

Chord Company Shawline for Naim

*A step by step setup
of an entire loom*



Chord Company Shawline for Naim

The Shawline by The Chord Company is, in terms of price and performance, the third cable series in the complete assortment of this English cable smith, after the C-Line and the Clearway. It is a 'one-stop' cable series, which means that you can use it to connect any device in your set with it if you wish. And in this case, that means also your Naim set, because the Shawline series offers all the analog DIN configurations (with five and four pins) used by Naim to connect NAIM HiCap DR or SuperCap upgrade power supplies. Earlier I also wrote a [review](#) about the ChordBurndy cables from The Chord Company, a review that more or less fell into our lap when we were visiting the Dutch distributor for two completely different reviews, of which this one about building a complete Shawline cable 'Loom' for a Naim set is the first.



Shawline, a short introduction



The cables in the Shawline series have - with three exceptions, which I will mention later - a bright red finish. In most cases, this is a robust braid, but with the Streaming Cable (that's what Chord Company calls their **Ethernet cables** it's a smooth jacket. The exceptions I mentioned are the remarkable HDMI optical cables (white smooth jacket), the speaker cables (transparent finish

with visible silver screen), and the power cable (gray braid). They don't say it in so many words, but I can't think of any other reason not to cover these cables in red than their more prominent visual presence in the room. Cables behind the hi-fi rack, okay, but cables in plain sight no way, that's the compromise that keeps the marriage in many households together. So be it, although I find this red finish very attractive.

Where possible, the Shawline Series is equipped with Chord Company's Tuned ARAY technology (which is explained in the review of the streaming cables - see link above) and is terminated with silver-plated connectors for the best conductivity. The DIN cables in the Shawline series, for use with Naim equipment, are available in all appropriate configurations.



The setup and the music



The set we were going to use to slowly build a complete Shawline 'Loom' consisted of a Naim NDX2 streamer, a Naim Supernait3 integrated amplifier with Naim HiCap DR power supply, connected with the standard Naim Snaic 4 and Snaic 5 cables. The analog interconnects were the standard Naim 'lavender grey' DIN types. The Neat EKSTRA speakers were connected using the standard Naim NAC A5 speaker cable. The English Electric 8Switch, providing an audiophile Ethernet connection, was connected by a standard Ethernet cable (computer wholesale level). Of course, I had brought my own music, but because we were also going to listen to the

streaming cable in the Shawline series, that USB stick stayed in my pocket and we used Qobuz to listen to the selected tracks.

Because there would be a lot of switching in a relatively short time, we decided to limit ourselves to two tracks, namely Bested Bones by Exit North, from the album Book Of Romance And Dust, and I Ran With You by Leifur James, from his album Angel In Disguise. As a backup, we kept the track Only from the album Tomorrows 1 by Son Lux at hand.



Music maestro, please!

The first step was to listen to the set in its basic setup, connected with the brand's own cables, which was not a disappointment. As we are used to from Naim with its own cabling, the reproduction was energetic and it had substance. Not knowing what we know now it would have been perfectly easy to live with, so to speak. The track by Exit North was reproduced with a nice spaciousness and a lot of push. There was a small bump in the midrange energy, which made the melancholic baritone of Thomas Feiner sound nice and with a lot of 'chest' beneath it. He appeared to be standing a meter or two in front of the music. The image did not have much depth, but it had a lot of width. That was another Naim characteristic that we recognized. The bass in Leifur James' song was nice and deep and had a lot of speed, with plenty of control. Again, the image was quite wide but didn't have a lot of depth.

Shawline DIN Interconnect

When we replaced Naim's original 'lavender grey' interconnect with the new Chord Company Shawline DIN interconnect, we immediately noticed that a little bit of unrest in the midrange and high frequencies - that had been there all along - was gone now, and we very much liked the lack of it. The bass sounded more neutral but it certainly didn't go any less deep, and the spaciousness had increased, especially into the depth that had been somewhat missing before. The sound as a whole was smoother and more compelling, and the various parts of the mix were unraveled better. Exit North sounded more graceful with the Shawline DIN interconnect, with a

more neutral piano sound. Feiner's voice was still prominently in front of the music, but because the bump in the midrange was gone, it sounded less intrusive and the listening experience as a whole became more relaxed without sacrificing any of its impact.

Shawline X speaker cable (with Ohmic banana plugs)



With the Shawline DIN interconnect as a new starting point, the Naim NAC-A5 speaker cable was replaced by the recently updated Shawline X speaker cable, where the X indicates that this cable now uses the new XLPE insulation material. With this cable between the Supernait3 and Neat EKSTRA speakers, the catchy "Naim drive" returned to the sound when we played Exit North. The voice was more colorful and slightly more forward, but at the same time, the music sounded more laid-back, more fluid, and more detailed. The bass went deeper, with more pressure, making the experience more intense.

Because of the increased micro detail, small sounds in the articulation of the vocals were more audible. The trumpet, now projected further into the background, also became more detailed, with more 'lip', and it was well separated from the speakers. With Leifur James the bass was deeper and more powerful as well, and the whole image became more three-dimensional. We heard more tone in the vocals, and the rhythm became more compelling, so we could no longer resist the temptation to move to the music.

Standard Shawline without Ohmic plugs

To hear what the addition of the XLPE insulation material and the Ohmic plugs to the Shawline speaker cables has done to improve the performance

of the Shawline speaker cables, we briefly listened to the previous version of the Shawline loudspeaker cable without the XLPE material and the Ohmic plugs. Other than that, this older version is completely identical in construction. So even though it was not an official part of the review, it was a nice eye-opener. In Exit North, everything sounded smaller and somewhat held back, as if the handbrake was on it a little bit, and with Leifur James part of the control that had made the performance so engaging was gone. So we switched back to the new Shawline X with Ohmic plugs quickly.

Shawline Naim DIN audio/power cables instead of Naim Snaic 4 and Snaic 5

When we replaced the Naim Snaic 4 and Snaic 5 cables between the HiCap DR and the Supernait3 with the Shawline versions we got the biggest improvement so far. The difference wasn't so much in tonal aspects anymore, although the timbres became more powerful and brighter, but more in things like texture, coherence, and spatial placement. The Exit North track became more effortless and smoother, and details in texture, such as the bowed bass strings or the brass of the trumpet, were more expressive. Everything sounded more refined and lifelike. With Leifur James, the speakers now disappeared completely from the spatial image, which became larger and deeper but also higher, with more audible reverb. More weight and pressure were added to the sound, without causing stress. In addition to being more refined and lifelike, the music also became more engaging.

Shawline streaming cable

From our previous review of the Chord Company streaming cables, we already knew that the Shawline is a very fine Ethernet cable that, in the set we were listening to at the time, offered a lot of 'tone', with warm natural timbres. The same thing happened this time, with a little more contrast between timbres, but also more spaciousness. The increase in height that was achieved with the replacement of the Snaic 4 and Snaic 5 became more obvious, and could also be heard in the Exit North track now, making it seem as if Thomas Feiner had stood up from his chair for singing. His

voice was clearly higher in the sonic image. We also heard an even better reproduction of texture and better timing. That brought the life-likeness one step closer to that precious but only theoretically achievable level of 100%.

Shawline Power Cable

Given the improvement we heard with the Chord Company 'Snaic' cables we already knew that good nutrition is not just important to living organisms, but the addition of three Shawline power cords, the last stage in putting together a full Loom, brought another breathtaking step forward. "Oh sure," we can hear you think, dear reader. "They're stacking it up again, of course each next step will be better than the last one." We get it, the skepticism. But we would reply by saying: try it out for yourself. Do what we have done, with an open mind and the willingness to accept the obvious. With Leifur James the improvement was 'across the board'. No big tonal differences, those usually occur earlier in the process, but spatiality, pressure, detail, texture, the suppleness of the low frequencies ..it all fell into place now. With Exit North we now heard texture in the sound of the piano that we had not noticed before, with greater richness of harmonic overtones. And more tranquillity, more authority, and a more natural coherence between the individual parts of the mix.



Concluding

Well, I guess the conclusion is quite obvious. With a complete Naim system, at this level, the relatively affordable Chord Company Shawline series really brings significant improvements compared to the brand's own cables, which have been devotedly championed and defended by the Naim community for many years. And we understand why. But we also have to admit that after the Chord Company Shawline series cables had replaced the complete set of Naim cables, we could still hear the engaging, rhythmically compelling sound reproduction that makes a complete Naim set so attractive. However, certain aspects of music reproduction that are usually less prevalent in the Naim sound signature - in particular the spatial layout in depth and height, and a deeper shine of the tonal colors and texture of the music - were more prominent with the Shawline cables. Unmistakably. It must have something to do with the fact that The Chord Company use Naim equipment to assess cables. Naim owners of all countries should take advantage of this.



Music and Information

More information and prices about the described Chord Company Shawline for Naim cables, can be found in our webshop:

[Chord Company cables](#)

[Chord Company cables for Naim](#)

Qobuz

[Leifur James - Angel in Disguise](#)

Bandcamp

[Exit North - Book of Romance and Dust](#)

Tidal

[Leifur James - Angel in Disguise](#)

[Exit North - Book of Romance and Dust](#)

Spotify

[Leifur James - Angel in Disguise](#)

[Exit North - Book of Romance and Dust](#)





© 2020 art's excellence - www.artsexcellence.com

This document belongs to art's excellence and may not be published without our permission.