

Skogrand SC Beethoven loudspeaker cable review



Cables have been considered the conduit of signal in an audio system. I believe that many audiophiles have considered cables to be more than that. There are those who would spend more on a cable than an audio component in an audio system. Then there are those who would tweak or treat their cables to exact a certain sound or presentation of music from the audio system. Maybe you have been told to float your cables, ground your cables, tie up your cables in a certain way, and the list can go on. To many audiophiles, cables are component in an audio system and should be treated and invested likewise. We have seen cables' prices soared to a region that is unbelievable a few years ago and insane, a decade ago.

I will come upfront and testify that I am not comfortable to invest in cables compare to audio components. Many of my audiophile friends advised that such investment is unavoidable if performance is to be had. My reply is always that I have to be convinced.

Knut Skogrand learnt of my passion in audio from my Analogue Fellowship Facebook a couple of years ago and asked me (then) if I be interested to try his cables and that no finance will be incurred on my side (and so forth). At that time, I believed that I was using one of the best cables in the market, the MIT Oracle MA. You can imagine my confident in my cables then, but curiosity pushed me for the try of Skogrand cables. If you have read my review of the Skogrand SC Tchaikovsky cables, the conclusion was that those cables were awarded the "Choice award" in Analogue Fellowship Facebook. Until now, it is still the only audio component to have received this award even after a number of top end audio components that I have the honor and pleasure to review over the years. The panel of listeners that came by converted their audio cables to Skogrand SC Tchaikovsky, soon after the session.

Not long after the review, Knut Skogrand believed that he can improved upon the Skogrand Tchaikovsky model, but he admitted that it may not be much. He asked if I be willing to try this new model, the Purist Ignes model. I enquired upon the price and was taken a back. My then response was that here we have a slightly better cable than the Skogrand SC Tchaikovsky but at a much higher price.



Enter Skogrand SC Beethoven,

The Malaysia's Skogrand distributor, HiFi-Creations' Victor Pheh contacted me and offered me the Skogrand SC Beethoven speaker cables for a trial run.

I took delivery of the Skogrand SC Beethoven speaker cable terminated with banana plug for easy access to my Vitus Masterpiece MPM mono amplifiers and to my Gryphon Pendragon loudspeaker system (reviews of these fine components were done with the Skogrand SC Tchaikovsky speaker cables). I usually will allow the cables to run in for at least 200 hours before serious listening. The Skogrand SC Beethoven speaker cables already have a certain life in their presentation after the initial few hours of play. Then, I realized that these cables may not be 'the ultra expensive but with only little improvement' cables that I believed initially.

After 200 hours...

As I have mentioned, there is that certain life to the music after connecting that Skogrand SC Beethoven speaker cables. I admit that the character that I hear from the Skogrand SC Tchaikovsky speaker cables are similar to the Skogrand SC Beethoven. If you like the Skogrand SC Tchaikovsky then you will love the Skogrand SC Beethoven. I would say that this is no surprise since they are of Knut Skogrand's art or science, effort, preference and taste. I believed that Knut was trying to create a better Skogrand SC Tchaikovsky cables and ended with more than better Skogrand SC Tchaikovsky, the Skogrand SC Beethoven cables.



I was so impressed with Skogrand SC Tchaikovsky cables to allow me to hear so much into the music uninterrupted. There is no emphasis of any particular frequency or bandwidth thereof, detailing or character that can be easily used to describe many other branded cables in the market. Some may comment that such (non) character as being dull and uninteresting. The cables are conduit for signal and suppose to allow the music's character (if that is to be coined) to be presented untainted or uncolored. The Skogrand SC Tchaikovsky cables perform their function as a conduit flawlessly. Upfront, I would say that the Skogrand SC Beethoven cables are a much bigger conduit that allow so much more to flow through uninterrupted.

A much lower noise level...

Immediately, I notice that the Skogrand SC Beethoven speaker cables is of much lower noise floor compared to the Skogrand SC Tchaikovsky which is already a very low noise conduit. In this department of noise level, I would further say that the Skogrand SC Beethoven must be the quietest speaker cables that I have yet to hear so far (I admit that I have not hear all of the top speaker cables out there).

The human voice...

Just play your favorite artist and immediately you will notice something pleasantly different from what you are used to, even with those other expensive examples of speaker cables that you used to swear by. I played Diana Krall's Wallflower vinyl album (Verve BOO 21154-01) to a few friends whom later testified that they could not recognize that the voice was Diana Krall's. They were shocked of themselves for failure to recognize her voice. Here, I noticed

that Diana Krall's voice is somewhat different compare to her previous albums. I could not blame them since I was taken a back myself when I first heard Kit Chan's voice in my usual heavy rotation vinyl album of hers (NCKCLP001). Through the Skogrand SC Beethoven, I heard a certain layer of detail over their voice that was not there with the other cables. Their voices' expressiveness have taken on a whole new level of detail, textures, layering and breath to sum up a whole new level of emotion that is palpable, dense, touching and engaging. I find the vocalist's presence really stand out and tall amidst the competing musicians and their respective presence.

There is that balance in the vocal...

Imagine the human voice can be divided into a number of frequencies; low, mid and high. I am used to hear other cables tend to emphasize a certain frequency more than suppose to be, and to good effect. Here, if I may assumed, the Skogrand SC Beethoven is so balance throughout the frequencies (in comparison with other cables) that it is able to render the human voice special and delicious (as described above). I wish to add that the intelligibility of the words in the lyrics is beyond reproach. Literally, each word is being expressed individually or each sentence is being sang melodiously, will be presented as its intended by the artist.



In addition, the key and note of the artist's voice is clearly presented. Even the sibilance took on a natural decay instead of the usual irritating peak at the high. I felt that I can really dig deep into the artist's voice and the artistic use of that voice. The voice of Miss. Radio Toneff from her only album, "FairyTales" (Odin LP03) sounded so diverse that you can hear her employing different keys and artistry at different songs; i.e., "The Moon is a harsh Mistress" compared to "Come down in time". The Skogrand SC Beethoven will highlight the voice like no other cables that came my way so far. I do not mean that it will exaggerate the details in the human voice but that this cable really love the human voice and that it will make you love your favorite vocalist (more or) all over again.

Back to the human emotion buried in the voice...

Through the Skogrand SC Beethoven, Diana Krall sounded so different to my friends, I believe she has sang differently. It is not so much so about her voice but her skill, experience and age in life. This cable has the ability to highlight the differences more than other cables and at naturally too. Here, to me, she sounded more chesty, raw, energized, focus and confident which is quite a contrast to her youthful, swinging and exploring mood. The same can be discovered of Miss. Radio Toneff. Here, you will hear the difference of emotional state she was in at each

song. The key she sang, the tempo and pause employed in the lyrics and so forth will be highlighted here, but not in an analytical manner but naturally obvious enough to show the emotion. The emotion carries the listener into the lyrics and the meaning thereof. To me, the Skogrand SC Beethoven did not just give me the lyrics but the song sang by the artist, and the artist herself (here).

The key of the piano...

In the context of a cable, the key to a good representation or playback of a piano is the least possible coloration. The piano is a sophisticated musical instrument that cover the very low to the very high key. This is one musical instrument that a symphony can be written on. The least colored audio system should be able to playback with clarity of each key played on the piano.



Take back the FairyTales vinyl album (Odin LP03), where one of the better recorded piano was done. Here, the Skogrand SC Beethoven allow the skill of Steve Dobrogosz to shine through accurately. Each key played and its accompanied pressure can be clearly heard, felt and experience to its full glory. Here, each piano key is allow to bloom fully and decay, follow by the next key. Depending on the key played, you can hear each key played to its full bandwidth that can extend all the way to its intended low and/or high. Thus, you will hear a piano key being represented more than just a floating note, which is the case and result with many other branded cables. The Skogrand SC Tchaikovsky already proved to me the experience of how accurate a piano key can be presented. The Skogrand SC Beethoven will take that so much further. Here, each piano key will be represented with its intended full bandwidth, and with a much greater extension at the low and high, and a more meatier mid, and all at greater clarity (clean and clear). In addition I notice a spacing before each key that allow me to follow the play so much more easier. Thus, the decay of each key is so much more clearer and clean to the extend that you will know when it actually end, even in instances where the pianist chose to play the next key before the complete decay of the initial key. To me, it is a complete experience of a piano play being presented at an audio system.

The whole piano...

My next question is how will the piano as a musical instrument stand out among other instruments?

Listen to the gentle play of the piano at the track, “Strange Meadow Lark” in the famous album “Time Out” by the Dave Brubeck Quartet (Columbia Stereo CS 8192). Here, each key stroke took on life with full bloom and decayed appropriately. It’s so “right” as if the piano took on a three dimensional space with a certain weight that totaled up a presence in my audio room.

Then the challenge went further. I played the vinyl album, Clifford Curzon played Mozart Piano Concerto No.20 & No.27 with the English Chamber Orchestra (Decca SXL 7007/Esoteric ESLP-10001) where I expect the piano really stand out. I am treated with the size, weight and presence of the piano in the midst of a full orchestra. It is not just the clarity of each piano key played but I can actually feel the low of the low key through the entire size and length of the piano. Before the Skogrand SC Beethoven, my best experience then was that each piano key was given its independent low frequency that I coined as the piano key was given the 'leg'. The Skogrand SC Beethoven will extend that piano key through the entire piano, even in a grand venue filled with many other musicians with competing musical instruments.



This experience confirmed to me just how critical this Skogrand SC Beethoven speaker cable's neutrality as conduit of signal in bringing out one of the most difficult to play of musical instrument, the piano through an audio system.

Play it all...

The human voice and the piano love to have the Skogrand SC Beethoven in the chain, that much is for sure (to me, anyway). I think all other musical instruments will love to have the Skogrand SC Beethoven too. I love to play the big band especially those led by the Count Basie. Try "Me and You" (Pablo 2310-891) vinyl album. I enjoy every tracks here. They have piano, guitar, bass, drum, trumpet, trombone and saxophone. It is so easy to identify every one of these instrument and the Skogrand SC Beethoven made it easier with its ability to separate them with a space that is huge enough to walk through. I know that I have said this a number of times in my other reviews. Maybe because at all those reviews, the components were connected with

Skogrand cables(?). The Skogrand SC Beethoven go further than the Skogrand SC Tchaikovsky by giving each musical instrument its own independent recording booth.



The clarity of each musical instrument is uncanny with independent weight, density, palpability, energy and life even when the whole band is playing at the same time. You will hear and experience each musician artistry and musical instrument as a whole (remember what I said about his own recording booth). The whole act will be played out to you in its own space. The bandwidth will be from top to low without discontinuity. The drum will shoot its dynamic bass line from its position. The trumpet will blow its peak high from its mouth. The bass pluck will be from the strings. Here, there are tracks with certain musician called out to do solo in the front, the Skogrand SC Beethoven will shine that musician without neglecting the others at the fore. The realism of the band play is the forte of this cable.

How low can you go?

I do not suppose that a cable or any audio component suppose to add or subtract low to a playback of a recording, but at times, it's a necessity (?). The Skogrand SC Beethoven is one "cable less" cable to an audio chain. Yet, I notice that musical instrument enjoys a more weightier presence compare to the Skogrand SC Tchaikovsky. But, the human voice does not sound the same 'weightier'. The drum's attack is more extended, deeper, clearer and more. The bass plucks lines are clearly string bound, extended, deeper, clearer and more. Ultimately, this Skogrand SC Beethoven has given these musical bass instrument their respective individual recording booth to capture all their respective energy to be playback at their supposedly full tilt. Thus, you will be treated with each musical instrument comes to life that is filled with energy. Ultimately, if the recording has it, you will be treated with low bass that is fast, taut, control, directional, clear and clean, as if you are being shot at by it. It is that great!

Clearer soundstage?

Here, the musical instrument will also enjoy a denser and higher palpability, with a much clearer delineation in a much more clearer soundstage in comparison. I noted 'clearer soundstage' because I noticed that the Skogrand SC Beethoven will outline the recording venue. It will even present the difference in time of recording of each track (if that is the case). It is apparent that the recording booth effect is extended to the venue and type of recording employed. I played the Airto Moreira & the Gods of Jazz's Killer Bees (B&W Music) that included 'some synthesizer, chicken, wilderness and weirdness', among the other conventional musical instruments. It is obvious where those 'weirdness' were added in the recording. Then I played a contrasting recording venue of actual and bigger space, Tower of Power Direct (Sheffield Lab

17). It is obvious the differences here since it was recorded with the musicians and their instrument in the same space, and that it was recorded direct.



Other cables will showcase the differences but the Skogrand SC Beethoven will highlight the differences with 'space' among the musicians that constitute a certain presence. Some may termed it as the 'atmosphere' of the recording but here, I wish to add that this space extend from top to bottom, fore to front and surrounding each musician and any other entity recorded. It's that super detail retrieval and the segregation of those details that constitute certain magic of this loudspeakers cable. I will not term this effect as analytical that may imply certain artifact(s) that may not be pleasant. Play your favorite vocal or any musical instrument and through an appropriate audio system, it will be obvious how natural the sound it presents.

Tempo...

Is there another loudspeaker cable that is faster sounding? Or more accurate in timing? Or tempo?



I believe that there are other cables that give the impression of having a faster tempo to its presentation, but not the Skogrand SC Beethoven's definition of tempo. There are those with that "improved tempo" at the sacrifice of intelligibility of tones. You cannot follow through the number of tones and the completion of each tone. This will usually follow with loss of palpability and density of imaging. It may suffered lack of detailing and texture. Spacing may suffer too. Ultimately, I believe a "fast sounding" cable will inevitably suffer in tonal balance.

I seek the right tempo by me with tonal balance that is well proportion and extended, and unobtrusive in between the low to mid to high, to say the least.



The Skogrand SC Beethoven loudspeaker cable's most immediate positive attribute and 'triumph card' upon installation is the presentation of spacing in all that is presented. Imagine playing one of those most complicated of composition that usually sound like a mess without any definition, boundary, separation and coherency. Then imagine this cable is able to separate every single tone emitted from a single musical instrument or voice recorded with every other tones from every other musical instrument recorded with spacing that is wide enough to constitute an entity in the recording itself. The imagination will continue to include the spacing of the recording venue and the surrounding itself. Ultimately, imagine every entity in the recording is widely separated by a space. Henceforth, the musicians and their instruments sound so clear and natural, with their tempo that is easily followed to each tone's end follow by the next to the completion of the intended line. There is no sluggishness in the mid and there is no over hanged from the mid low to the lowest possible from the loudspeakers even with playback of material of extreme low frequencies. I would say that there is no exaggeration or roll off of any particular frequency to suggest any contribution to the ultimate tempo of the presentation. I believe that the Skogrand SC Beethoven loudspeaker cables maybe the most accurate in presenting tempo that I have yet heard.

My final thought?

The Skogrand SC Beethoven loudspeaker cables is the least colored example that came into my audio system thus far. I have many audiophile friends that swear by one cable brand or another that is attributed by the cables' color in sound character. I do not disagree with most of them as I find those color enticing and even necessary to make certain music or recording more entertaining. As I venture further into the upper echelon of audio fidelity, my objective improved. I seek the actual presentation of the recording, as intended by the artists and the

recording engineers. I am more interested in hearing more into the music than my preferences. I do admit having that question lingering of what is the actual presentation in the recording. Is it not this “better” presentation (more bass, more high, meatier mid, etc) is what is intended by the artists or the recording engineers? My rule of thumb is go for something that can give me more of the music in term of the artists’ artistry, musical instruments, and the essence of the music, and not just any particular frequency and/or bandwidth thereof.



The Skogrand Beethoven is that indispensable tool and my current reference to really hear and understand any audio component, and ultimately any music and its intended recording. It is not the most expensive loudspeakers cables out in the current market and it’s not the cable bargain of the year. I believe that is not the intention of Skogrand. It’s the state of the art cable from Skogrand.

Associated audio components in this review:

- 1) TriangleArt Apollo MC cartridge,
- 2) Vermeer Reference tonearm,
- 3) TechDas Air Force One turntable,
- 4) FM Acoustics 223 Phono Master stage,
- 5) Vitus Masterpiece Phonostage MP-P201,
- 6) FM Acoustics 268C pre amp,
- 7) Vitus Masterpiece Mono Amplifier MP-M201,
- 8) Gryphon Pendragon Loudspeaker System,
- 9) Skogrand Beethoven Loudspeaker cables,
- 10) Skogrand Tchaikovsky Balance interconnects,
- 11) Frank Acoustics Power Bank Storage PB-15000Ws (3 units),

- 12) Tombo Audio platforms,
- 13) Stillpoints Rack and footers,
- 14) Harmonix 666 Million
- 15) BSG Technologies QOL “Signal Completion Stage”,

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