

Pinnacle of Audio Cables

The Siltech

Triple Crown Wins it All

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Siltech, the Holland Audiophile Cables manufacturer, has a history of 32 years. Since 1990, it began to make audio cables with silver as conductors and in 1998 it developed the G3 series. In G3, a small amount of gold was injected into the silver conductor to fill up any gaps between silver crystals, and that reduced the crystal boundary distortion. With its unique and outstanding performance, G3 soon built up a good reputation. As the audio cable market was getting mature, Siltech kept improving the purity of the silver conductors, the technique of the 24k gold filling and the design in cable construction. G5, G6, G6 SATT and Royal Signature series were launched one after another, consolidating its leading position in the world of Hi-End audio cables.

Price Rose with Every Upgrade

Beginning with G5, I have been using Siltech flagship cables for my own system at home. It is because my reference gears kept changing from time to time, and all the time Siltech cables could bring me great satisfaction with transparency, delicacy, analytical power, big and micro dynamics, sense of hierarchy, airiness and fidelity. Every time Siltech launched a new series, it brought very obvious upgrade in sound. So, even the Siltech flagship cables were very expensive and the prices rose with every upgrade, every time when I brought home a new Siltech model for audition, the end result was always the same — the new model remained and I had to trade off the old ones. In more than a decade, Siltech has accumulated 6 generations and the Royal Signature had been raised to a state-of-the-art level. When I reviewed the Double Crown series (Audiotechnique October Issue, 2011), I applauded for its super performance on one hand, I couldn't help wondering what the Siltech design team could do for the next generation on the other.

Highly Demanding Design

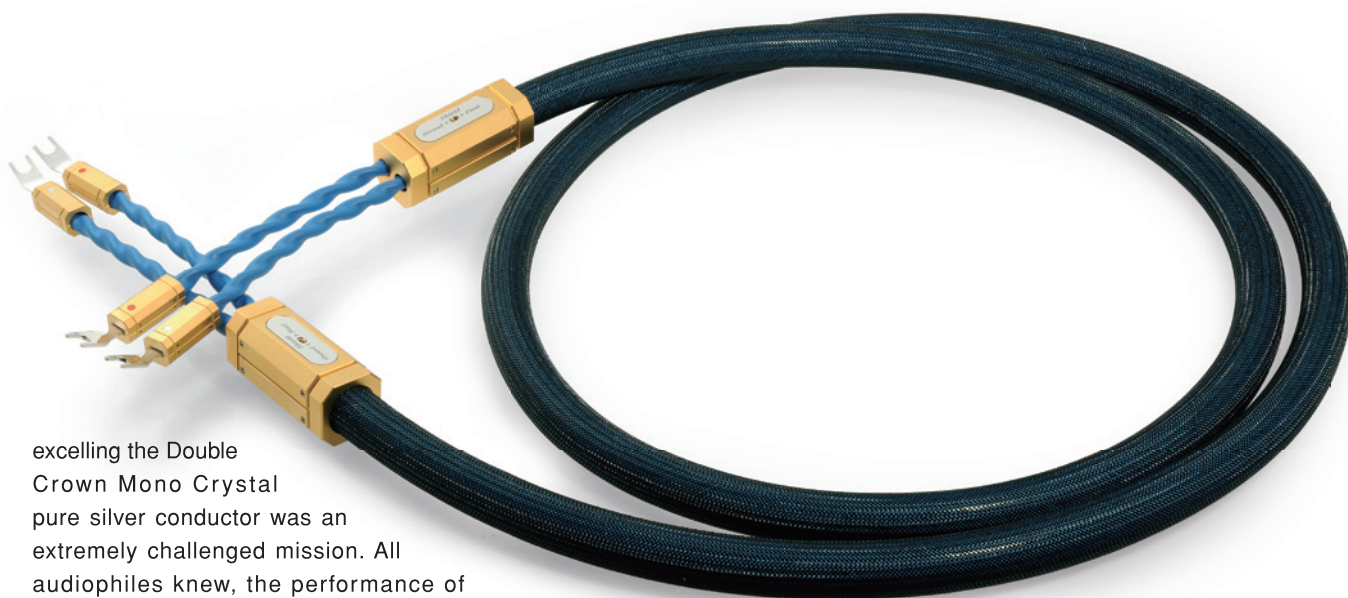
I worried too much. A product would fall behind if it could not introduce more advance substitutes. The release of higher level products than the Double Crown was only a matter of time. After 2 years of exploit, Siltech showed the prototype of the Triple Crown RCA interconnects in the 2014 CES. As a general practice, the official product would launch in 6 months or less after the prototype emerged. The manufacture of cables were relatively

simple, it should take even shorter time; some other cables didn't even have any prototype. When it took more than a year to see the Triple Crown official product, I could imagine how difficult and complicated the production was. In the past year, I talked to Edwin Rijnveld, the managing director of Siltech, several times on the manufacture of the Triple Crown. He complained every time I raised such questions. He explained that although the construction and design of the cable were complicated, the production could still be completed on time. The problem was on the metal ground box and the RCA and XLR connectors. At first they couldn't find satisfactory metalwork in Europe. Finally, Edwin found a watch workshop in Holland and they satisfied him with products made from their advanced and delicate machines. Siltech planned to have all the metal surfaces plated with rose gold, but due to the large area, the result was far from satisfactory. Finally, they were plated with the traditional 22K sand gold.

Brand new Design

The Siltech Triple Crown at the moment included single-end RCA, balanced XLR interconnects, and speaker cables. Since Edwin advertised in advance the complexity of the Triple Crown, I would like to find out before the audition how they were superior to others in design and construction. Edwin told me, to design a new product





excelling the Double Crown Mono Crystal pure silver conductor was an extremely challenged mission. All audiophiles knew, the performance of an audio cable depended not only on the three main electrical properties, R-L-C (Resistance, Inductance and Capacitance), the construction and distances between conductor, insulation and dielectric should be steady, design of the screening, even design and construction of the connectors had great influences. At the end, the design team had to design the Triple Crown with a completely new way of thinking, in order to make new breakthrough in the limitation of the old technique. After more than 2 years' research and experiment, the Triple Crown was a brand new design in all aspects including conductor, insulation, construction, grounding method and connectors. Let me begin with the conductor.

Consistent and Steady

As Edwin said, it was extremely difficult to excel the Double Crown. Now S8 mono crystal pure silver (a total of 3 grades, S8 was the highest) was so far the best conductor in the audio cable market, the Triple Crown simply used bigger mono crystal pure silver conductor. The core of the Triple Crown was 10 AWG(2.59mm in diameter). There were 2 cores (+ & - respectively) in RCA, 3 (+, - & ground respectively) in XLR, and 4 (2 for + and 2 for -) in speaker cables. All cores had Kapton from DuPont for insulation.

Since the development of the Crown series, the Siltech design team knew well the construction of dielectric, the position of the core conductor should keep their geometric construction consistent and mechanical steady. These were vital to the performance. But if the cable was too thick and stiff, it was impractical to end users. Siltech had developed an "Air Cradle Construction" for the cable. The dielectric surrounding the star-quad connected shielding was made with a complex Teflon matrix, extending in a single direction and resulting in extremely low R, L and C. Distortion was practically non-existent and the cable was reasonably flexible. Even when bent and twisted, the electrical properties of the cable remained unchanged.

Super Accurate Design

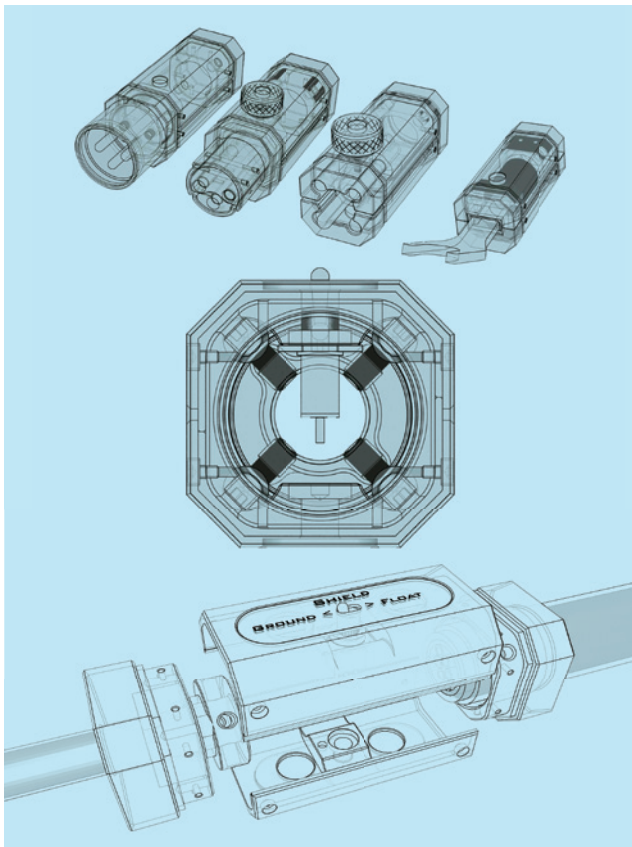
It was common understanding that besides the cable material itself, the quality of the connectors was critical to the performance. Edwin naturally paid special attention to the connectors. All the three connectors, RCA and XLR plugs, speaker spades were newly designed. The octagonal box was made from aerospace grade aluminium and 22K sand gold plated. All contact points were made of mono-crystal silver. Other mechanical parts were made of stainless steel and the insulations were PEEK. The RCA and XLR plugs had locking clamps and self-centred, ensuring perfect contacts. As mentioned before, these connectors and parts were very demanding and in the end only a Dutch watch-maker could meet the strict and precise requirements.

The shielding of the Triple Crown was tightly braided G7 pure silver with gold filling. Not far from both ends were two gold-plated aluminium boxes with shielding devices. There was a switch on each box to allow the end users to choose the way of shielding:

1. Screens of both ends were grounded
2. With the preamplifier as reference, only input/output was grounded
3. The other way round as (2)
4. Both ends not grounded

With this switch, in addition to the superior performance of the Triple Crown, the end user could have more choices to suit their own tastes. For me, I adapted the 2nd method.

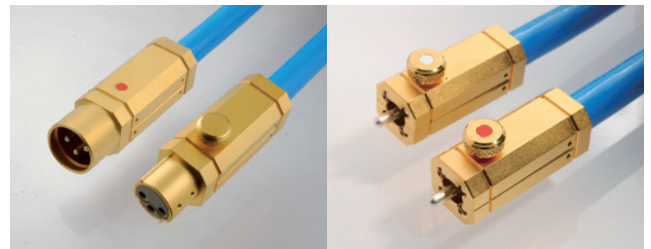
Since the diameter of the Triple Crown was quite large, there were some limitations in twisting, especially when connecting the XLR, it would be difficult to align the 3 pins. For this reason, Siltech designed a very clever way to cope



with it: both RCA and XLR connectors could be turned by 90 degrees, which is 180 degrees for one pair of cables and that made connection much more convenient.

Clearing the Clouds

To find out what improvements the Triple Crown over the Double Crown, the best way was to change all the Double



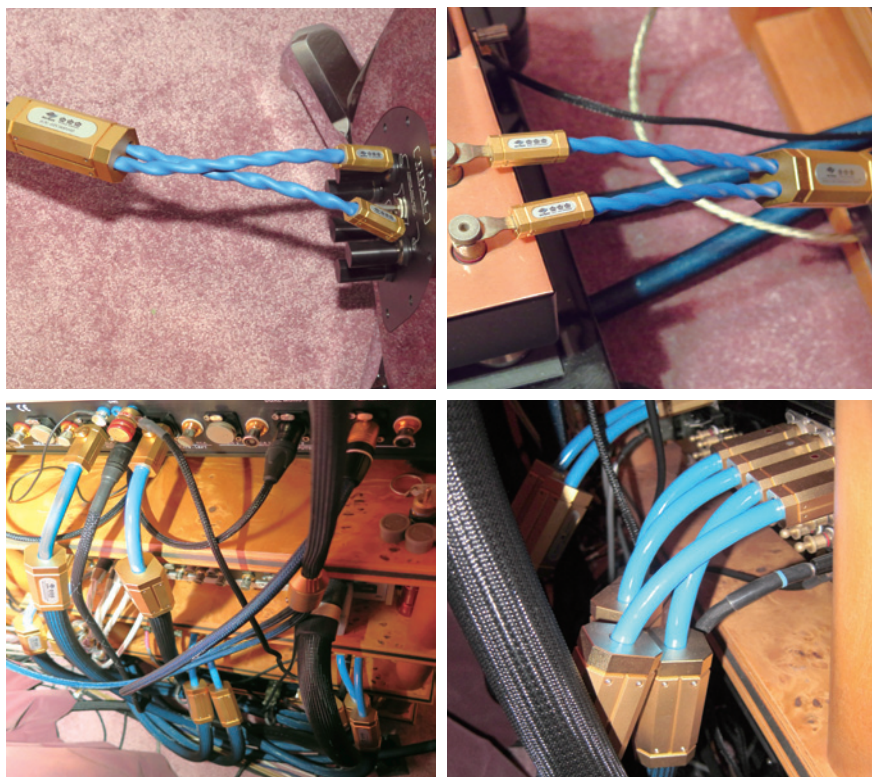
Crown cables in my place to Triple Crown! That included all XLR interconnects from the Karan Acoustic KA Ph Reference phono stage, from dCS Vivaldi DAC to the Audio Note M10 Signature preamplifier, and from preamplifier to the Gaku-On mono power amplifiers, and also speaker cables from power amplifiers to the Tidal Contriva G2 speakers. As usual, all cables were burned in for 50 hours with the Siltech burn-in machine made by IsoTek before bringing them to my place.

I still remembered the first time I listened to the Single and Double Crown, the most unforgettable moment was that feeling of openness, like all the clouds were cleared on a cloudy day and the blue sky reappeared. The feeling got stronger each time. Especially when listening to the Double Crown, the definitions of instrument and vocals were never so good in my place. There was nothing I could pick about. But, when I listened to the Triple Crown, the same openness feeling came again and I was really shocked! How could it be so perfect! Comparing with the Triple Crown, the cloudless feeling before seemed still to have a thin layer of yarn in between. What a cruel AB comparison!

Frightening Dynamics

I listened to the 'new' 24K gold CD, "Misty". When the





Tsuyoshi Yamamoto Trio recorded this album at Aoi Studio, Tokyo in 1974, Yamamoto was only 28. He was young and full of energy. When he played “Misty” on his Steinway, audiophiles were shocked by his unbelievable dynamics, speed and power. The typical close microphone recording of Three Blind Mice could reveal any shortages of a system. The Triple Crown not only reproduced most clearly the heavy poundings or light touches on the piano keys, but also the details of hammers striking on the steel strings, the vibrations of the strings. The reverb of the piano were as true as right before your eyes. In addition, Isoo Fukui’s bass and Tetsujiro Obara’s metal brush across the drums created a splendid jazz sound picture. In fact, Yamamoto’s powerful pounding on the piano was quite frightening, I couldn’t help raising my eyes to check if the mid drivers of my speakers were still okay!

Exquisitely Clear

When listening to Diana Krall’s “Wallflower”, the jazz diva sang with a low and a bit husky voice the familiar songs like “California Dreamin’”, “Desperado” and “Alone Again (Naturally)”. The Triple Crown brought me yet another new listening experience. Diana’s voice was exceptional sexy, the piano, guitar, drums and the whole ensemble was so well balanced. The sound of opening and closing of lips and teeth, the details of voice were absolutely clear and natural, the body and definition of the instrument were also exquisitely clear. Old wine in a new bottle was still refreshing!

Recently, the most frequently listened CD was “The Perfect Sound 2015”. Jacky Cheung’s voice in “How could I bear” was fleshy and emotional, the arrangement and guitar were brilliant! In the beginning of “Sunrise from Also Sprach Zarathustra”, the bass from the organ surged from the speakers, sweeping everybody’s trousers! In Rossini’s “String Sonata”, the strings were bright and shiny and full of harmonics. The samba rhythm in “Amado Mio” could definitely make you dance; every instrument was so distinctive, but so harmonious when played together; China Forbes’s bright and beautiful voice was most unforgettable! Playing back this “Perfect Sound” (produced by myself!) with the Triple Crown, obviously, details were more, background was quieter and more musical. Haha! What a perfect full stop to my production!

Postscript

Although the production of Triple Crown was more complicated, more difficult to make and the cost was higher than the Double Crown, its selling price was only 30% higher. As a previous user of the Double Crown, I thought the price increase was very reasonable, and I kept the whole set of Triple Crown without any hesitation.

Contentment was priceless! 音