

# 2011 6MOONS

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Siltech 550i/L  
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Back in the 1960s and on to the early 1970s, the very idea of cable as an actual component was a mere embryonic concept. Simply, audio components were tied together with copper wire of a generic nature both with interconnects and speaker cables. At just the right time in the latter part of the 70s decade, a Mr Noel Lee then marketed and popularised a thick copper cable, called it Monster and dressed it in an attractive see-through jacket. Thus Lee single-handedly brought forth to the audiophile consciousness a whole new market segment.

Indeed Monster cable was followed by a number of companies, some still around today, that have advanced the technologies inherent in cable design such as the conductive materials and their purity, shield and insulation techniques/materials, winding geometries etc. One of those early companies is Siltech Cable from Holland who to this

day offer cable products based on decades of materials and transmission technology research.



The company is led by Edwin van der Kleij with a passion for metallurgy and cable design in general. In fact van der Kleij's unparalleled transmission technology experience has resulted in contributions to the medical and aviation fields, both areas where exacting science is mandatory (no quarter for snake oil merchants here). But it's via sustained research and development that Siltech flourished whilst establishing a culture of generational product evolution. The current series of cables have evolved to Generation 7 (G7) and feature the summation of Siltech's extensive research into electromagnetic inductance and RF interference. The company claims these G7 cables to be "10,000 times quieter than the best-tested cable contenders". I can't contest the validity of 10,000 times quieter but suffice to say that on a subjective level even if I questioned the magnitude of the measurement, I find no reason to dispute the claim completely. These cables were tomb quiet indeed. I'll explain anon. I conducted a long video interview with in fact both van der Kleijs when a couple of months ago they visited Australia and our local distributor, the affable Boris Granovsky from Absolute Hi-End. Gabi van der Kleij is the head of the very successful—and in these pages well reviewed—Crystal Cable company. Siltech and Crystal Cable share the same manufacturing facility but have distinctive product lines that are quite different in aesthetics and design (thick twisted pairs for Siltech, thin coaxial for Crystal). Seeing how a number of important elements of Siltech's design philosophy have been thoroughly covered in the interview, I'll provide less intense commentary today albeit still cover the design of the subjects at hand – the Siltech Classic Anniversary 550i RCA interconnect and matching 550L speaker cable.

As this is the element one encounters first when receiving these products, I must mention the superb presentation, packaging and accompanying documentation. The cables come with a product engineer's report card filled out upon assembly completion. It is individually signed and the cable allotted a unique serial number. The cables themselves are jewellery perfect so there is some serious quality and pride-of-ownership craftsmanship involved. Yes it should be all about the sound (and that's there too, consider yourself 'hinted') but I've seen some pretty serious-money cables that looked like the dog just threw them up. The 550i and 550L are tie-a-knot flexible—a big bonus in my book!—exquisitely finished and aesthetically highlighted with a conical chrome collar engraved with the company logo, model name and unit serial numbers. Termination was via custom high-quality spades and RCAs for my review samples. Banana plugs and XLRs are available too.

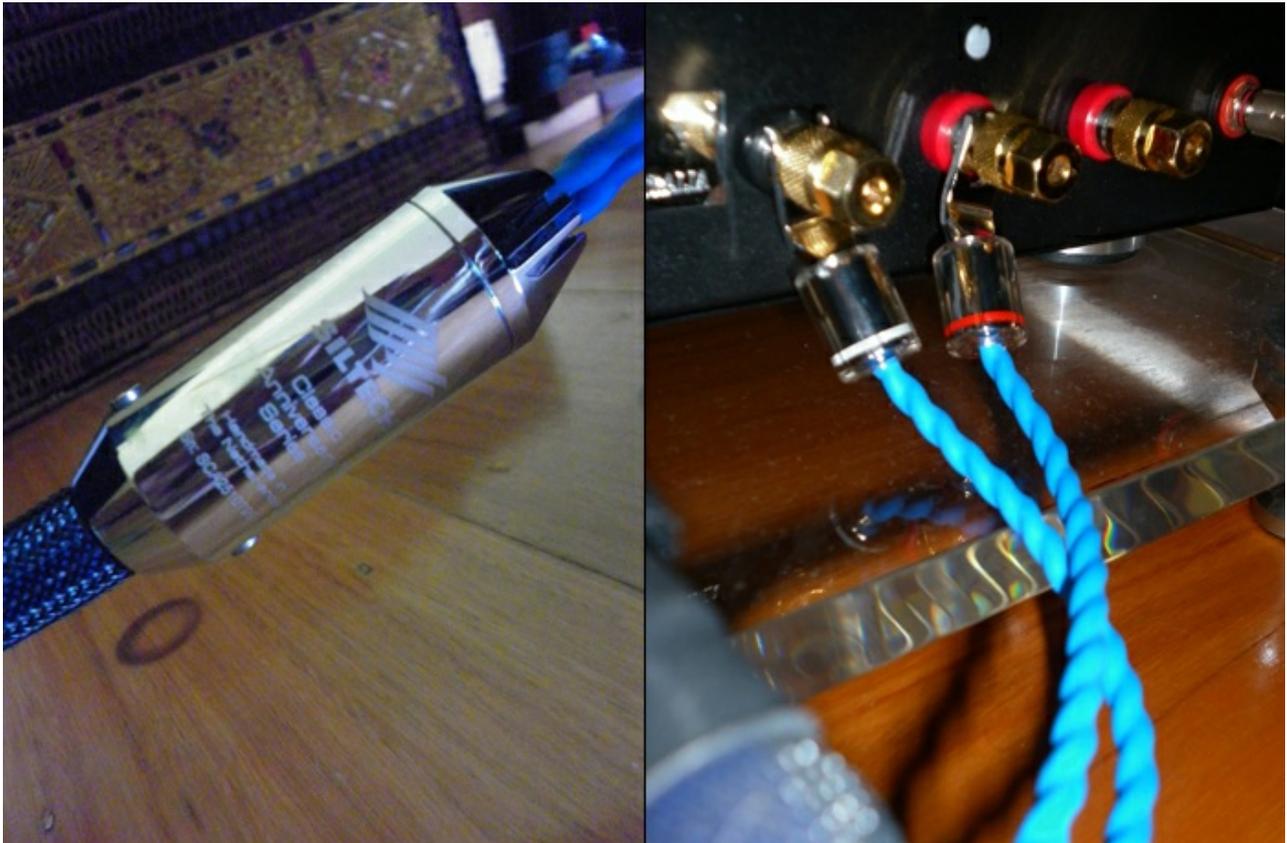


The Classic Anniversary Series of cables—of which there are the 330, 550 and 770 models—were released by Siltech to commemorate their 25th anniversary. The 550i conductors are a silver/gold alloy that van der Kleij believes to provide the best of both worlds – the incision and detail of silver with the ease and musicality of gold. The topology is a 'dual balanced coaxial' arrangement and the insulation material is the mouthful EPTFE Polyimide Air FEP E-Silicon. The 550L speaker cable uses the same materials, coaxial topology and insulation in an overall larger gauge.

Siltech silence. 'Tis true I say! These cables are quiet... perhaps even 10,000 times more quiet. There's a stillness and quietude between the notes that aids the perception of low-level detail. It's that 'black background' thing. And in particular with the 550L I could hear minutiae that were smudged or even buried within the sonic presentation or relative noise floor of my usual speaker cables. The same phenomenon as revealed to

me during my recent review with the PSC Monolith interconnect. This silent background opens a whole new world of secondary transient detail that r

along and enhances the experience from the primary musical content. And this level of lucidity does not in any way come with a price (usually an excess of brittleness or grain brought forth as the by-product of extra detail). And another thing – these cables are fast. Or perhaps I should say that music sounds rhythmic and bouncy for want of better words. Bass is on the lean side but possesses punch, terrific detail and nuance and is very dynamic. That slight leanness in the bass regions brings forth a sharp lucidity in the midrange that is spellbinding with vocals and even acoustic guitar. It doesn't bring the presentation forward or throw detail and presence in your face but just presents a plainly more realistic impression of humans performing.



I think it's in the mix of materials. In fact I know. Edwin van der Kleij, skilful craftsman that he is, has concocted a metallurgical metal mix in these wires that results in a voicing that is expressive or better, more faithful and less intrusive to the signal it is charged to transmit, pardon the pun. And that's what cables should really be about. Take A unmarred to B and leave well alone. But if another striking quality becomes supporting evidence of these Classic cables' total transparency, it's their superb transmission of harmonic content and note decay. Piano sounds mesmerising in its hammer-to-string clarity and the resulting decays linger only to subside naturally and most sweetly. This harmonic fidelity in addition to the transmission of intact dynamic contrast and profound levels of detail make for a verisimilitude to real instruments that astounds.

You want to talk about soundstage and imaging? That's always the result of a system's performance as an entire discrete entity. But let's just say that the soundstage seemed to extend a tad deeper, a smidgen wider and more enveloping with the Siltech cables. Images were defined, full-bodied and placed as discrete entities within a homogeneous whole.

Siltech synergy. The Siltech Classic Anniversary cables have been designed by an engineer with profound materials knowledge. They're meticulously constructed by Dutch craftsmen and come from a company with a long and respected record in the industry. Within the context of my system these cables were nothing short of outstanding. They provided a pristine yet never sterile conduit for the signal to flow through. They were dynamic, extended at both extremes, beautifully balanced and harmonically spot on. The profound level of information provided promoted the listener's involvement and the assurance that whatever is in the pits, grooves or even digital stream will pass unblemished and intact.

In my system the speaker cable in particular was one of two standout performers among the dozens I've auditioned over an epoch of audiophile exploits (stay tuned for a review of the other contender). What does a reviewer do when an item under examination elevates his system sonics to produce more involving and enjoyable music? Does this lead to a continuous merry-go-round of gear purchases? Limits have to be set, sanity has to prevail especially in light of other recent component upgrades within our systems. Nonetheless Mr. Siltech, at the risk of financial distress and matrimonial disunity, negotiations for these cables must be under way now...