

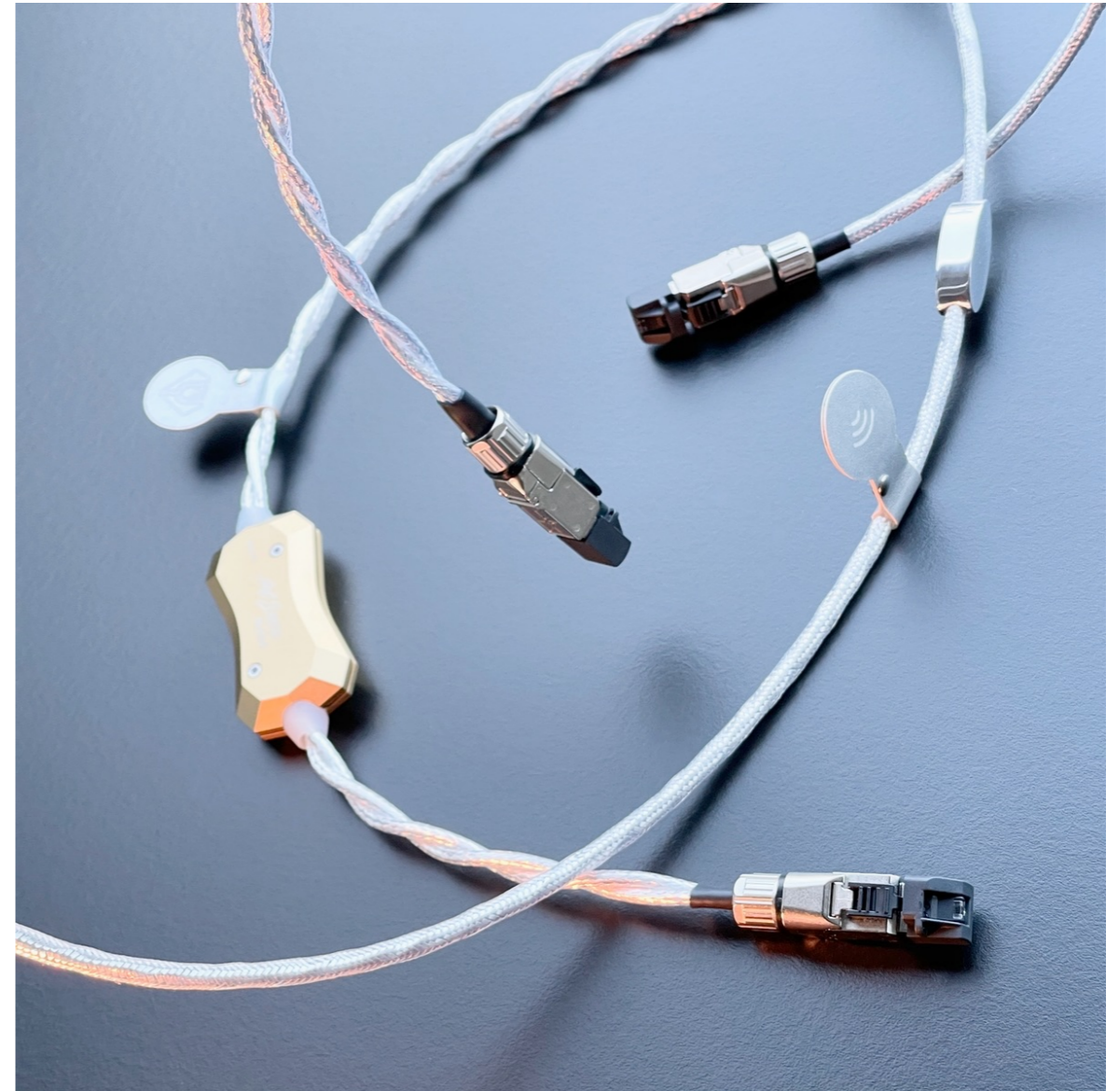
# Crystal Cable Diamond and Monet Network

*Ethernet according to the  
Audiophile Silversmith from Elst*



# Crystal Cable Diamond and Monet Network

*In September 2020 Crystal Cable, the Dutch manufacturer of high-end audio cables from Elst - introduced the CrystalNetwork Diamond and the CrystalNetwork Absolute Dream, their first network cables. A few months later, all of a sudden, there was the Art Series, a new series that has three price levels, rising from Monet through Van Gogh to DaVinci. The Monet Network, which is about the same price as the CrystalNetwork Absolute Dream, is the only network cable in that series like the Network Diamond is within the Diamond Series. It took a while, but we finally managed to get hold of a CrystalNetwork Diamond and a Monet Network for an extensive comparison.*





# Diamond versus Monet

## CrystalNetwork Diamond

The CrystalNetwork Diamond, like all cables in the Diamond Series, has conductors constructed of Crystal Cable's unique and patented silver/gold metallurgy. Of particular interest - and this also applies to the Monet Network - is that the CrystalNetwork Diamond, due to its four-conductor geometry, does not transmit data rates above 100Mbit/s. Don't be alarmed though, that's still more than enough, even for streaming extreme resolutions like eightfold DSD or 32bit/768kHz PCM. The main advantage of

this configuration - in a nutshell - is that there is less noise at clock processor level than at Gigabit speeds. Moreover, with 8 conductors, the price would almost double, which is also not unimportant. The CrystalNetwork Diamond is terminated with shielded Telegärtner CAT8 Ethernet connectors, which are considered the very best.

## Crystal Cable Monet Network

The Crystal Cable Monet Network, like all cables in the Art Series, uses the very newest generation of 'mono-crystal' conductors. Crystal Cable themselves call this Infinite Crystal Silver (ICS). Each conductor in the cable consists of one long 'crystal' of their proprietary silver/gold metal, thereby improving conductivity and reducing signal smearing. As with the CrystalNetwork Diamond, the data rate with the Monet Network is limited to 100Mbit/s, and the cable is also terminated with the superior Telegärtner CAT8 connectors.

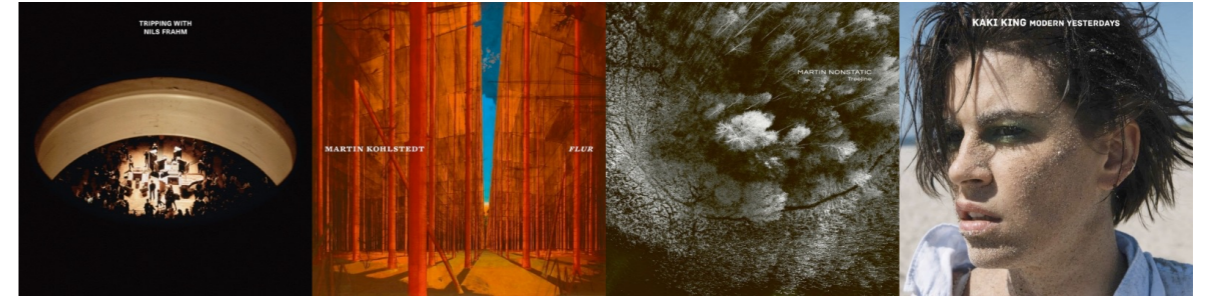




# Setup and Music

## The Setup

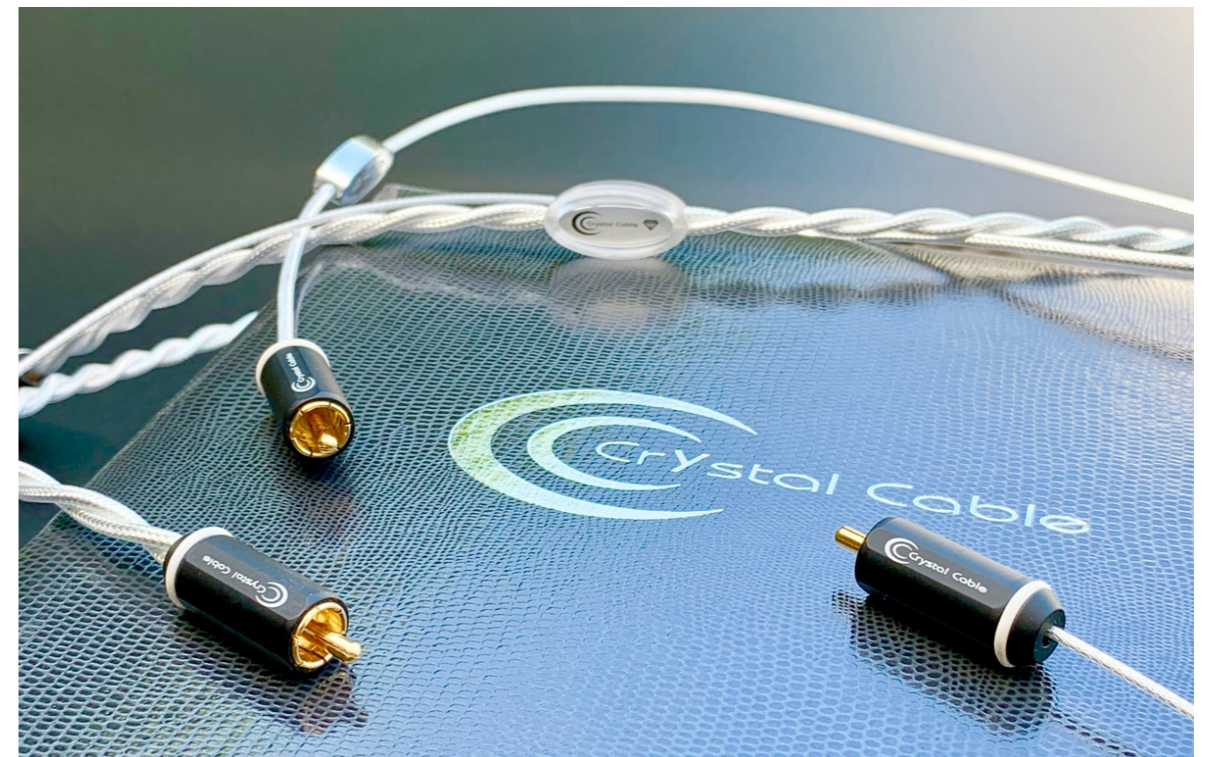
As usual, we decided to set up this comparative test in a step-by-step manner. But first, we wanted to optimize the reference set to make sure we had the best environment for testing the new cables. The familiar Linn Klimax set with Wilson Benesch Trinity speakers and a Mac mini as Roon Server had been upgraded in a number of ways since the previous comparison test we did. For example, all power cords were replaced by AudioQuest **Monsoon**, the analog cables were replaced by Crystal Cable Diamond **Ultra** and **Reference** and the English Electric **8Switch** had been added to the network, powered by a second-generation iFi iPower adapter. As a baseline, the network from NAS to streamer was wired entirely with AudioQuest Carbon CAT700. Two 'intermediate steps' were included: we wanted to determine in advance whether the more powerful and even quieter iFi iPower X power supply would bring improvement to the 8Switch, and we wanted to start the comparison by replacing the AudioQuest Carbon network cable between switch and streamer with an AudioQuest Vodka, to fill the price gap with the CrystalNetwork Diamond,



but also to give the reader a little more perspective on the progress we were hoping to make with the Crystal Cable cables.

## The Music

To keep the listening test more or less surveyable, we chose four tracks that we had been listening to extensively over the last period. First of all, the beautiful neo-classical piano music of ZIN by Martin Kohlstedt, from his album FLUR. Secondly, the exciting and atmospheric track Sunson by Nils Frahm, from his exquisitely recorded live album Tripping With Nils Frahm, then the dense electronic dub sounds of Olakite by Martin Nonstatic, on Treeline, and finally Can't Touch This Or That On You Or My Face by the virtuoso guitar player Kaki King on her album Modern Yesterdays.

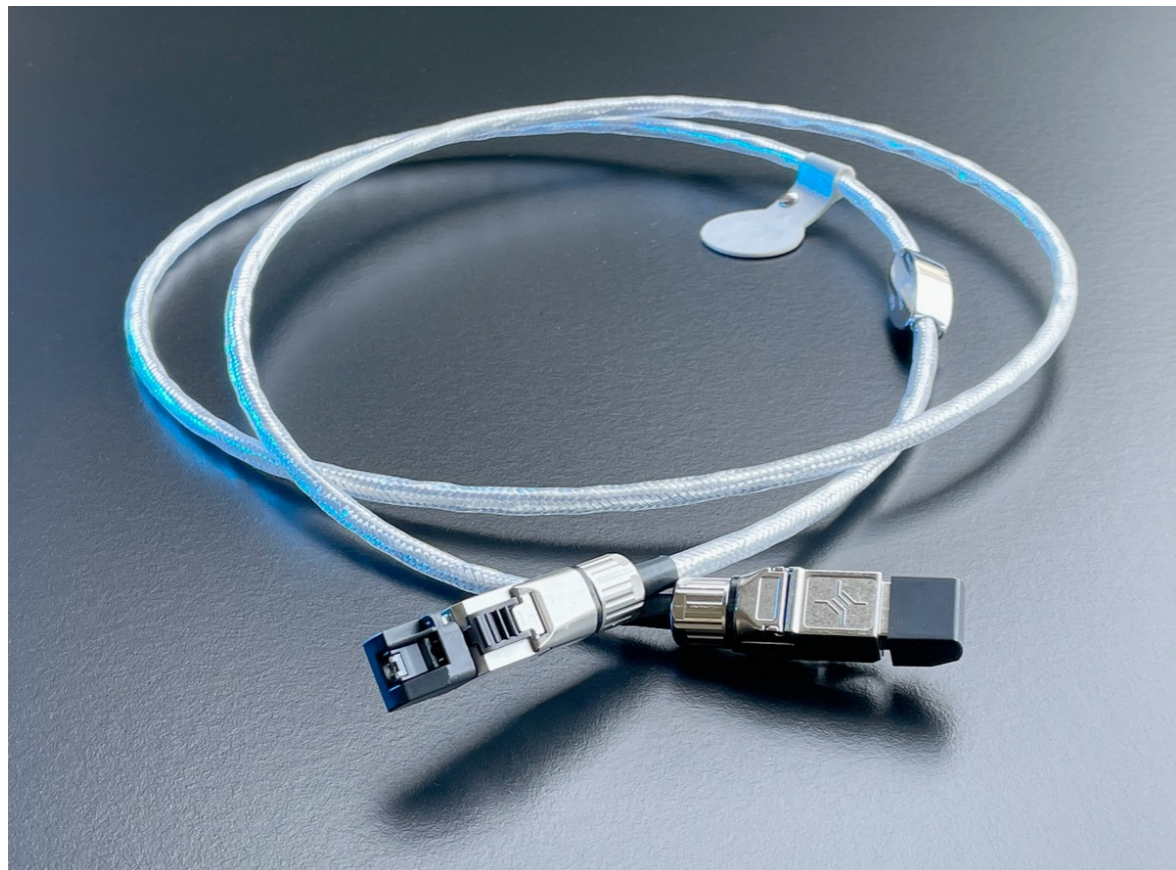




# Listening

## The baseline

We have found on many occasions that we could live very happily with this set. The reproduction was detailed and colourful, dynamic and spacious, with no stand-out issues. Martin Kohlstedt's piano sparkled beautifully, and there were plenty of ambient noises to be heard. With Nils Frahm, we felt like we were physically present at the concert. Very suitable as a baseline, but we knew that there was still room for improvement.



## iFi iPower X (the baseline 2.0)

Replacing the '2nd generation' iFi iPower (feeding the switch) with the iFi iPower X made a greater difference than we had expected. Nils Frahm sounded more spacious and cleaner, also in the bass, which became slightly more neutral without losing its tonal colour. The recording of Martin Kohlstedt sounded more transparent and neutral and therefore more lifelike. With Martin Nonstatic, the tighter bass, bigger spaciousness, and slightly more frontal and also deeper image stood out. The 'Brian Eno' sample - you'll know what we mean when you hear it - that starts around 1' 10 minutes, was more clearly identifiable. We had found our definitive baseline.

## AudioQuest Vodka

Compared to the custom-made AudioQuest Carbon, the considerably more expensive AudioQuest Vodka presented a more relaxed, more fluid low end with Martin Nonstatic, with bigger spaciousness and more texture for the synthesizer's sounds, that made them less 'smoothed out'. Martin Kohlstedt's piano had more push and tonal colour, a characteristic that we are quite familiar with when listening to the Vodka. We could also hear more 'string' and tiny ambient noises were better distinguishable, which made it sound more realistic. With Nils Frahm, the midrange became more pronounced, the piano gained in detail, and the overall atmosphere became more spacious and thrilling. The midrange might be just a shade too colourful as far as neutrality fetishists are concerned, but it did add to the 'live feel'.

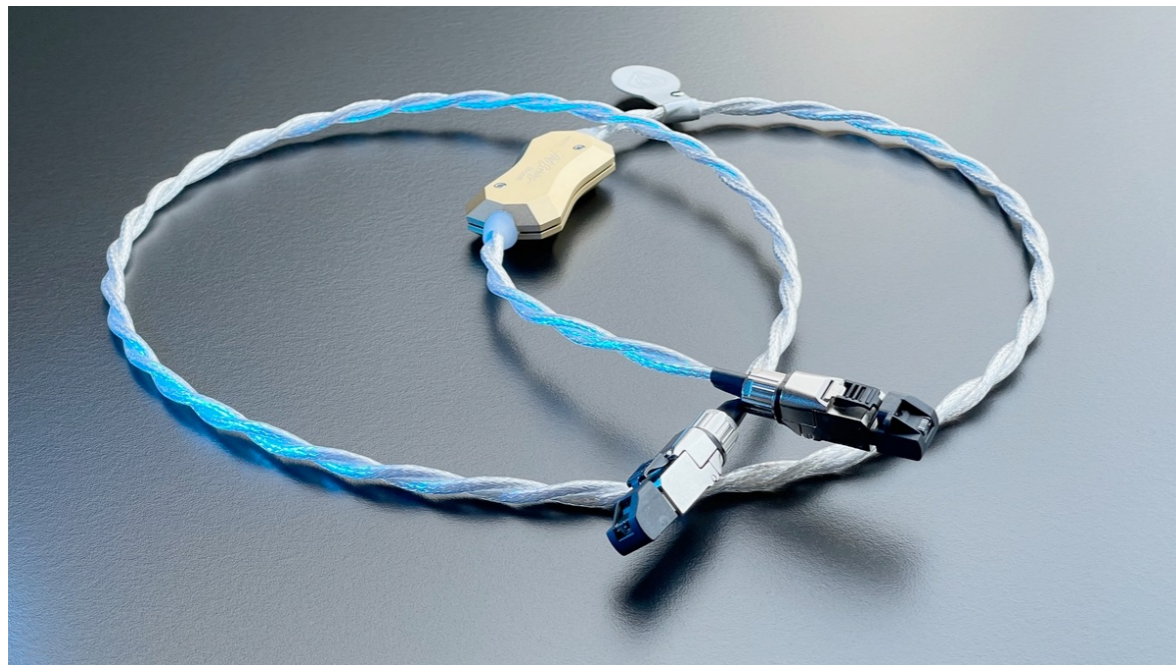
## CrystalNetwork Diamond

The CrystalNetwork Diamond sounded considerably different. We have learned that 'different' is not necessarily 'better,' but we really took a big leap forward here. Nils Frahm's music sounded smoother and more relaxed in exactly the right way. The background seemed quieter and the spaciousness was larger. The bass, which is often a bit softer with silver cables from other brands, was actually tighter and went deeper. Based on

previous experiences with Crystal Cable we had hoped for this, but had been careful not to count on it too much. The music became more concrete, more tangible and had more dynamics. With Martin Nonstatic there was more pressure, but in a subtle way without being 'in your face'. The bass sounded smoother and sounds in the background were much easier to hear, we could 'see' deeper into the mix and the Eno sample was much more sharply delineated. The various layers were easier to distinguish from each other. Martin Kohlstedt's piano contained significantly more harmonics, which resulted in a richer listening experience. There was more micro-detail and sounds became more tangible and transparent, flowing into the room more fluidly. With Kaki King, we noticed that there was more 'tone', with deeper insight into the mix and an overall stronger listening experience.

## Crystal Cable Monet Network

The Crystal Cable Monet Network, with its larger number of even better conductors, showed us that Crystal Cable, like other cable brands that we hold in high esteem, manages to achieve terrific consistency between series. The character of the Monet Network was identical to that of the CrystalNetwork Diamond, but it simply delivered more of the good stuff. With Kaki King, the sound stage became even deeper while at the same



time the far background was rendered broader and cleaner. The percussive elements of her guitar playing had bigger reverb and the coherence of the mix became more clear and compelling. Martin Kohlstedt's piano sounded more relaxed and had considerably more texture, but there was also more pressure in the piano sounds. The spaciousness in Martin Nonstatic's track took on holographic dimensions. More micro-dynamics and detail could be heard. The imaging was deeper, the bass was more supple and transparent, offering more power, and the Eno sample was now hovering almost palpably in the middle of the sound stage. By now the speakers had performed their grand disappearing act once again; the sounds were floating freely across the room.

## Diamond and Monet in tandem

Based on extensive listening tests, we have since long preached the gospel of the cable between switch and streamer being the most important one in your network, and consequently that you should make your biggest investment there. But that doesn't mean that the cable between your source device and the switch (in this case between the Mac mini and the English Electric 8Switch) can be of poor quality. The AudioQuest Carbon CAT700 with Telegärtner CAT6 connectors is no slouch, but what would happen if we replaced it with the CrystalNetwork Diamond? So that's exactly what we did, and we had a good laugh about it. Oh boy, oh boy... The recording of Martin Nonstatic became completely holographic, with more dynamics, more inner detail, and more texture than we had ever thought possible. Martin Kohlstedt's grand piano sounded even richer, even the softest of tones had more detail in the attack. The piano's mechanism was much more clearly associated with the notes that were being played and became an integral part of the instrument. Kaki King's guitar had much more 'string' to it, the vibrations were almost visible, and with Nils Frahm, the sustain - on the lower strings in particular - lasted a lot longer. The overall impression was that we were looking at a beloved painting that had just returned from a professional cleaning and a thorough restoration, and that we were marveling at the natural colours and details.



# Concluding

With their first network cables, the people at Crystal Cable have most emphatically secured their place in this hard-won cable segment. The audiophile silversmiths from Elst have created a beautiful product. Refinement, naturalness, fluidity, and transparency are the keywords, but let's not forget about power, timbre, and impact. To qualify it soundwise: of all the network cable brands we have tested up until now, we found these Crystal Cables to be the most 'audiophile', but in a very natural, colourful, and above all nicely un-cerebral way. Never too white or too restrained (which is often mistaken for being 'relaxed') but rather very engaging and 'fun'. The CrystalNetwork Diamond may well be the finest network cable in its price segment, but the Crystal Cable Monet Network was the clear winner overall. In tandem, they were more than the sum of their parts, but starting with just one will already increase your listening pleasure quite significantly.





# Music and Information

More information and prices about the described Crystal Cable Diamond and Monet network cables, can be found in our webshop:

Crystal Cable network cables

## Qobuz

Martin Kohlstedt - FLUR

Nils Frahm - Tripping

Martin Nonstatic - Treeline

Kaki King - Modern Yesterdays

## Tidal

Martin Kohlstedt - FLUR

Nils Frahm - Tripping

Martin Nonstatic - Treeline

Kaki King - Modern Yesterdays

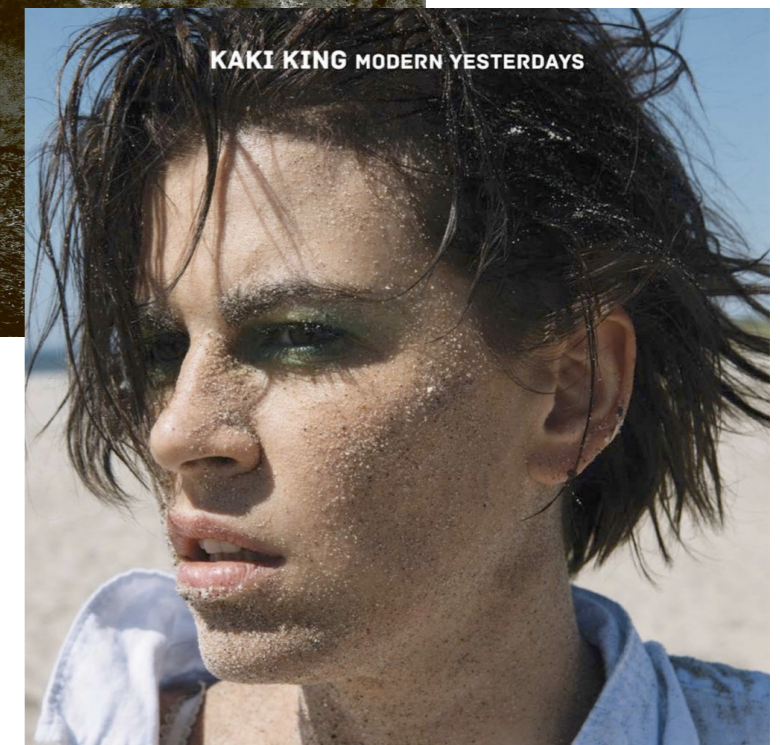
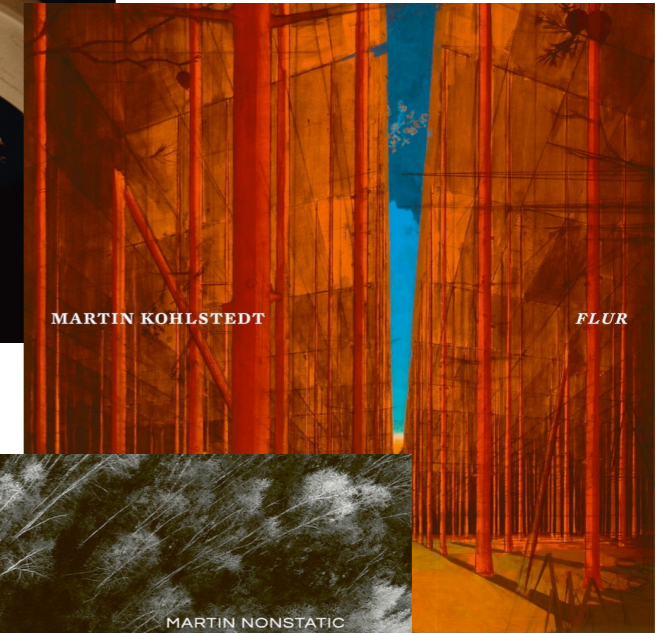
## Spotify

Martin Kohlstedt - FLUR

Nils Frahm - Tripping

Martin Nonstatic - Treeline

Kaki King - Modern Yesterdays







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