibility.

PRICE..... R2 500 (0.8m pair)

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would do well to remember!

And so, what the Nu Diva achieves here is to transport the signal with as little fuss and ceremony as possible, retaining the original sonic data, warts and all, and delivering it to its destination with coherence and precision.

It means that good recordings, worthy of such painstaking attention, sound marvellous, since the Ecosse Nu Diva allows the full value of the content to be extracted, with none of the artefacts that can obscure the signal transfer process with lesser designs.

Thus, on Dire Straits' classic 'Lover Over Gold', treble was sweet and rounded (as one would expect of an analogue era recording), with no brittleness or aggression. The superb richness of the midrange was fully retained, notable in particular in the acoustic guitar riffs of Mark Knopfler, and his gruff, almost nonchalant vocals. And the bass was deep, dark and wholesome.

The Nu Diva promoted a wide and open soundstage, together with a strong element of transparency, allowing the music to transcend the loudspeakers as point sources, and to create a powerfully convincing, three-dimensional sonic picture.

As for pace, those who believe that silver-coated cables swap sweetness for lethargic dynamics had better take a listen to the Ecosse: the Nu Diva always sounded agile and articulate, with good rhythmic integrity and loads of energy.

Listening to the Ecosse Nu Diva is listening to music the way it was meant to be heard: it delivers the sonic signal with honesty and integrity, focusing purely on what is already there, and not adding or taking away anything in the so-called interests of listener enjoyment.

Of course, it also means that a poor recording or a flawed source component, will be far more readily identified in the process. But the Ecosse rewards excellence with such glee that its addition to a competent system will be well worth the investment.

Deon Schoeman