

The Chord Company

Shawline ShawCan headphone cable

WHILE IT IS common to consider upgrading speaker cables, the wire that's fitted to headphones is all too often overlooked. To redress the balance, Chord has added the ShawCan to its popular Shawline range, making this its first headphone cable in its 32-year history.

The ShawCan is made from high-quality, silver-plated conductors insulated with a PTFE dielectric. These are screened with a carbon composite that, in addition to blocking out RFI, has been designed to minimise unwanted mechanical noise – an inherent problem with headphone cables. The conductors are enclosed in a black outer jacket that also assists acoustic damping. The cable uses an adapted version of Chord's Super ARAY conductor geometry, which was originally developed for the Sarum range.

Prices start at £275 fitted with a 3.5mm jack plug or £350 with a 6.35mm jack plug. At the headphone end, a range of terminations can be fitted including mono or stereo 3.5mm jack plugs (pictured) or two-pin IEM plugs. The cable is supplied as standard at 1.5m, but custom lengths are available to order at £80 for each additional metre.

The ShawCan is lightweight and flexible. The cable reviewed here is fitted with two-pin IEM plugs for connection to my Sennheiser HD 600 (HFC 300). It is almost as flexible as the standard supplied cable and doesn't exert any pressure on the earcups when I move my head.

Spot the difference

I listen to a variety of music and am in no doubt that the new cable offers noticeable audible improvements over the original one. Vivaldi's *Opus 7* performed by I Musici has a more open and detailed solo oboe and the other instruments are more clearly defined within the soundstage. There is also a marked improvement in imaging with a clearer instrument focus of both the soloist and the entire orchestra.

DETAILS

PRICE
£275 for 1.5m cable

TELEPHONE

WEBSITE
chord.co.uk

OUR VERDICT

★★★★★



I experience similar improvements with a full orchestra. With a superb recording of Rimsky Korsakov's *Capriccio Espagnol* played by the National Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Debbie Wiseman, the exciting opening movement seems more expansive with the ShawCan cable fitted. The improvement in clarity results in a slightly fuller, yet uncluttered, sound. I have a greater sense of being there in front of the orchestra. It is as though the element of realism has been clicked up a notch and the overall effect is one of greater involvement with both the music and the performance.

To explore the effect of the cable with vocals, I turn to a CD of Ane Brun singing *These Days*. With the ShawCan fitted, there is a greater sense of depth to the deep bass notes that accompany her singing and the organ is better positioned behind her than with the standard cable fitted. As the music progresses, I am increasingly aware of a real sense of spaciousness, even though I am listening on a pair of headphones. Her diction is beautifully clear and expressive throughout.

The classic Pink Floyd recording of *Money* from *The Dark Side Of The Moon* is reproduced well and the cash registers in the opening section show

off the top-end response of the cable particularly well. When the electric bass guitar takes over, there seems to be an improvement in the clarity of all of the individual notes played. There is also a very slightly increased edginess to the vocals (in a good way), which is one of the hallmarks of the Pink Floyd sound.

Some like it hot

Another CD of the Jan Harbeck Quartet playing Cole Porter's *Too Darn Hot* enables me to explore the cable with some jazz. Swapping between the standard cable and the ShawCan demonstrates a greater excitement to the performance with the Chord cable. The drums really keep the pace of the music going throughout. The timing of this swinging piece is superb with the opening drum roll as it follows through into the opening melody played on the saxophone. As the music progresses, the saxophone, piano and drum indulge in some impromptu playing, which is extremely spirited – there is certainly great energy and excitement with the performance.

The ShawCan sure can deliver sonic benefits and so consequently comes very highly recommended. **NR**