



TEST. DYNAMIQUE AUDIO SHADOW 2

16.12.2019 // WOLFGANG KEMPER

From Dynamique Audio, our editorial team received a set of two power cables, an RCA connection and a pair of speaker cables for testing, all from the Dynamique Shadow 2 line. The material mix of these cables is of high quality and gives hope for a remarkable sound level.

Dynamique Audio is based in Brighton, England, and has established itself on the market with its extensive range of cables in the USA and many countries in Asia. There are no distributors for Europe on the Dynamique Audio Ltd. website, as Dynamique supplies its cables directly to the end user, thus saving on margins. If you want to try out the cables at home first, you are given 30 days to do so, i.e. twice as long as the EU Distance Selling Act provides. Dynamique Audio provides a ten-year warranty against manufacturing defects to the first owner who orders online from the factory. In any case, the cables from Dynamique Audio seem to be quite inexpensive at the moment, if you take a look at the materials used and also know the prices of the competitors. It's also nice that Dynamique Audio offers a complete range of all imaginable audio types and designs, so phono cables, digital cables, balanced and RCA lines and more are available in up to six different quality levels. The Shadow 2 line is in the upper mid-range in terms of price. Thanks to the variety, it is possible to completely equip a system with Dynamique at the desired price range. In most cases, I consider this idea of holistic cabling from a single source to be a very good solution. A few months ago, I had a musically pleasing experience with the complete network cabling of my system with Audioquest. Since then, it has been playing at a much higher level. All previous tests with different cables were not or only partially effective. The replacement of individual power cords can certainly be successful, but is hardly predictable and determined by individual circumstances. This brings us to the heart of the sound issue. I installed one of the Dynamique Shadow 2 power cables available to me on my Audio-gd preamp and thus broke through the Audioquest entirety. The Shadow 2 Power Cable showed quite pleasing character traits, but the tonal balance in my system got out of balance. For my friend, also owner of the same Audio-gd preamp, the sun rose with the Shadow 2, if I may say so. It seemed as if it was only now that his Brinkmann monos, which, like the rest of the audio chain, were connected to a solid, simple power strip with cheap Supra cables, could unfold their full sonic splendour. That's how different the effect of a single cable on the same device can be. In my friend's case, a variety of other power cords tried on his preamp didn't provide nearly as much musicality to his entire system as the Shadow 2 did.



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The massive anti-resonance element is particularly weighty in the RCA cable

It was a similar story with my system, where I experimentally changed the RCA cable to the Spectral tweeter power amplifier, my In-akustik 1302, for the Shadow 2 silver cable. Again, there were positive features, especially the shine in the highs. The Shadow 2 could have stayed here, as the tonality changed slightly, but didn't get out of balance. I experienced the same thing with the speaker cable from Dynamique. The latest album of the Cécile Verny Quartet Of Moons and Dreams delighted with the Shadow 2 Speaker Cable on the Spectral with tonal balance, whereby the clear and colourfully finely nuanced reverberation of the drum cymbals was particularly impressive. All three Shadow 2s had something in common in my layout, where they were only used in a single place. They also brought light into the game, drawing transparent, delicate structures in the high pitches. Voices became a little slimmer. All in all, the performance seemed to me a little tighter, a little more dynamic and in a pleasing way a little more direct. However, my second system should really provide information about the sonic capabilities of the Dynamique Shadow 2, where the five cables have a higher share of the total. But first, a little bit about the technical aspects and the construction of the Shadow 2.



The ground and minus conductors in the RCA cable have a narrow, deliberately low-mass contact in the red plastic.

Dynamique Audio designs and manufactures its own cables and, with a few exceptions, does not use cables supplied by other manufacturers to Dynamique specifications. This ensures continuous quality control and consistent manufacturing quality. All Dynamique Audio connections are developed with a related sound character. If you move up from an inexpensive entry-level cable to a more expensive, higher-quality one, you get the same tonality, but you get a gain in detail resolution and clarity, according to Dynamique Audio. The tonal alignment always remains the same, so that there should be no changes into the dark or lighter. All cables are described in detail on the Dynamique Audio website in their technical design. They don't pretend to be mysterious here. According to Dynamique Audio, designs that only serve to enhance the look or feel are not to be found at Dynamique Audio. In addition to the sound, however, good handling is very important in the construction. All Dynamique cables are very flexible. Pure silver or silver-plated, high-purity copper is the most commonly used conductor material. In order to prevent the silver ladders from sounding unmusically bright and partially overemphasizing, purity, geometry, ladder strength and dialect are harmonized and coordinated. The silver plating of the copper conductors is at least 100 micrometers thick. In Brighton, they are convinced that the best detail, dynamics and musicality can be achieved with high-quality silver. For the most part, it is preferable not to use stranded conductors, but solid conductors. The Teflon coating is only coated in the manufacturing process after the conductors have been gently chemically freed from contamination. The Teflon insulation of the Shadow 2 line is an oversized tube, so the conductor almost floats in the ideal insulator, namely the air. Mechanical material resonances should also be avoided by the air envelope. The different conductor geometries in a wiring harness are designed to achieve the best possible results in terms of radio frequency and electromagnetic suppression. Resonance damper elements are integrated into various cables and are clearly visible on the outside. In the case of our test cables, this is the case with the power cable and the RCA cable. The speaker cables have smaller, less elaborate elements in the crossover, where the cable is divided into plus and minus and thus two pieces per cable. These dampers are designed to counteract microphone distortion in the cable. Although a similar resonance rejection could also be achieved with cotton fillings between the conductors, their effect as a dielectric layer would be disadvantageous, according to Dynamique Audio. The Dynamique resonance damper is a block CNC machined from solid aluminium that is polished and anodized. Crucial for its effectiveness is its attachment to the cable with an elastomer adhesive that absorbs vibrations and resonances. Of particular importance is the filling of these dampers with electromagnetic interference-absorbing fillings, a mixture that has been specially researched by Dynamique Audio. It is a mixture of non-ferrous materials. This design of the

resonance damper is intended to leave the basic electrical parameters unaffected, but to effectively absorb the high-frequency noise.



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The Shadow 2 loudspeaker cables have metal and carbon fiber resonance dampers in each of the crossovers

Most of the plugs used by Dynamique Audio are in-house developments. However, plugs from WBT, Neutrik and Wattgate are also installed. The Shadow 2 RCA cable is equipped with connectors that guide the negative pole with little mass, only through a narrow gold contact in the plastic. We know this from WBT nextgen and it serves to avoid turbulence in a contact mass that is too large, as can occur with conventional RCA connectors. Running directions of the cables are only marked in a few cases at Dynamique. It is only indicated when the shield is connected to an RCA connector at only one end of the cable. Otherwise, it is believed that a cable will feed itself in one direction in the course of use. If the direction is reversed in the meantime, there may be a loss of sound, but the cable will then play in again. However, the cables do need a break-in time, and due to the silver, longer than conventional copper cables. 50 to 75 hours for signal cables and 100 to 150 hours for loudspeaker and power cables are sufficient to eliminate an initial, slight tonal imbalance. Further play-in stabilizes the quality achieved. With regard to the selected, different conductor geometries used, Dynamique is of the opinion that their respective deviating electrical properties complement each other positively and should lead to a harmonious sound balance. Uniform conductors, on the other hand, would add their properties to the negative. This technology is used in the medium and high-quality signal and speaker cables, including the Shadow 2. Recently, multicore conductors have also been used for loudspeaker cables, a mixture of solid-core and stranded wire. This brings an additional sound advantage. The Shadow 2 is also built this way.



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High-quality connectors, mainly of their own production, are an important part of every cable at Dynamique Audio

The test setup of my system looked like this: The Air-Tight mono power amplifiers each received a Shadow 2 power cable. The Shadow 2 RCA cable connected the Antelope DAC preamp and the Air Tights. The speaker cable was also involved. I gave the cables some break-in time. What I got to hear in this configuration was an unusually beautiful sound. Because I had never heard the depth of the room and the lightness and openness on the Epsilon ribbon speakers. The music was clearly structured. In the first movement of Camille Saint-Saëns' Organ Symphony with Charles Munch, the strings and wind section can sometimes sound uncharacteristically aggressive when the presence or treble is too pronounced. Not so with the Shadow 2 Silver cables. On the other hand, the sound was not soft, but rather clear and precise. Here, relaxed listening was an enjoyable experience. When replacing only the RCA connection between the preamp and the power amplifier with my standard in-acoustic NF-1302, the sound became rounder and lost its shine. The Shadow 2 had a comparatively slightly stricter diction, which, depending on the type of music and recording, always led to more light, but no shadows at all. The positive effect of the Shadow 2 cabling as a whole became even more pronounced when I connected the system via the sinfully expensive PS Audio P20 mains power regenerator, which had just arrived for the test, instead of via my Mudra isolating transformer power strip. The fun costs around 16,000 euros with Analysis Plus power cable to the wall socket and unfortunately proves once again: money sounds. But that's just a side note. The Mudra bar also not only let the clear, spacious and filigree sound quality of the Shadow 2 through, but also gave rise to the desire to equip the entire setup with Shadow 2 power cables. But the supply line to the Max strip and also the plug-in power supply from the Antelope had to make do with the inexpensive Mudra cable. The primary CD player, on the other hand, benefited from the timbres that the Audioquest Hurricane Source tends to generate. Above all, listening with the Dynamique Shadow 2 is a pleasure, because the musical flow is right, the rhythm takes the listener along and the dynamics surprise again and again, especially in the fine. At the same time, I was always pleased to see how homogeneous the music is presented on the imaginary stage. The musical whole is not picked apart, but beautifully analyzed, and with ease you can trace the tone sequences of the instruments. The Shadow 2 set of three also plays excellently in the low-frequency range. Nothing is really thickened at all and yet drums, electric basses, organ and other low registers come impressively powerful, but above all with clear drawing. Kari Bremne's album *Løsrivelse*, with settings of Edward Munch's poems for fifteen of his paintings, is an example of impressive spatial depth, from which sometimes abysmal basses, produced by percussion or strings, spread out plastically in space.



Perfectly crafted, each Shadow 2 cable contributes to the added value of the sound

Let's move on. I'm leaving the NF-1302 in the game because I want to get back to my usual wiring step by step, and now I'm swapping the Shadow 2 Speaker Cable for my QED Silver Spiral. This leads to a veritable collapse in terms of dynamism, spaciousness and grandeur. To speak of boredom is an exaggeration, but that's the direction we're heading in now that the Shadow 2 Speaker Cable is no longer in the game. This is clearly perceptible on the album *Roots Revisited* by Marceo Parker (Minor Music 801015). The strong timbre attack of saxophone, trombone and organ in particular is missing. The music no longer sweeps me away in the way that was unavoidable before. Somewhat less pronounced, I experience the same dynamic restraint and pallor in the timbres on Duke Ellington's 1975 album *The Afro Eurasian Eclypse*. Even in the maestro's witty speech at the beginning, you can feel the space that has become narrower. So I have to put the Shadow 2 speaker back into the game before I change the power cables from Dynamique Audio to my Mudra. Also due to the lack of Shadow 2 power, rousing momentum is lost in the presentation. The timbres are now clearly duller. The longer one listens, the more clearly the reluctance becomes apparent as a deficit. Even if it doesn't sound bad, the great and inspiring has fallen by the wayside to a large extent. I now want to know if the Shadow-2-RCA can save something and integrate it instead of the 1302. Yes, it can, at least in terms of dynamics and punch, the music picks up a bit again. However, the listening fun that the Shadow power cables made on the mono tube power amplifiers is not achieved. I'm now trying the power cord on the CD player, where the much more expensive Hurricane has done its job very well so far. The character that characterizes all three Shadow 2 is clearly audible. The music sounds precise, a little leaner, with appealing drive and a pleasing amount of pep. I like that, but I would like to rate this change more as a matter of taste. The Audioquest shines with more fullness, which can also please.



Each Dynamique Audio cable comes with a manually completed certificate

So the result for me, which is not really surprising, is that it sounds best as soon as the entire system is wired with Shadow 2 within the limits of what is available. I especially like the power and speaker cables. In the case of the RCA cable, it certainly also depends on the sound character of the entire chain whether its tightness and precision in the high pitches brings that certain bit of shine or whether it does not need it. The cables from Dynamique Audio have their character: they sound pleasantly dynamic, very beautiful and transparent and make the music lively. In addition to the tonal merits, their mechanical flexibility also deserves an honorable mention. In practice, this is often very significant: In contrast to many top cables, we are not dealing with stiff hoses here, but with easily layable, perfectly processed connections. They should be tried, even if Brexit makes access a little more difficult in the future. In any case, I would like to get to know more Dynamique cables.

STATEMENT

At fair prices in direct sales, Dynamique Audio offers a comprehensive portfolio of audio cables of all kinds. The Shadow 2 tested here promise listening fun and should increase some systems to a better level. Her taut, nuanced sound is colourful and of gripping, rousing dynamics.

HEARD WITH

DAC Preamplifier: Antelope Zodiac plus

CD player: Primary DVD 30

Power amplifier: Air Tight ATM-3

Loudspeaker: Analysis Audio Epsilon

Current: PS Audio P20

Accessories: JIB Boacoustic Krypton AES/EBU, DH-Labs Silver Sonic or Sommer Carbokab AES/EBU, In-akustik Black&White NF-1302, QED Genesis Silver Spiral, Mudra Akustik Max Power Strip and Power Cord, Audioquest Hurricane Source Power Cord, AHP Pure Copper Fuses, Room Absorbers from mbakustik and Browne Akustik

Furniture: Audio Exclusive d.C.d. Basis; Ikea Lacquer