

THE COMPANION

The Listener of Emotion

“I listen to connect with the emotional truth of music.”

LEVEL 1 OF 3

Foundations

Emotion audible at first listen — clear, unambiguous emotional content that almost everyone recognizes instantly. 14 calibrator tracks.

14 tracks · English edition · verified July 2026

The Map of Your Perception

SoundDNA archetypes are not personality types. They describe four distinct modes of processing sound — ways attention and the brain filter the very same music, bringing different layers of it to the foreground. What is “noise” to one listener is “energy” to another, and “structure” to a third. No one is wrong — everyone hears their own layer of the truth. This document is your guide to one of the four:

The Companion, the listener of emotion.

“I listen to connect with the emotional truth of music.”

CHARACTER

The Companion seeks an intimate bond with the performer. They focus on natural timbre, the authenticity of the human voice and the emotional message. Instead of technical sterility, they choose organic warmth and mood.

OUR HYPOTHESIS

The midrange band carries the frequencies of human speech — the channel through which we read other people's emotions from birth. We hypothesize that Companions listen to music with the same “social ear” they use to listen to people: the priority is the voice, its timbre and its emotional truth.

IN THE MARKET

In gear design, there is an entire school of thought focused precisely on this profile — placing musicality and emotional truth above raw specification. On the forums, the Companion defends “musicality” against “soulless charts.”

PREFERENCES

Rich midrange, smooth presentation, natural warmth. A system should sound human: the beauty of voices and emotional resonance over surgical precision.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

- 1 Know your profile first.** This library reads very differently once you know which element you listen with — take the free test at soundDNA.org before you start.
- 2 Pick a calibrator.** Every track below is described the same way: what to listen for, a concrete mini-test, and what the result says about you.
- 3 Listen with a task.** Listening with a specific question teaches more than a hundred passive plays. This is training — results arrive fast and stay with you.

ABOUT THIS LEVEL — FOUNDATIONS

Emotion is audible “at first listen” — clear, unambiguous emotional content that almost everyone recognizes instantly. These fourteen tracks build your baseline vocabulary before Level 2 (Development) introduces ambiguity, irony, and mixed feeling, and Level 3 (Mastery) reaches the outer edges of emotional expression in music.

14 Tracks That Are Tools

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR — what is perceptually distinctive in this recording, and where to find it. **YOUR TEST** — one concrete listening task. **WHAT THIS TESTS** — what the result says about your ear, your emotional response, and your element.

01

At Last

Etta James

SOUL / R&B BALLAD · STUDIO · 1960

Many live and alternate versions exist — use this original single version.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR Etta James's voice carries a specific emotional quality — fulfilled, patient longing finally answered — supported by a slow-swelling orchestral arrangement that seems to physically “arrive” alongside the lyric.

YOUR TEST Try to name the exact emotion in one or two words before reading anything else about the song. Is it simply “happy,” or is there something more specific — relief, disbelief, gratitude?

WHAT THIS TESTS Your baseline ability to identify a single, clearly-intended emotion and put words to it — the foundational Companion skill everything else in this library builds on.



LISTEN

open.spotify.com/track/6N8yVvN6qEYx9qiIsCfkXk

02 Hurt

Johnny Cash

AMERICANA · STUDIO · 2002

A cover of the original Nine Inch Nails song. Recorded when Cash was 70 and in declining health, months before his death.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR Cash's voice is worn, cracked, and unsteady in places — a fragility that wasn't in the original recording of this song, and that transforms its meaning entirely, from youthful self-destruction to an old man's reckoning with his whole life.

YOUR TEST Try to notice the moments where his voice audibly strains or wavers. Does this feel like a flaw, or does it feel like the emotional point of the performance?

WHAT THIS TESTS Recognizing when vocal imperfection is not a technical failure but the primary carrier of emotional meaning — a skill that will matter throughout this library.



LISTEN

open.spotify.com/track/28cnXtME493VX9NOw9clUh

03 Happy

Pharrell Williams

POP / SOUL · STUDIO · 2013

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR A relentlessly upbeat tempo, a bright horn-and-clap arrangement, and a vocal performance that never drops its energy for even a moment — engineered from the ground up for unmixed, uncomplicated joy.

YOUR TEST Try to find even one moment of ambiguity or shadow in the track. Does it exist, or is the emotion completely, deliberately pure?

WHAT THIS TESTS Recognizing “pure” emotional intent — a track built to convey exactly one feeling with no complicating layers, useful as a reference point against which more complex tracks later in this library can be measured.



LISTEN

open.spotify.com/track/1X9NVfPMpopapXyLoZrSCD

04 Non, je ne regrette rien

Édith Piaf

FRENCH CHANSON · STUDIO · 1960

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR Piaf's voice builds from a controlled, almost conversational opening into a full-throated, defiant declaration — “No, I regret nothing” — that grows louder and more emphatic with each repetition, as if she is convincing herself as much as the listener.

YOUR TEST Try to track how the emotional intensity changes across the track's short two and a half minutes. Where exactly does it shift from statement to declaration?

WHAT THIS TESTS Perceiving emotional escalation within a single short performance — noticing that feeling in music is rarely static, even in a track this brief.



LISTEN

open.spotify.com/track/3dkIE8P7hvl3tHI9KSb6dA

05 I Will Always Love You

Whitney Houston

POP / R&B BALLAD · STUDIO · 1992

A cover of Dolly Parton's 1973 original — a very different, much quieter arrangement.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR The song begins nearly a cappella, quiet and intimate, before building through a famous key change into an enormous, sustained vocal climax — one of the most recognizable examples of dynamic build in popular music.

YOUR TEST Try to locate the exact moment the key change happens. What does your body do at that instant — does it register as a physical shift, not just a musical one?

WHAT THIS TESTS Perceiving how a specific musical device (the key change) is used deliberately to manufacture an emotional peak — recognizing craft behind what feels like spontaneous feeling.



LISTEN

open.spotify.com/track/4eHbdreAnSOrDDsFfc4Fpm

06 No Woman, No Cry

Bob Marley & The Wailers

REGGAE · STUDIO · 1974

A famous 1975 live version is also widely considered the best-known recording — this is the original studio version.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR Despite its title and lyrical content about hardship and poverty, the song's warm organ, gentle reggae rhythm, and Marley's tender, reassuring vocal delivery create an overall feeling of comfort rather than sadness.

YOUR TEST Try to notice the gap between what the words describe (difficult circumstances) and how the music makes you feel (consoled, soothed). Which one wins?

WHAT THIS TESTS Recognizing that lyrical content and musical feeling can point in different emotional directions — and that, when they conflict, the music usually determines what a listener actually feels.



LISTEN

open.spotify.com/track/3PQLYVskjUeRmRlECsL0X

07 Killing In The Name

Rage Against The Machine

RAP METAL · STUDIO · 1992

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR Heavy, detuned guitar riffs, a tense, repetitive groove, and a vocal delivery that escalates from controlled tension into a full-throated, screamed refusal by the track's end — one of the most direct musical expressions of anger in popular music.

YOUR TEST Try to physically notice your own reaction — does your body tense up, does your jaw clench? Compare this to how track #3 (Happy) made you feel.

WHAT THIS TESTS Connecting a specific, intense emotion (anger) to a physical bodily response — recognizing that emotional listening isn't only mental, it's felt in the body.



LISTEN

open.spotify.com/track/0N4NO2BmOIBWrCQ9r8Ei8m

08 Strange Fruit

Billie Holiday

JAZZ · STUDIO · 1939

This song protests the lynching of Black Americans; a serious historical subject presented with deliberate restraint.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR Holiday sings with extreme restraint and control rather than overt anguish — a deliberately understated delivery over a sparse, slow arrangement that makes the song's difficult subject matter more devastating, not less, precisely because it isn't oversung.

YOUR TEST Try to notice how little vocal ornamentation or emotional “performance” Holiday actually uses here, compared to the intensity of what she's singing about. Does restraint feel more or less powerful than an overt display of emotion would?

WHAT THIS TESTS Recognizing that understatement can be an emotional technique in its own right — that the absence of visible emotional display doesn't mean absence of emotional power.



LISTEN

open.spotify.com/track/1CTex49P0iWwzUGsMNjgaV

09 Somebody To Love

Queen

ROCK · STUDIO · 1976

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR Freddie Mercury's voice is layered dozens of times to simulate a full gospel choir, creating a sense of communal, almost desperate yearning that a single voice alone couldn't achieve — loneliness expressed, paradoxically, through the sound of many voices.

YOUR TEST Try to notice that the song is fundamentally about being alone, yet it's built from an enormous wall of massed voices. Does that combination feel contradictory, or does it somehow make sense emotionally?

WHAT THIS TESTS Perceiving how arrangement choices (like vocal layering) can amplify or complicate the emotional content of a lyric — a technical device in direct service of a feeling.



LISTEN

open.spotify.com/track/3cF5wb8RD0McGCUPSBaQmY

10 Piano Sonata No. 14 “Moonlight”: I. Adagio sostenuto

Ludwig van Beethoven, performed by Daniel Barenboim

CLASSICAL (SOLO PIANO) · COMPOSED 1801, THIS RECORDING 1967

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR A slow, repeating triplet figure in the right hand sits above a simple, somber bass line — no lyrics, no title referring to any specific event, just harmony and repetition conveying melancholy entirely through instrumental means.

YOUR TEST Try to describe the emotion this piece conveys without using any words related to what you've heard about its title (“moonlight”). What do you actually hear, independent of the nickname?

WHAT THIS TESTS Perceiving emotion in music with zero lyrical or narrative content to guide you — pure instrumental emotional communication, the hardest and most fundamental skill this entire library trains.



LISTEN

open.spotify.com/track/4cyODakABlyEfHg1mqXp3b

11 Fado português

Amália Rodrigues

FADO (PORTUGAL) · STUDIO · 1970 (WRITTEN 1965)

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR Fado is built around saudade — a specifically Portuguese emotional concept combining longing, melancholy, and love all at once, with no single-word English equivalent — carried here by Amália's voice over Portuguese guitar.

YOUR TEST Try to notice that the emotion in this recording doesn't cleanly match any single English emotion word you already know. Sit with that ambiguity rather than forcing a label onto it.

WHAT THIS TESTS Recognizing that not every emotion music conveys has a convenient word in your own language — an important corrective before this library assumes emotional vocabulary is universal.



LISTEN

open.spotify.com/track/2IBJHVCe0FCVodfl9sCA7q

12

Amazing Grace

Mahalia Jackson

GOSPEL · STUDIO · MID-20TH CENTURY

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR Jackson's voice moves between quiet, reverent restraint and powerful, soaring release within the same performance — the emotional range associated with spiritual devotion, moving from humility to exaltation and back.

YOUR TEST Try to identify at least two distinct emotional “modes” within this single performance. Does the feeling stay constant, or does it shift?

WHAT THIS TESTS Perceiving emotional range within a single vocal performance — recognizing that even a “simple” hymn can move through more than one feeling.



LISTEN

open.spotify.com/track/7z0hfYzsQCsZWtsXsHpIi3

13

Cielito Lindo

Vicente Fernández

MARIACHI / RANCHERA (MEXICO) · TRADITIONAL SONG, LATER 20TH-CENTURY RECORDING

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR Full mariachi brass and strings, a bright major-key melody, and Vicente Fernández's full-throated, celebratory vocal delivery — joy expressed through communal, festive musical means rather than the more restrained joy of track #1 or #3.

YOUR TEST Compare this directly to “Happy” (track #3). Both convey joy — what specifically makes this version of joy feel different: more collective, more festival-like?

WHAT THIS TESTS Building precise emotional vocabulary — recognizing that “joy” itself has different flavors depending on cultural and musical context, not a single interchangeable feeling.



LISTEN

open.spotify.com/track/1nZJtMvVLYXVZt2K23xdnP

14 Vandanaa Trayee

Ravi Shankar

INDIAN DEVOTIONAL / VEDIC CHANT · STUDIO · 1997

Produced by George Harrison; sung and chanted texts drawn from the Vedas and Upanishads.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR Sitar, tanpura drone, and chanted Sanskrit verses combine to create a specific emotional quality — reverence and awe directed outward, toward something larger than the self, rather than the personal, individual emotions featured in most of this level's other tracks.

YOUR TEST Try to notice that this track's emotion doesn't feel like it's “about” a person or relationship the way most of the tracks in this level are. What is it directed toward instead?

WHAT THIS TESTS Recognizing a category of emotion — reverence, awe, transcendence — that operates differently from interpersonal emotions like love, anger, or grief. A fitting close to Level 1: not every feeling music conveys is about another person.



LISTEN

open.spotify.com/track/3KSBIH0ZbvtlI8jUFiHGeB

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