

Nordost Odin 2 Tonearm Cable +

by Alan Sircom



The tonearm cable is the most critical and sensitive cable in any system. Obviously, that only relates to vinyl-based systems, but as a turntable is basically an extremely sensitive backwards seismograph, the signal it generates is both exceptionally delicate and relatively small. If any cable can make a difference to performance, it's the phono cable, and Nordost's Odin 2 Tonearm Cable + makes one hell of a difference! The new grounding systems that went into the Tonearm Cable + line meant Odin 2's existing phono cable needed a boost.

It took more than a year to finally arrive, but Nordost's Odin 2 Tonearm Cable + consists of four, silver-plated, solid core 99.999999% oxygen-free copper conductors, wrapped in Nordost's own Dual Mono-Filament suspension. This last element is claimed to dramatically increase signal speed and reduces insulation contact by 85%. The conductors are then individually shielded using Nordost's unique Total Signal Control (TSC) technology, which is said to provide 100% coverage as well as protection from external pollution (such as radio frequency and electromagnetic interference) and crosstalk.

Irrespective of cable construction, noise is always going to be a significant issue with tonearm cables because of grounding issues. While the lone earthing tag is a good basic solution, complete grounding is beyond such prosaic implementations, especially as providing a complete grounding solution relies on different grounding requirements depending on arm, cartridge, internal wiring of the arm and the phono stage itself. While this doesn't require hundreds of different grounding options, the right grounding is required for high-end vinyl. ▶

▶ Nordost's Odin 2 Tonearm Cable + takes on grounding in two ways. First, the cable sports a fully-isolated bond ground through the length of the cable, which connects the chassis of turntable to phono stage in the conventional manner. Going beyond this, the cable is supplied with two detachable, silver-plated ground whips that connect to the shielding of the cable itself, to further reduce noise during signal transfer. To determine the correct use of these silver-plated, Dual Mono-Filament wires, first, play some music without any of the Detachable Ground Wires attached and see how it sounds. Then try inserting one of the Detachable Ground Wires to the cable on the end closest to the turntable. Connect the spade of the Detachable Ground Wire to the ground post on the turntable. Next, if there is a ground option on the phono stage end, disconnect the Detachable Ground Wire from the turntable end of the tonearm cable, and insert it into the phono stage end instead. Connect the spade of the Detachable Ground Wire to the phono stage ground and listen again. Finally, if applicable, insert both Detachable Ground Wires to both ends of the cable, connect them to the ground on the turntable and the phono stage, and listen one last time. Then, configure whichever set-up had the least noise in that system. This is not simply 'Your Mileage May Vary' but more that no two vinyl replay systems are alike and this degree of fine-tuning will bring the best out of the widest range of turntable systems. Regardless, keep this experimentation in mind, because any subsequent changes to your replay system (such as swapping out the cartridge) might be enough to alter the system's ground-wire configuration.

Frankly, all that configuration potentially gives reviewers the heebie-jeebies. It gives the potential for you to get the sound of a thing dead wrong. In fact, the configuration process doesn't undermine the basic Odin 2 sound, as it applies universally. But when it snaps into focus, you'll hear it. The magic happens throughout, but the magic happens with chocolate sprinkles when you fall upon the right configuration. It's not 'no, no, yes, no' and more like re-enacting that scene from *When Harry Met Sally*.

To use the best of British understatement, Odin 2 Tonearm Cable + 'is a bit good.' Configured to fit the demands of your vinyl replay chain it goes from being 'quiet, detailed, dynamic, with good bass' to 'I need to force myself to pick up the notepad, but LPs are calling.' Your records are not made anew; the surface noise and bumps and pops generated along the way are still there, but they rise and fall fast enough to step outside the music more than ever before. Instead of annoyances, they become little sonic tattoos of the life that album has led.

It's the silence that first catches you out with Odin 2 Tonearm Cable +; the gentle rush of noise from a good phono stage and the sound of grooves are far less impactful than you know, and the cable helps show you that by presenting a surprising depth and stillness to the sound. Of course, when the faders are pushed on an analogue recording, tape hiss rises up, but that hiss is not joined by the rest of the signal chain, and it's an ear-opening event.

However, as quickly as that absence of noise impresses, it's added to by the sheer scale and detail of the performances played on LP. By rights, this veteran format should have long since faded from view, but Odin 2 Tonearm Cable + reminds us why that simply never happens, because despite its

PRICE AND CONTACT DETAILS

Price: from £11,560 (depending on length and termination)

Manufactured by: Nordost
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on-paper inferiority to digital, when listening to an album now, it has a sense of dynamic shading and time-sensitivity that makes all digital seem a lifeless affair. There is verve and lust for musical life in those grooves, and Odin 2 Tonearm Cable + will dig it out!

I don't understand bass on Odin 2 Tonearm Cable +. Not because the bass is somehow wrong or out of step, just because there is so much to unfold and extract that simply doesn't make it through the replay system otherwise. This is like your turntable just took a step into a larger, deeper, yet tauter and more rhythmic world. It's uncanny.

I could go on for page after page, citing how Nordost Odin 2 Tonearm Cable + just extracts more information that's normally lost in sacrifice to the Noise Gods of Vinyl. But it all amounts to the same thing... this is the best damn cable to hook a turntable to a phono stage. Ever. Yes, that price tag is one that requires taking a few practise runs before tackling, but like all of Nordost Odin 2 cable line, once you hear what it does, the numbers become meaningless. All that matters is the sound. +