2012 THE ABSOLUTE SOUND ROUNDTABLE

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The Absolute Sound's #226 issue features Edwin Rynveld of Siltech & Crystal Cable for a Cable Designer Roundtable interview:

Edwin van der Kleij-Rynveld was born in 1953 and raised in Canada and Holland. A music enthusiast from a young age, he played bass guitar in a high-school band, and built amplifiers and speakers. This led him to complete a university degree in electrical engineering. After college he worked for Philips and Exxon, mostly working with computers. During this time he developed high-end audio products for established companies. His interest in audio led him to publish a paper on small-signal behavior in solid-state devices and vacuum tubes. After working with Siltech for several years as a consultant, he acquired the company in 1992. Edwin is married to Gabi van der Kleij-Rynveld, founder of Crystal Cable.

Each of you participating in this roundtable is a pioneer, designing cables long before cables and interconnects became recognized as important contributors to high-fidelity music reproduction. Why did you choose to work in the cable arena rather than in other fields of high-end audio? After finishing university (electronics) I worked many years in the computer division of Philips and later for other computer companies. Simultaneously I helped high-end audio companies with their analog amplifier designs, something I loved doing next to the digital day job. This later materialized in the co-ownership of Siltech, where I could expand my interest into cable design. As a specialized electronics engineer, I was very curious to know how cables create audible differences in sound. Step by step the

mysteries unraveled. For a researcher this is heaven, as very little is published regarding audibility of cables used for audio. This early excitement still lives on today, helped by new and better measurement possibilities combined with the use of state-of-the-art multi-physics programming. With this multi-physics approach many complex combined effects of material and construction properties can be visualized before production even starts.

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This leads to better results than otherwise possible. We believe this is one of the key reasons for our worldwide success.

What are your core beliefs that guide you in product development?
A) Never think you're finished; in high-end audio there is no limit to quality. B) Keep comparing listening results with live music—it resets your hi-fi memory (by hi-fi memory, I mean getting used to errors by repeated listening). C) Keep innovating, never underestimate your competitors, and try harder to keep on top. D) Keep searching for new technologies and materials; material science develops fast. E) Make products that are practical, strong, and flexible so that the sound quality doesn't deteriorate over time. F) Use the best available materials. For both our brands, the highest-quality materials are used, starting at even the most affordable cable. A material example: Siltech Explorer 90i high-purity monocrystal copper, DuPont Kapton plus Teflon-film insulation. Crystal Cable Piccolo: high-purity solid silver-gold-core conductor with dual-layer Kapton insulation and high-precision coaxial construction. Nowadays it is hard to find equally high-tech materials at this price level. F) Build it to perfection. This is why our company can give lifetime warranty for every cable from Siltech and Crystal Cable. Even 25-year-old Siltech cables still change hands today because of their still excellent sound and lifetime warranty.

Now that the cable industry has about 35 years of experience under its belt, has cable design approached its pinnacle where further improvements are likely to be marginal? Or will the improvements we've seen in, say, the past ten years follow the same trajectory?

I believe large improvements are still possible. As resolution and overall sound quality improve, so will cable performance have to follow. An interesting story: One of my old books dating to 1928 holds an ad from Philips in which a man sits comfortably in a chair reading a book while listening to the Philips Pagode loudspeaker and says "Just like in a real concert hall!" So in that time it probably sounded realistic. Similar claims are made

today, despite the difference with that 1928 loudspeaker. It just means what seems real is what we believe in a certain time period. So for all hi-fi components there is a lot to improve. Now for cables, will they stay? Twenty years ago we believed by now most equipment would be wireless. The digital technology makes it simple now. However, the continuous improvement in source quality, by technique and better recording equipment, gives a great advantage to hard-wired connections. There is no conversion loss as in all-digital systems. Most high end audio owners are very aware of this. For the highest in sound-quality there is just no replacement for a direct-wired connection.

In a field that is overcrowded with competing designs and technical hype, what advice would you give consumers when choosing cables for their systems?

Before spending on cables, make sure the whole system is already acoustically balanced. Correcting large acoustical problems with cables is impossible. Correcting harsh or boomy speakers with cables is equally illusive. If the sound system is already good sounding, then cable can bring the next 30% of quality improvement—the cables can let the system sing. To start exchanging cables, work from source to the end (loudspeaker cable comes last). The music from the source is of the highest quality in your system, only to be degraded by whatever follows. For example, start by changing the interconnect between the source and the preamplifier input, then the interconnect between the preamplifier and the power amplifier, then power cords to the source components, then loudspeaker cables, and finally the digital cables. One final note: Cables are as interesting as car tires. Boring at first sight and not the first thing you think of when buying a car, but essential for its performance. Like tires, cables are the connection to the real world.