

It's A Shaw Thing

Jon Myles tries out Chord Company's new Shawline X loudspeaker cable – and likes what he hears.



The Chord Company's Shawline X loudspeaker cables may be a new name but they have a rich heritage. For the Shawline X is based around the Chord Rumour cable – a best-seller for 20-plus years - but with some significant changes.

The conductors are still silver-plated, insulated with XLPE and arranged in a twisted pair configuration. But with the Shawline X Chord have taken the existing conductor layout and added a specially-chosen PVC internal jacket to reduce mechanical noise, before applying the same high density, dual-layer foil and braid shield that is used on the more expensive Chord Epic.

And while previously PTFE - Teflon - was the standard material for insulation, a new material known as XLPE (Cross-linked Polyethylene) has been used. This is said to bring a cleaner, crisper sound by reducing interference, allowing smoother signal flow.

SOUND QUALITY

Swapping out a pair of basic loudspeaker cables and inserting the Shawline X between a Creek Evolution 100A integrated amplifier and a pair of Spondor AI loudspeakers showed a clear improvement. The Chord cable is clearly engineered to be of a balanced nature. John Martyn's 'Solid Air' had added depth and dynamics.

The timbre of his guitar was more realistic, the fine details of his playing coming over with uncanny accuracy. It was as though I could hear deeper into the mix.

Also evident was the increase in micro-dynamics. On 'Debaser' by the Pixies the guitars often sound slurred – but not with the Shawline X. I could clearly hear two separate instruments and they timed together exactly as they should. Black Francis's vocals were clear and intelligible - even when he went into his barking-like phases. Bass was taut and firm without being overpowering – or dominating the track after its initial introductory passage.

Upper registers were also well served. Albert Ayler's saxophone on 'Spiritual Unity' - that can sound piercing through some loudspeaker cables - came across as melodious and fluent. Some of the higher notes were a little restrained but that added to the balanced sound on offer.

Those who like their cables to tune a system - by adding more bass or treble - may not find the Shawline X to their tastes. But the majority who require a cable that lets music flow relatively unimpeded will like what they hear.

As an experiment I plugged the

original — admittedly a little cheaper — cables back in and put on Arvo Part's 'Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten'. It sounded good. But with the Shawline X cables in place there was more atmosphere and detail and a greater sense of presence. The reverberations of the final bell lasted longer, giving a more striking effect.

CONCLUSION

The Shawline X cables are extremely balanced and enjoyable. The biggest compliment I can pay them is that they simply get out of the way and let the music come through, revealing details you may have never noticed before on many recordings. Definitely a worthwhile upgrade for many a system.

CHORD SHAWLINE X £30 PER METRE



OUTSTANDING - amongst the best

VALUE - keenly priced

VERDICT

A balanced, detailed cable that lets music sound as it should. Gives instruments a natural timbre.

FOR

- evenly balanced
- detailed
- adds depth to recordings

AGAINST

- nothing at the price

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