



Signed With A Twist

Looking for a high-end speaker cable upgrade? Paul Rigby tries the Chord Signature Reference.

Hi-fi attention can be focused in and around boxes – amplifiers, CD players, turntables and the like, even enlightened hi-fi users relegating the 'speakers to add-on necessities with little consideration of the cabling. Yet the speaker cables are an essential ingredient for good sound. Get this bit right, you'll certainly notice – and your music will thank you for it.

Chord's Signature speaker cables have actually been around for some time. In fact, they've been selling nicely for around ten years. When Chord took a second look at them they realised that an upgrade was both possible and worthwhile so the Signatures were hauled back into the workshop for a wash and a brush up.

Well, actually, it's a bit more than that since Chord have added more effective shielding, silver-plated conductors and PTFE insulation. That shielding features high density foil and 95% coverage by a metallic braid. You'll notice from the accompanying images that the cables are also

twisted to improve sound quality. The thrust of these upgrades was (hopefully) to produce a neutral tone. So I'll be looking out for that during the sound tests. Standard colours are red and black or all black, but if there's a particular colour you really want, please ask and I'm sure the company will be able to sort you out.

SOUND QUALITY

I began with a slice of David Bowie and his 'Low' album. Playing the track 'Breaking Glass' I was happy to hear that the bass had an articulate aspect that helped to separate it from the drums. Both occupying the stereo the soundstage, there was plenty of opportunity for confusion between them, with smearing in the mids and bloom in the bass. That never happened with the Signature Reference cables though. Not only were both kept well apart but the bass guitar was also temporally focused enough to provide a rhythm that was easily followed by my ear. At no time did the bass guitar seemingly go AWOL to escape my attention,

and at no time did the processed, gated drum sound lose control.

Further, I was impressed by the dynamic performance of the Signature Reference cables during Don Cornell and 'Heart of my Heart' from the original 'Great Hits' Dot release. The bass was appreciably low and rumbling while the upper mids and treble were fragile and delicately detailed. Cymbals and piano offered enough precision to deliver to my ear their intricate work. Via average cables, this complex business blurs into a single noise. The Chords managed to dig into the recording to separate out this necessary information.

CONCLUSION

High-end cable design asks a lot of the designers partly because the price places expectations upon them. Chord has nothing to fear here because this set of cables provides a splendid array of sonic highlights that provides fine transparency and – yes – neutrality of tone to bring a sense of natural music detail. A fine set of loudspeaker cables then.

**CHORD
SIGNATURE
REFERENCE
SPEAKER CABLES**
3M £1,350
(OTHER LENGTHS
AVAILABLE)



**OUTSTANDING - amongst
the best.**

VERDICT

Providing clarity and a neutral tone, the Chord Signature Reference speaker cables allow music to sing.

FOR

- dynamic reach
- instrumental separation
- clarity

AGAINST

- nothing

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