



Striking A Chord

Jon Myles listens to Chord's new budget interconnect – and comes away impressed.

Anyone with an interest in cables will be well aware of the Chord Company's proprietary Tuned Array range. The technology was originally developed for company's digital cables - but it was soon found it also brought improvements to analogue interconnects and power leads.

In fact, we found the Signature Tuned Array interconnect such an impressive performer we named it Hi-Fi World's Best Interconnect Cable in our 2014 Awards issue.

The only problem is the Signature will set you back some £765 for a 1 metre length. But now Chord is trickling down the Tuned Array technology to its more affordable ranges – most impressively in the shape of the new C-Line interconnect which comes in at just £45 for a 1 metre length or £35 for a 0.5 metre pair.

To help achieve the cost reduction, the C-Line is the first Chord cable to be assembled by a third-party partner in Taiwan. Not that you'd know on unpacking. Construction is very much up to Chord's traditionally high standards with the C-Line utilising oxygen-free copper signal and return conductors with a high-density foil shielding

and gold-plated conductors with a moulded plug protector.

Bear in mind Chord also stresses that all its cables are directional with small arrows indicating the direction of signal travel. I'm slightly sceptical about these sort of claims for cables – but if the manufacturer recommends it, it's usually best to take their advice.

SOUND QUALITY

Swapping in the C-Line for my usual Van Den Hul interconnect (which costs more than twice the price of the Chord) and it's obvious this is no run-of-the-mill budget interconnect.

Its sound is extremely clear and open with a dynamic range which belies its price. On Led Zeppelin's 'Dazed And Confused' bass had great extension and wallop while Jimmy Page's guitar work was relayed with the necessary bite and presence.

Indeed, the C-Lines seemed to separate instruments much more effectively – giving the music more room to breath. This was especially evident on complex jazz. Ornette Coleman's 'Free Jazz' can descend into an unpleasant cacophony through some budget cables with the sound too blurred to be enjoyed. But the Chords cut through the squall to allow you to hear exactly what the various musicians were doing.

If anything, there is a slight degree of warmth to the overall sound – but that can be no bad thing when used with budget equipment. Certainly the complex synth work of Kraftwerk's 'Minimum-Maximum' came across with due resonance and – while treble is slightly curtailed compared to more expensive interconnects – it means there's never an unpleasant screechiness to the music.

Instead, play something with real rhythmic swing and the C-Lines allow the music to flow naturally without imposing too much of their own character on the presentation.

CONCLUSION

As budget interconnects go, the Chord C-Line is up there with the best – and could easily go head-to-head with some rivals costing twice as much. Build quality is excellent but, more importantly, it has a lovely, open sound with good frequency extension, firm bass and smooth mid and treble. Anyone looking for a good interconnect without breaking the bank should put this at the top of their list.

CHORD C-LINE
£45 FOR 1 METRE,
£35 0.5 METRE
VERSION



OUTSTANDING - amongst the best.

VALUE - keenly priced

VERDICT

Brings the benefits of Tuned Array configuration down to a new price-point. Hard to beat at the price.

FOR

- dynamic range
- good bass
- clear and open

AGAINST

- nothing at the price

The Chord Company
 +44 (0)1980 625700
 www.chord.co.uk