

# KLEI gZero10 ICs by Steve Reeve (Fine Art)

After reviewing the KLEI™gZero6 IC, KLEI sent their latest top-of-the-line product... the KLEI™gZero10 IC for review.

As with all KLEInnovations products, the outward appearance of this interconnect is almost identical to the other interconnects in their line-up, with the exception of its gZero10 product label and the attached RCA plug which sports a light blue logo, denoting it as their very latest KLEI™Absolute Harmony plugs.

To date, I have been extremely happy with my KLEI™gZero6 ICs. They are very neutral, open, spacious, and fast with an excellent bass response. So I was very curious as what Keith Louis (KL) and his team could possibly have done to better this already excellent performer.

From the KLEI website...

- ...Exceptional Resolution, very Tight non-bloated, deep, detailed, resolving Bass, Extremely articulate presentation, Conveys subtle nuances with amazing dexterity, Stage is very spacious and envelopes the listener, Allows the full emotion of the music to be experienced, Superb dynamics and an excellent micro detail presentation
- This sounds very much like the KLEI™gZero6 ICs which had already won me over.



So are the promised improvements due to...

- The addition of the KLEI™Absolute Harmony RCA Plug?
- A tweak of conductor metallurgy?
- An improved gZero architecture?
- All of the above?

Since that is a closely guarded secret, there was only one thing left to do – plug it in and let the music tell the story.

## Initial Impressions

Well, right out of the little red satin bag that it came in, the KLEI™gZero10 ICs actually performed slightly better than my well broken-in KLEI™gZero6 interconnect. Now, there was just 300 hours of burn-in time left to make me a believer.

Although its initial performance did leave me impressed, I did observe a slightly diminished lower register. Fortunately, after the 60 hour mark the lower register was restored with just a little more depth and a little more control.

From that point on, progress slowed and checking in daily produced very little in the way of discernable improvements. Granted, some tracks did display a slightly wider and deeper image and the overall reproduction was still very articulate, lively and a pleasure to listen too. But I did not feel the KLEI™gZero10 ICs were really “living up to its billing”. It was a bit like observing the earth's tectonic plates – you know they are ever changing, but it was taking a long while for something significant to happen.

Now, I am not a real fan of products that provide little in the way of improvements. Those products that some reviewers categorize as adhering to *The Law of Diminishing Returns*. If you want my hard earned cash – your product must provide some really tangible benefits!

## Impressions after 220 Hours

It was around the 220 hour mark that I sat down with a cup of Earl-Grey tea and turned up the volume...

Whoa! – what happened?

The tectonic plates had separated and a new continent was born!

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OK, a little dramatic granted, but this particular burn-in was becoming just a little tedious which is not generally my experience from a KLEInnovations product. In contrast to the progress made up to this point, these latest improvements were akin to someone flipping a switch. There was a marked improvement across the board...

- The whole presentation became more snappy and lively, but with a warmth and fullness that made for a much more musical delivery.
- Instrument and performer placement within the image had a laser-like precision to it, each with significantly more space around them. Orchestral works seemed to have a more spacious presentation with the various sections of the orchestra flowing elegantly from one to the other – more like a real painting, as opposed to “Paint by Numbers”.
- Vocal performances were much more “breathy” thanks to the improved upper-high frequency detailing.
- The bass was now extended down into what seemed like the subsonic level, but more importantly, improvements in the control of that extended bass resulted in a real improvement of bass textures.
- The mid to high frequency improvements made the artefacts associated to the playing of an instrument, such as instrument timbre, fingering transitions and musician movements even more discernible, but that improved detailing also contributed greatly to a more realistic reproduction of the venue acoustics, which in turn, makes that rendition more reminiscent of the original live performance – it really is “just like being there!”.

On experiencing these changes I decided to move the cables over from my DAC to my analogue rig, since I had always believed it was capable of providing better resolution.

## What albums to Audition...

On one of my recent forays to my favourite vinyl store I found an exceptional album from a favourite record label, TACET. The album title: JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH: Partitas – Florin Paul violinist – L10. The sound engineering on this album, using only two 1947 Neumann U47 tube microphones into an analogue tape recorder, really demonstrates their devotion to the art of recording exquisite sound (others might just say anal)

- Combine that with the music of JSB.
- The superb musicianship of soloist Florin Paul playing a 1689 Stradivari.
- In an unknown church in a suburb of Nice, chosen for its exquisite acoustics that are well suited to the violin.

This particular album was recorded some 25 years ago, but is still considered one of the very best in the TACET catalogue – and with very good reason. Hearing this album through the KLEI™gZero10 ICs maxed out my “Goosebump Scale”. One word... incroyable! (apologies, that should read “Incredible!” – I sometimes lapse into French when I get excited). The more ethereal attributes ascribed to this interconnect from the KLEInnovations website were spot on: subtle nuances with amazing dexterity, Stage is very spacious and envelopes the listener, Allows the full emotion of the music to be experienced.

Another album I tend to use for audition purposes is from James Newton Howard, called “James Newton Howard and Friends”, on the Sheffield Labs label – and another bunch of “very enthusiastic” sound engineers.

- This album provides some amazing percussive dynamics, exceptional detailing and extremely low frequency synth work, which allowed me to assess how well the KLEI™gZero10 ICs handled these other ascribed attributes.
- Needless to say, the results were excellent. There were some very deep low frequency details I had never heard before, the details of the percussive chimes were very crisp and articulate and the dynamics and detailing of the various drums used was exemplary.

Another noteworthy mention is my original pressing of The Beatles: White Album.

- Since both the above albums were recorded with great care by fastidious sound engineers with superb equipment and finally pressed into 150-180gram vinyl, I figured that listening to something a little less “specialized”, might reflect recordings of a more conventional nature.
- After all, I purchased this album in 1982. However, it was recorded 1968, in a commercial studio and pressed into vinyl – which by today’s standards is just plain flimsy. Add to that the number of tracks crammed onto each side (from 6 to 9) and you would probably be in the majority if you believed the resulting fidelity might just be a little less than premium.
- YOU’D BE WRONG! – just as I was.

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- The details and clarity I observed would make most people believe this album had been re-mastered – it was just that good. I don't think I have ever been quite so amazed.

One last album to mention is "Tubular Bells" from Mike Oldfield:

- Since both the albums above were recorded with great care by fastidious sound engineers with superb equipment and finally pressed into 150-180 gram vinyl, I figured that listening to something a little more "commercial", might reflect how my other recordings following a more conventional creation process might sound.
- After all, I purchased this album in 1982. However, it was recorded 1973, in a "home studio" and pressed into vinyl – which by today's standards is just plain flimsy. Add to that the track density crammed onto each side and you would probably be in the majority if you believed the resulting fidelity might just be a little less than premium.
- Well, needless to say I was very surprised – the details and clarity I observed would make most people believe this album had been recently re-mastered – it was just that good.
- Mike Oldfield is probably "the master" at multi-tracking, creating recordings that approach orchestral complexity, using both acoustic and electronic instruments. The resulting sound is very complex, but incredibly detailed. However, what transpired was perhaps the biggest single transformation I have heard from any album in my collection.
- The first thing I noticed was the placement of the many instruments in play, taking their place in a wider and much deeper image which isolated their signature more effectively, possibly due to the improved clarity these cables provide.
- The next improvement was in the detailing that reflected a more accurate reproduction of the many instruments, especially the improved audibility of instruments that occupy the higher frequencies such as his frequent use of glockenspiels that now ring out with superb clarity.
- He also make great use of various bass guitars and synths, which now have their very own unique textures that are more easily heard, together with a very well controlled extension to the depth of those bass lines.
- Finally, side one culminates in the chimes of tubular bells, which ring out so powerfully it sounds as though you are standing in a church belfry.

The very detailed reproduction observed in the above recordings reflects their superb sound engineering. The improvements in some albums were less apparent on first listen, but subsequent replays revealed their more subtle engineering approach in the recording process.

Now you might be thinking that I have an extremely expensive phono cartridge to achieve such incredible details, but – it's a \$299 Denon DL 103 moving coil. Granted, the turntable and arm is a little special and the one piece Silver litz tone-arm wire is terminated with the KLEI™Pure Harmony plugs from KLEInnovations. The Phono stage is a Simaudio MOON LP5.3 RS, which is a pretty adept performer, but not quite in the same league as many other excellent phono stages available today.

Which means, in this case, the kudos must go to the KLEI™gZero10 ICs.

## CONCLUSION

You can take each of the metrics above and probably, with the aid of some sophisticated electronic test equipment, measure the improvements that were observed.

But measurements do not account for the passion of the music and the emotion of the artists, which is exactly what the KLEI™gZero10 IC is so very adept at conveying.

Yes, the addition of the KLEI™Absolute Harmony plug + an additional tweak of conductor metallurgy + a significantly better gZero design, all makes for a great cable.

But for something to sound this good it is very much a case of...

The whole is greater than the sum of it's parts

Who knows, it could even have a little of "KL's soul" in there too

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It is a bit on the pricey side, so why should you buy them? Well, that very much depends on your own individual thought process...

- If you take the view that the cables play a significant role in your system (like me) – you should try them.
- If you feel that your other system components may not be “worthy” of such an upgrade then first try the KLEI gZero3 ICs then you might just be very surprised at your components abilities (I was) and you can always upgrade (as I have).
- If you feel the KLEI™gZero10 ICs may not be up to the resolution capabilities of your existing components then I would recommend you keep an eye on the KLEInnovations website for reviews of these cables on higher resolving systems.
- I was able to audition the KLEI gZero3 ICs on a friends higher resolving system and we were both very impressed, especially since it bettered his very well-known US\$1200 Brand-Name XLR balanced silver ICs. So based on that experience, I believe the KLEI™gZero10 ICs are capable of performing exceptionally well on any system.

Personally, my own journey of “cable enlightenment” over the years has actually saved me thousands of dollars in component upgrades.

- Eg. You might think having the KLEI™gZero6 ICs on my \$600 DAC as – “a little overkill”.
- However, attempting to replace my DAC with another unit capable of achieving a similar performance improvement would probably cost significantly more and still leave me with a system lacking in the realism I experience today.

That’s it! – go out and buy a pair – they are freaky good!

But please remember to let them burn-in for the period recommended.

It makes a huge difference!

My System:

- Custom turntable with Denon DL103(modified) phono cartridge on and Audiomods Arm with one piece silver litz cable + KLEI™Absolute Harmony RCA plugs
- Simaudio MOON LP5.3 RS phono stage
- Schiit Bifrost USB DAC with UBER analogue upgrade
- NAIM 5i integrated amp (has a passive pre-section)
- Gerchman Acoustics Sonogram speakers
- KLEI™gZero6 SCs



*A highly recommended product*

[Steve Reeve \(Fine Art\)](#)