

# Striking the right Chord

Chord's new Shawline range brings the company's Tuned ARAY technology into a new price range. Jon Myles plugs them in and loves the sound.

**T**he Wiltshire-based Chord Company certainly made an impact with the launch of their

Tuned ARAY cables interconnect and digital cables. Developed by their renowned designer Nigel Finn they used a unique geometry and superior materials to bring out the spatial elements in music while retaining the timing and essential rhythmic vibrancy.

Listening to the first iteration of this technology I was supremely impressed with its clarity, openness and, most of all, level of detail on offer. One problem, however, was the cost – the Tuned ARAY first appearing in the high-end Sarum interconnects.

However, the development is now starting to trickle down throughout the Chord range and has been implemented in its new Shawline series. Analogue and digital interconnects are available as well as a dedicated loudspeaker cable. The latter features silver-plated conductors, 16 AWG multi-strand silver-plated conductors allied to a PTFE insulation.

All the leads have been designed to work together to give a signature sound which means deploying them as a complete loom is the ideal way



**Chord Shawline Analogue Cable**

to go - which is exactly what I did.

Taken individually the cables cost £200 for a 1 metre analogue RCA or digital interconnect while the speaker leads come in at £30 per metre with factory-fitted gold-plated banana or spade terminations provided for £100. For the analogue interconnect DIN, RCA and XLR terminations are all available.

One point to remember is that Chord always stresses that its cables are directional – with small arrows indicating the correct line of instillation – so bear this in mind when you put them into your system.

## SOUND QUALITY

As a range the new Shawlines are not overly expensive. But taken as a package they do represent an investment that has to be seen as value for money to justify the

expenditure.

Happily, they do just this. First of all, plugging the loudspeaker cables into a combination of Naim amplification and a pair of Spondor A3 loudspeakers brought a tempo and clarity to the sound which similar cables at this price struggle to match.

Kylie Minogue's vocals on her duet with Nick Cave during 'Where The Wild Roses Grow' positively shimmered – especially as the 'speaker cable brought out elements of the sound that others can sometimes block such as subtle intonations in phrasing and the slight catch in the throat between lines.

Adding the analogue and digital interconnects, though, served to

reinforce the sense of extra clarity. Designer Nigel Finn is a musician as well as a cable expert and this comes through with both the leads.

Using the analogue interconnects between an Oppo BDP-105D with the Naim and Spondors shone a brighter light on the Nick Cave track than before. What's impressive is how the sound opens up, becoming more expansive with greater atmosphere.

Switching to Aaron Copland's 'Fanfare For The Common Man' the interconnects allowed the force of the bass drum to power into the room. There was a sense that the leads are not restricting the natural flow of the music but simply relaying the signal, which is what all good interconnects should do.

On the late David Bowie's 'Panic In Detroit' Mick Ronson's guitar has all the edgy vibrancy you could wish for but the whole mix is decidedly open, so Linda Lewis's backing vocals never descend too low or have a hint of sibilance.

The same presentation was evident in the digital interconnect. One of the advantages of the Tuned ARAY configuration when it first emerged was its ability to introduce a more organic nature into digital replay chains.



**Chord Shawline Digital Cable**

I used this new Shawline cable between a variety of different components and once again it had a lovely, musical flow to its sound. Acoustic instruments have a realistic timbre while there's a dynamism to fast-paced tracks.

If there's one caveat to bear in mind it's that the Shawlines don't quite have the outright dynamic range of Chord's more expensive cables such as the Sarum range, which work supremely well in high-end systems. But then again they do

not cost anywhere near as much – which is the whole point of the new Shawline range.

**CONCLUSION**

These new Chord Shawline cables are impressive performers. They major on detail and timing allowing you to hear just what individual components are doing without adding anything of their own character. If you have a good system and want to give it a boost these may just be the most cost-effective way to do that.



**Chord Shawline Speaker Cable**

**CHORD SHAWLINE SPEAKER CABLE, ANALOGUE AND DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS**

**ANALOGUE RCA 1M £200 ADDITIONAL METRES £80**

**DIGITAL RCA 1M £200 ADDITIONAL METRES £80**

**SPEAKER £30/M UNTERMINATED FACTORY BANANA/SPADE TERMINATIONS 8 PLUGS ONE PAIR £100**



**OUTSTANDING - amongst the best**

**VALUE - keenly priced**

**VERDICT**

An interconnect and loudspeaker cable loom that relays music without adding any colouration and at an affordable price. Highly recommended.

**FOR**

- timing
- openness
- lack of colouration

**AGAINST**

- nothing at the price

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