

Solid Citizens...

The Siltech Classic Anniversary Cables

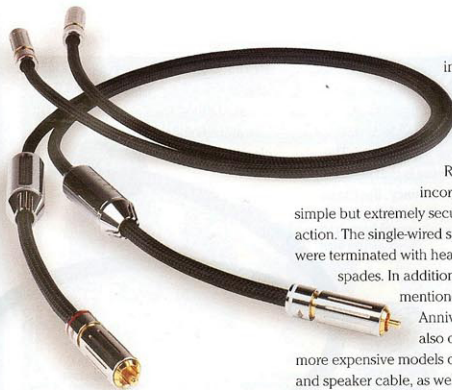
by Roy Gregory



Siltech is one of the oldest and most respected cable brands in the audio industry. While it was far from the first manufacturer to offer specialist audio cables, Siltech was certainly the first to introduce exotic materials and high-end performance to the market. Those original Siltech interconnects seemed stratospherically expensive at the time, the 4-56 leads weighing in at around \$400 for a meter pair – this at a time when a top-flight pre-amp like the Audio Research SP11 would set you back around \$5.5K. Well, the current ARC Reference 3 line-stage might have roughly doubled in price, but cable costs have got crazy, with the likes of Transparent, Nordost, Siltech itself and a number of other companies all offering products that dwarf that original \$400 price tag. Get it right of course, and those prices can be justified, but the real relevance of top-end cables is in their trickle-down impact on more affordable product lines.

The Classic Anniversary line marks Siltech's 25 years in the audio business. It is also the most affordable range the company offers that still incorporates all of its latest thinking and metallurgy. And just as an added point of interest, Classic Anniversary also uses the same silver/gold alloy for its conductors that feature in the company's sister brand, the minimalist Crystal Cables that so impressed me when I used them. But instead of the almost string-like simplicity of the Crystals, these Siltechs are much more traditional in presentation and construction.

As per usual practice, I ordered up a complete cable loom for review, allowing me to run the same cable brand (and therefore the same thinking, materials and technology) from one end of the system to the other, from wall socket to speaker sockets if you like. The cables supplied consist of the Model SPX-300 power cord, Model 330i interconnect and 330L loudspeaker cable. I also received one of the ▶



interconnects arriving with Siltech's own low-mass RCA plugs, incorporating a simple but extremely secure locking action. The single-wired speaker cables were terminated with heavy-duty spades. In addition, to the models mentioned, the Classic Anniversary series also offers various, more expensive models of interconnect and speaker cable, as well as a range of video leads and dedicated phono and digital designs.

► company's Signature Octopus 8 mains distribution blocks, equipped with the superior (to 13 Amp) continental Schuko sockets, the power cords being equipped accordingly.

The SPX-800 power cords are constructed from heavily stranded and shielded, silver-plated copper conductors, but they are the exception here. The signal leads all use Siltech's proprietary G7 silver/gold, high conductivity alloy arranged in a dual balanced co-axial arrangement,



giving four conductors per channel and allowing for balanced connection with the interconnects and also bi-wired termination on the speaker cable. I used single-ended connections, the

The cables themselves are beautifully presented, firmly within what I'd term the "sensible school" of hi-fi aesthetics. Nothing here to offend the purchaser: reassuring girth combined with good flexibility, muted colours, neat termination and a metal sleeve that adds a touch of luxury. In keeping with the cables themselves, the connectors

are suitably solid, almost bulky against the current fashion for minimalist termination. Like I said, everything one would expect from a traditional audio cable from a traditional manufacturer, one that leans heavily on the excellence of its metallurgy and consistency of its manufacturing rather than gimmicks or unnecessary exoticia.

In use, the Siltechs have an immediately comfortable and comforting sound. They lack the obvious speed and stark clarity of cables from the likes of Nordost, or the easy, expressive fluidity of their stable-

mate, the Crystals, but offer their own considerable virtues. Playing orchestral works the richness and stability of their bass performance is immediately apparent. The sparse and sporadic opening of the second movement Scherzo from Taneyev's *Third Symphony* is a perfect example. With notes and phrase plucked forth, seemingly from every section of the orchestra, that steady stability in the music's nether regions is all that ties it together, giving shape and substance, musically and physically. It also serves to demonstrate the sweetness they possess across the rest of the range, instruments instantly identifiable from their natural



tonality and texture. From the opening woodwind trills to the rumbling bass chords and burbling bassoon continuo, each extra instrument, across the strings and brass is brought to life, added to the expanding soundscape and tonal palette. It's a lively, affectionate piece and the Siltechs capture that warmth and humour perfectly.

This ability to bring shape to music, to maintain its structure, is key to the musical appeal of these cables. Comparisons to similarly priced competitors (and the experience of live music) betray a slight softness in their presentation, which accounts both for their sweetness and also their sense of subtle distance or lack of immediacy. Their presentation, built on that solid foundation is rhythmically sure-footed and coherent, but also contained; it is a distinct entity that you look in upon, complete and perfectly shaped. Therein lies both its appeal and the single biggest factor in the selection

► process. There's many a system that is crying out for just such a humanizing touch; there's others, and other listeners for whom it will be anathema. Plus ça change! No cable offers a universal solution, so don't punish the Siltechs for exhibiting the same failing. Instead, appreciate their virtues and see consider whether they fit you and your system's needs. They might well be just what you are looking for.

Their lack of glare or hardness, their natural weight and presence is in stark contrast to the vast majority of audiophile offerings. If you've heard silver cables in the past and been worried by their thinness and shimmer,

material they are never provoked to a rash overshoot or a hurried skid, remaining perfectly poised right up to the point where the electronics or speakers go weak at the knees. The price you are paying is that loss of immediacy and intimacy, the Classic Anniversaries trading edge of the seat, you are there excitement for a more balanced, all-embracing presentation, occasional flashes of near reality for a more general and universal excellence. There is no music that they will not play, nor any type they particularly favour.

Vocals are particularly well served, with none of the anemic tonality or lack of body, emphasized sibilance or threadbare emotional range that afflicts so many cables and the systems they serve in the name of resolution. Add that to the easy sense of solid substance and natural weight, and songs like Eleanor McEvoy's 'Old, New, Borrowed and Blue' roll along with a rollicking enthusiasm. There are those who might wish for more drive, more sheer authority from the cables' lower reaches, a quality which would also likely increase the immediacy of their performance, but there's no faulting the lack of grain or bleaching that would rob instruments and voices of their natural character. There again, Siltech offer their own, more expensive and more accomplished options that I suspect would allow you to have your tonal cake and lace it with all the immediacy you can handle – at a price. And therein lies the real beauty of the Classic Anniversaries cables. Their path travels the right side of the music/resolution divide, ensuring that you can enjoy whatever you play, whilst offering a ready upgrade path if funds and opportunity allows.

The natural warmth and detail they offer is a winning combination, whilst the unpolluted background behind the instruments speaks clearly as to



it's time to listen again. An album like *Tea For The Tillerman* has exactly the kind of immediacy and explosive dynamics that can have you reaching to reduce the level with starker sounding cables, pulling the music (and the system) back into its comfort zone. The Siltechs are utterly imperturbable, irrespective of level. Even with genuinely uncompressed

the benefits of the silver/gold alloy and the exacting construction employed in these cables. More balanced and less obvious in their presentation than some – and possibly less purposeful – the Classic Anniversary cables are welcome and worthwhile antidotes to some of the more extreme cable options on offer. ➤

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Siltech C330i (1m RCA) -	£610
Siltech C330L (3m single-wire) -	£1,385
Siltech SPX-300 (1m IEC) -	£450
Signature Octopus 8 (Cu) -	£1,805

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