



Chord Company Shawline **£480**

From the pioneers of affordable hi-fi cables comes this sober looking but sweet sounding loom

DETAILS

ORIGIN
UK

TYPE
Interconnect/
speaker cable

FEATURES

- Interconnect: silver-plated copper conductors; FEP dielectric
- Speaker cable: silver-plated copper conductors; PTFE dielectric
- 1m interconnect £200/3m speaker cable £280

DISTRIBUTOR
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There's a reason for the unusual name – it commemorates former associate of The Chord Company, David Shaw. Indeed this looks and feels very much like it's a product of the Wiltshire company – right down to the so-called Tuned ARAY design (see boxout). It sports silver-plated copper conductors, encased in an FEP dielectric, with a composite shielding material that the manufacturer claims works over a wide bandwidth and also reduces mechanical noise. It's put inside a flexible plastic tube, then a protective outer braid is fitted – the result is a pretty inert mechanical cable to my ears. Silver-plated Chord VEE3 RCA phono plugs come as standard, although XLR and DIN terminations are also available to order.

The Shawline speaker cable is based on the old favourite Chord Rumour – whose 16-gauge silver-plated oxygen-free copper conductors it shares, insulated with PTFE and arranged in a twisted pair configuration. Chord has added a specially chosen PVC internal jacket to reduce mechanical noise, before applying the same high-density, dual-layer foil and metal-braided shield seen on the Chord Epic (HFC 388). It has an 8mm diameter.

Sound quality

Were you to put the muscular Atlas sound together with the more romantic and finessed Black Rhodium, you'd lose half the strengths of both, but half the weaknesses too. The result would sound something like this – a really good all-rounder that doesn't excel in one particular respect, but is nevertheless a strong force to be reckoned with. As the Daft Punk track shows, The Chord Company loom can thump out solid tracts of bass – it's up with the Atlas in this respect – but it also has a good degree of sophistication. You couldn't call it Neanderthal, whatever else you say. That makes this a great 'real-world' combination for those looking for a do-it-all design.

The Tony Banks track is a superb modern recording, and the Shawline combo really captures its essence. The fundamentals are correct; the soundstage is wide and drops back better than most here. Instrument location is pretty accurate, and there's

HI-FI HARMONY

When Sally Gibb (née Kennedy) launched The Chord Company in 1984, it was a small concern in an embryonic market. Since then the company has grown hugely, and moved premises several times. It now has a large factory just outside Salisbury, Wiltshire. A great deal of time is spent auditioning both its own and rival manufacturers' products in the listening room, which houses a lot of esoteric equipment. This has led to the development of what the company calls its Tuned ARAY conductor configuration, which it describes as a "revolutionary way of building audio interconnects." The first cables were developed using the company's then flagship Sarum range, a few years back. The Shawline analogue cables use the same specially developed conductor geometry to deliver a superior performance than would otherwise be possible, says Chord.

a good sense of the recorded acoustic inside which the orchestra is playing. The Chord Company loom conveys the rhythmic flow of the music skilfully, getting the foot tapping with the pleasing way it signposts dynamic contrasts, for example. It's when you really try to listen in, though, that this combo becomes unstuck; it doesn't have the crystalline clarity of the QED pairing – although some may find the latter just a bit too stark and cold. Again, it's all up to synergy and system matching.

The headline point about this dynamic duo, however, is that you can put any type of music through it and it's still enjoyable. Hi-fi considerations seem to slowly ebb away, as you get into the music. The Saxon track has me on the edge of my seat, offering just the right combination of power and pace ●



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

- SOUND QUALITY** ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Nicely built; strong, musical and smooth performance
- VALUE FOR MONEY** ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Unspectacular looks, but who cares?
- BUILD QUALITY** ★★★★★ **WESAY:** Excellent all-rounder with a natural, organic way of making music; it's smooth too
- FEATURES** ★★★★★

OVERALL

