

Gutwire Chime³ Absolute Edition loudspeaker cables

by Alan Sircom

For a brand with remarkably little visibility next to big names in the cable world, we've given Gutwire a lot of column inches in recent years. That's because the products make a good case for themselves in sonic terms, hype be damned! This latest – Chime³ Absolute Edition – takes the successful formula used in the original Chime and Chime² cable and takes things to the next level.

As always with Gutwire, this one-from-the-top speaker cable (Gutwire's Big Boss speaker cable is called Vision) is not shouted about either by the company or its distributors and agents. It's almost as if – heaven forbid – you are encouraged to go out and be discerning in your listening, rather than spoon-fed instructions on what you are supposed to buy and moderate your listening accordingly. Damn those Canadians and their tail-wagging-the-dog right way of doing things!

Of course, as a consequence, hype-y statements about how Gutwire cables can 'reverse the polarity of the neutron flow' or work by 'quantum entanglement' are thin on the ground. Instead, we get facts about the cable such as its use of 16x 16 AWG solid-core high-purity oxygen-free copper conductors making a 2x 20AWG cable, Teflon insulation and its Mylar shielding. Chime³ Absolute Edition's uses Furutech CF-201R copper-sandwich spade lugs or WBT-0610 copper banana plugs.

Chime³ Absolute Edition is all about Near-End crosstalk, or NEXT. However, this has nothing whatsoever to do with the conventional audio interpretation of



'crosstalk', which means the signal of one channel bleeding into the other. Instead, the term relates to a performance parameter measured within a single link/channel; NEXT measures the signal coupled from one conductor to another. It's called 'near end' because the measurement takes place at the same end of the channel as the signal source. One measures NEXT in decibels, and it varies with the frequency of the transmission since higher frequencies create more interference. The higher the dB value, the less crosstalk is received by any 'disturbed' conductors. If you want to know just how much of a potential ►

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- ▶ issue this can be in signal transmission, just ask any network engineer worth his or her salt about the problems NEXT can create.

Gutwire resolves any potential near-end crosstalk by physically separating the conductors, which goes some way to explain the cable's inch-thick diameter. However, by spacing the conductors this way, Gutwire also runs the risk of introducing resonance into the cable itself, thereby solving a problem by creating a different problem. However, to help reduce that resonance threat, Chime³ Absolute Edition uses aluminium damping terminators at either end of the cable.

Like most Gutwire cables, Chime³ Absolute Edition requires both an extensive running-in period and a shorter ‘bedding in’ period if moved. In fairness, most high-grade cables need the former, and most need the latter to some degree, but the ‘bedding in’ aspect is perhaps most readily noticed in Gutwire, and Chime³ Absolute Edition is no exception. Run-in times should make no difference in most cases; however, if you want to borrow Chime³ Absolute Edition for a weekend, you might want to argue for a whole-week loan to get past that hurdle.

As befits a large pair of speaker cables on the ‘spendy’ side of things, this isn’t the sort of speaker cable to sit between a low-cost amp and a couple of budget loudspeakers, although it would bring a much-needed sense of order and refinement to such a system. Instead, Gutwire Chime³ Absolute Edition looks more to extending its elegant performance to a full-range solution, and your system should be potent enough to reflect that.

Your system also needs to be at once well-balanced and even-handed. The cable is not uneven or peaky; the reverse is the case and reveals system balance so well that any kinds of brightness or boom have nowhere to hide. It’s not that Chime³ Absolute Edition lays such flaws bare. Instead, this refined cable is satisfying enough not to rely on any such system enhancements. Those enhancements – ostensibly there to make a system sound good – are too often getting in the way of the music. Chime³ Absolute Edition continues Gutwire’s path of musical integrity over audiophile sensibility.

Recently – in Issue 191 – I tested Gutwire’s top interconnect, Consummate. Although it is an astonishingly good cable in many ways, it is so profoundly neutral that it draws praise and criticism in equal measure. Some like it, some hate it. That’s not the case here. Whether it’s because Chime³ Absolute Edition is still one from the top or because it’s a universal cable, but there is a consensus here. It does universally, and what it does is widely liked, if you want that inherently honest ‘un-sound’ of Gutwire.

Gutwire’s offering is perhaps the ultimate expression of a loudspeaker cable that doesn’t favour one style of system or music genre, over another. Chime³ Absolute Edition’s effortless charm is more ambassadorial (in the

PRICE AND CONTACT DETAILS

Chime³ Absolute Edition:
6 ft (1.85m) £4,800

Manufactured by: Gutwire
URL: gutwire.com

Distributed by: Epicurean Audio
Email: simply_better@yahoo.com
Tel: +44(0)780 556 7630

‘charming everyone’ rather than ‘thinly-veiled spy’ reading of the term). That comes across at first in the shape and size of the soundstage; never too far forward (either in staging or brashness), wide, deep and high. While all this refinement and soundstaging properties reads very ‘audiophile’ in reality, it transforms less than hi-fi oriented recordings, such as ‘You’ve Got A Friend.’ sung by Donny Hathaway [*Live*, Atlantic]. Although often mercifully free from excessive post-processing, this recording – made in LA’s famous Troubadour club – isn’t particularly well-cut or spacious. However, Chime³ Absolute Edition makes the best of it, showcasing (but not exaggerating) his sublime soulful voice and yet keeping the ‘somewhat excited’ potentially knicker-throwing audience from sounding too over-exuberant and bright. As a result, you feel more like you are there.

From here, it becomes clear that there is an awful lot of detail coming through, and this cable is one that plays the strengths of any system that is both resolving and articulate, yet not pushy and bright. Whether it’s because the cable simply gets out of the way more than others or it couples well with a broader group of audio components is unclear. Regardless, Gutwire’s Chime³ Absolute Edition is genuinely one of the best speaker cables you can buy today. +