

# Dynamique Audio Shadow 2 Interconnects, Power Cords, & Speaker Cables Review

January 27th, 2020



The game of cable one-upmanship seems to be never ending. Perceived value for money in anything is, of course, a personal thing. While some drooling audio dorks might see a power cable with a \$20K USD price as a “bargain”, for most audiophiles, spending \$100,000 USD on a cable loom simply isn’t affordable; let alone sane.

Sometimes I wonder if audiophiles have lost sight of what’s truly important, which is enjoying the music. As a reviewer, I’ve spent obscene amounts of my own money on cabling. I’m happiest, however, when I discover great sounding cables at, relatively speaking, sensible prices.

When NOVO asked if I’d review a loom of Dynamique Audio’s Shadow 2 cables, I was more excited than Stormy Daniels at an equestrian center climbing aboard a new stallion. I’d never previously auditioned any of Dynamique’s cables. Their sound was an utter mystery to me and this, ostensibly, made the forthcoming review a curious joy to undertake.

**Product Description:**

Founded in Britain in 2009, Dynamique's goals were to build cables that sound "dynamic" while presenting neutral sonics that balance warmth and detail. They also wanted their cabling to be affordable and have a high build quality. Dynamique Audio's Shadow 2 line of ICs, PCs, and SCs are positioned at the lower-middle end of their product range.

**Shadow 2 single-ended RCA + XLR balanced ICs:**

Available with single-ended (RCA-to-RCA) or balanced (XLR-to-XLR) plugs, Dynamique's Shadow 2 interconnects feature a triple-balanced conductor array that uses 6 x 24 AWG solid-core conductors per each channel. These ICs use air-spaced PTFE insulation and Dynamique's proprietary resonance damper technologies. A 1.0m pair of Shadow 2 interconnects terminated with stock S/E or XLR plugs costs £575 [\$990 CAD].



## Shadow 2 Power Cords:

A 1.5m Shadow 2 power cord (PC) with 15Amp plugs retails for £680 [\$1170 CAD]. This PC incorporates a 6-conductor array that utilizes a mix of pure silver (Ag) and silver-plated copper (Cu) solid core conductors. They also use multi-stranded conductors to achieve what Dynamique describes as a “balanced” sound. The conductors are wound in a helix array and shielded with air-spaced PTFE Teflon insulation. Each PC also comes with a built-in resonance filter.



## Shadow 2 Speaker Cables:

Previously known as the Caparo 2 speaker cables (SCs), the Shadow 2 SCs combine 4-nines pure silver (Ag) and 7-nines silver plated copper (Cu) conductors. These SCs use air-spaced PTFE and extruded FEP Teflon insulation, as well as the same 'distributed gauge' technology of Dynamique's higher echelon speaker cables to optimise bandwidth and frequency response.

Each speaker cable incorporates carbon-fibre resonance dampers to reduce mechanically induced distortion. One 2.0m pair of the Shadow 2 speaker cables terminated with banana plugs retails for £795 [\$1370 CAD]. WBT Nextgen 0681 Cu spade or 0610 Cu banana connectors are available for a small upcharge.

The entire line of Shadow 2 cables is thin in diameter. This is not by accident. Bucking the current trend of making cables that are as thick and heavy as frozen fire hoses, Dynamique wants their wires to be "invisible" and don't believe in multiple layers of shielding. So... how do Dynamique Audio's cables sound?

### General Sonic Impressions:

Cable sonics result from a number of different variables. These include: 1), the quality and type of the metals used as conductors; 2), the di-electric materials and shielding used to insulate the conductors; 3), the quality of the connecting plugs; and 4), the quality of the assembly and termination work.

To start, I emptied my main 2-channel SFI tube rig of a mixture of Synergistic Research's Galileo UEF ICs + PCs, and Stealth's v16 Dream PCs and SCs. For perspective, I first tried the disposable 39¢ level cables that came with the various components.

Removing \$70K USD worth of reference cabling caused a catastrophic collapse of soundstaging and imaging. Poor cables will smother detail, choke PRaT, and strangle a stereo's dynamics as if an elephant wearing snow pants is sitting on top of the speakers' drivers. My system instantly went from having layered, 3-dimensional, 'reach-out-and-touch-it' holographic sound to flat, edgy, and compressed sonics that any \$20 clock radio from Kay-Maart could produce.

With the stock 39¢ cables, the PRaT and musicality of the sound evaporated faster than honesty during an election campaign. Concurrently, dynamics were more sluggish than a comatose sloth. Imaging was shakier than a conga line of homeless blood donors exiting a blood mobile parked out front of an inner-city bus terminal.

Once you've graduated to multi-thousand dollar cables, returning to the el cheapo stock ones will result in a complete loss of sound quality like modesty at a nude beach. It's like accidentally discovering ancient pictures on-line from the mid-1980s of Edward James Olmos wearing a Speedo bikini. Once you've seen Lt. Castillo from Miami Vice rocking a European banana hammock, frankly, you can't un-see it. The shivering psychological torment of seeing that will haunt you for a lifetime. Bad sound is no different.

The highs were more annoying than Justin Trudeau on a codeine bender rambling on and on in front of a media scrum about white privilege. Midrange transparency

collapsed like John Candy (God rest his soul) playing racquetball in the movie Splash. Sonics in the lower midrange, upper bass, and mid-bass had all warmth and intimacy of a gonzo porn shoot in the dairy aisle at Azda... er... WallyMaart to North Americans.

To remedy this, I first tried the Shadow 2 power cords. The sonic improvement was immediate. Backgrounds were much quieter and the PRaT of the music was far more accurate. Across the frequency spectrum, soundstaging, imaging, 3-dimensionality, and weight in the bass registers all improved dramatically.

After installing the Shadow 2 RCA interconnects and speaker cables, the sound climbed several rungs higher up the sonic ladder. Timbral accuracy was vastly superior, the noise floor dropped even further, and I could once again *\*feel\** the emotional message of the songs. Vocals also became much easier to understand.

The sonic signature of the Shadow 2 cables has a neutral balance between warmth and detail. They are weighted top-down though and do not have as much emphasis in the lower registers as top tier cables. For their asking prices, inner detail retrieval and timbral accuracy was quite impressive.

Are the Shadow 2 ICs, PCs, and SCs as good as my reference Galileo UEF and Stealth v16 cable looms? No... of course not. At 1/15th the retail price, the Shadow 2 wires are aimed at an entirely different market segment. I can enthusiastically state that all of the Shadow 2 cables offer a huge sonic improvement over stock throw away cabling.

### **Comparison Tests:**

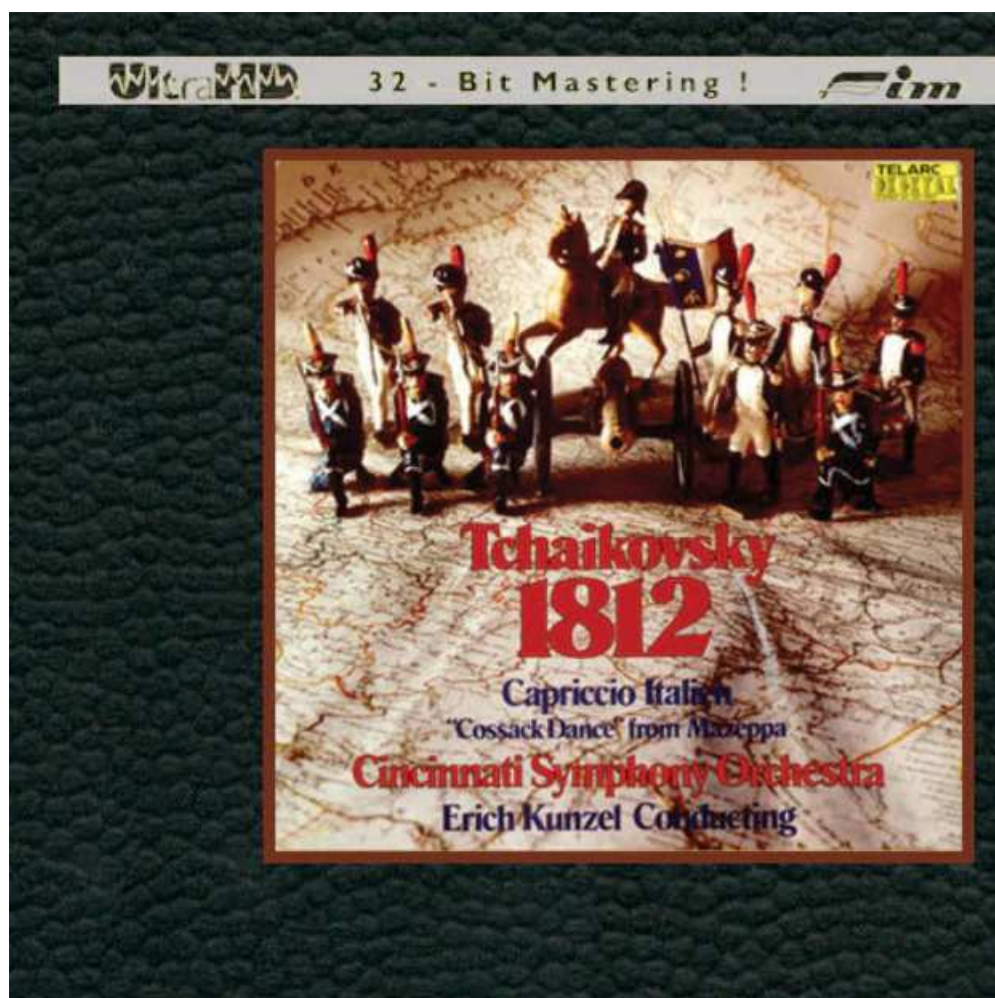
I compared Dynamique's Shadow 2 cables against the following competitors: a), Nordost's Heimdall 2 (1.0m ICs \$985 USD, 1.5m PC \$760 USD, and 2.0m SCs \$1,965 USD); and b), Cardas' Clear Cygnus cables (1.0m ICs \$790 USD, 1.5m PC \$510 USD, and 2.0m SCs \$1,320 USD).

Nordost's Heimdall 2 loom of cables had the most detail- especially in the highs and upper mid-range registers. Opposite to this, the loom of Cardas' Clear Cygnus cables offered the most warmth. Dynamique's Shadow 2 cables sounded the most neutral and, within my 2-channel stereo rigs, created the best timbral accuracy.

Shortcomings? I found the Shadow 2 cables to consistently be a bit *\*light\** in the lower mid-range, upper bass, and mid-bass registers. At the Shadow 2's asking prices, however, their neutrality and timbral accuracy is impressive.

### Listening Tests:

Recorded in 1979 by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, FIM's 2011 Ultra-disc Ultra High Definition 32-bit re-mastered CD version of Tchaikovsky: 1812 Overture has exceptional sonics.



As an imaginative musical depiction that commemorates the failed 1812 invasion of Moscow by Napoleon's forces, this recording of Pytor Illyich Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture features stunning dynamics, authentic 19th century cannons, and a vast array of symphonic instruments.

With Dynamique's Shadow 2 loom of cables, I could clearly hear the brooding and anxious emotional \*feel\* of the "1812 Overture, Op. #49" track in all of its dramatic glory. There's an anxious tension to this recording that should be palpable. I say "should" because I've heard a fair number of supposedly higher-end 2-channel stereo systems completely fail to reproduce this tension. At several times in this 15:36 minute wandering opus, the Shadow 2 cables recreated the emotion of this epic recording with such a dramatic impact that the thundering sound made my heart skip a beat.



For perspective, I next tried Black Label Society's 1999 Sonic Brew. This album was recently re-released in May 2019 for the recording's 20th anniversary.



Championing mammoth heavy songs where massive riffs and memorable melodies combine with guitarist Zakk Wylde's unique voice, this is (arguably) BLS' best album. Featuring rampaging solos, airtight rhythms, and sucker-punch dynamics, all of the songs captured on Sonic Brew sound remarkably pure and honest. There's no hint of musical compromise here.

You want unstoppable grooves, atmospheric interludes, and murderously passionate lead guitar solos? Just listen to BLS' songs "Hey You", "Low Down", "T.A.Z.", and "World of Trouble". Monsieur Wylde might have hoped for greater commercial success, but not at the expense of betraying his own principles and values. Hearing any music that is this honest and pure these days is rare... exceedingly rare.

In particular, listening to the song "Peddlers of Death" with the Shadow 2 loom of cables, the overwhelming emotional message of the song came roaring forth with a shiver-inducing honesty and intensity. Like former Canadian Prime Minister Jean Cr tien strangling a protestor on Flag Day, the solo in this track grabs a listener by the throat and shakes them into submission like a British nanny throttling a teething toddler. If this track doesn't make you feel something, open your heart and dust it.

**Conclusion:**

The Shadow 2 family of ICs, PCs, and SCs deliver upon their promise of value for money. Within their price range, they offer class leading neutrality and timbral accuracy.

If you're still using the dreadful 39¢ level disposable cables that came with your gear, do yourself an enormous favour and upgrade to Dynamique Audio's Shadow 2 audiophile cables.

**Dynamique Audio**

[www.dynamiqueaudio.com](http://www.dynamiqueaudio.com)

Shadow 2 RCA interconnects – 1m pair RCA-RCA – £575 [\$990 CAD]

Shadow 2 XLR interconnects – 1m pair XLR-XLR – £575 [\$990 CAD]

Shadow 2 speaker cable – 2m pair banana/spade terminations – £795 [\$1370 CAD]

Shadow 2 power cable – 1.5m length, US to IEC – £680 [\$1170 CAD]