

Stereo Times

The Complete Audiophile Magazine



Sharkwire Bull Shark series cables
Swimming with the Big Boys!



Sharkwire, an European-based high-end cable manufacturer who has spent the 35 years or so designing cables in Great Britain. I've never heard of Sharkwire, nor for that matter any other British-brand cable that immediately comes to mind. Jacob Gunter, president Lieder cables (a Dutch brand company), was also the former sales/marketing man at Siltech. In 2009, Gunter joined forces with Sharkwire to form the "Very Best Cable" department with no exceptions. To my surprise, this past spring, I was contact by Gunter with an opportunity to hear these newest products. I expressed no real interest outside of getting perhaps another ST reviewer to take on this assignment. That is, until Mr. Gunter started talking about the products how much he wanted me to hear these cables personally. Reluctantly, I began inquiring about the brand.

Starting with their most economically based cable, the Sharkwire Blue Sea Series features two price points: the affordable Classical series and the more expensive Sumptuous models. The 1.5 meter Blue Sea Series Classical AC cord has a retail asking price of \$420.00 here in the USA while a 1.5 meter Sumptuous AC cord retails for \$2,000.00. And that's just for those who dare to only place their toe into the Shark(wire) infested waters. Want to really swim with the big fish? Entire into their reference series lineup which offers three different models: Great White their state of the art model; the Tiger Shark (second from the top) and *Carcharhinus Leucas* or Bull Shark cables - which is the very subject of this review.

Just my opinion, but why name a high-end audio product after a predatory fish is unoriginal. But to name a cable after a shark? Corny! I can only imagine the advertising reading "Sharkwire devours the competition!" or something along those lines. Moreover, when I saw the asking price, even a died-in-the-wool, well-seasoned audiophile like me went totally slack jawed. The Bull Shark series here under review are expensive indeed with a starting price for their speaker cables at \$7,200.00 a pair and \$4k for a 1.5 meter AC cord. Obviously, there's lots of cables that are in this price range but these represent the least expensive in this series! The Tiger Shark series starts at \$30,400 for an 8ft speaker cable and \$9k for their AC cord. This places the Tiger Shark series in the same price range as the Gobel cables I fell madly in love with only recently. So much in love, I personally refused to review any other cable ever again (or so I hoped).

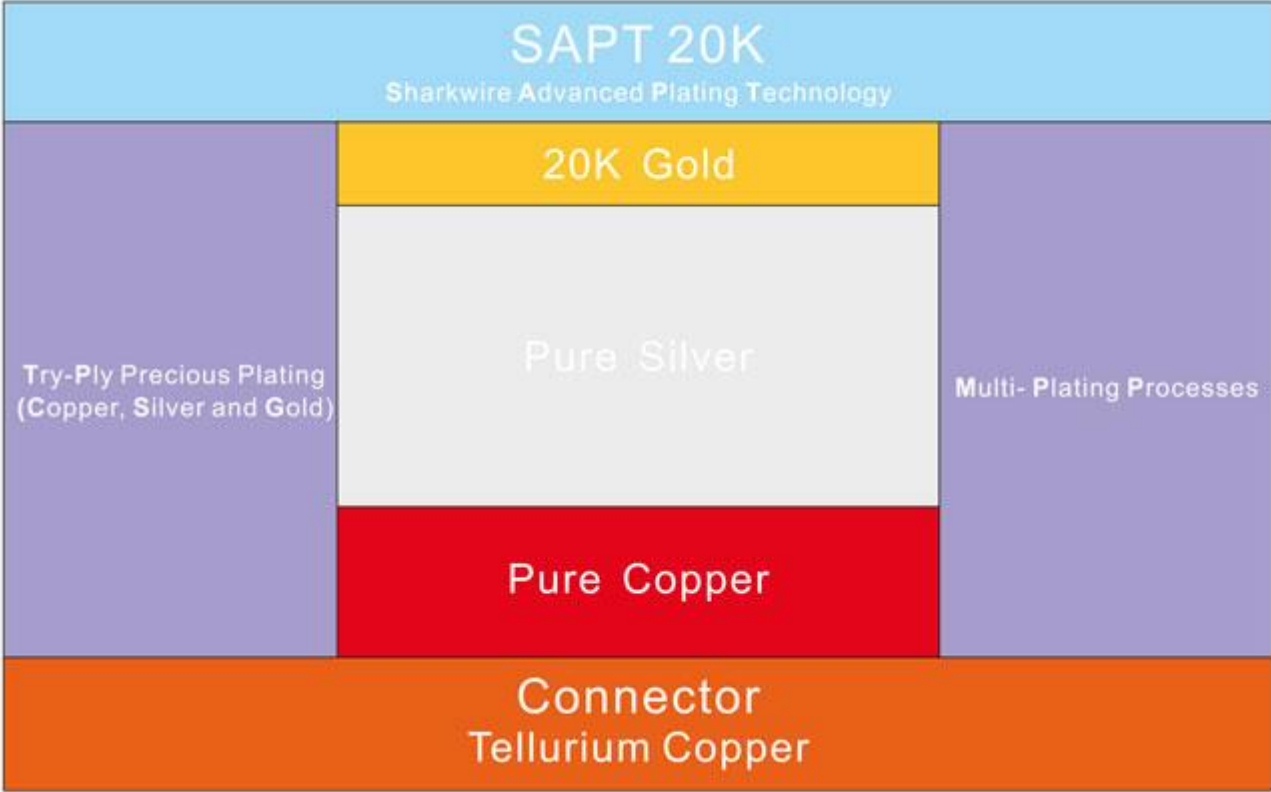
However, it was the asking price of the Great White that got me, well *angry* and *upset*.

The Great White series speaker cables retails for a whopping \$116,800.00 per pair! Ridiculous right? Absolutely! The Great White AC cords alone are \$22,400.00 each! These are not the first cables that I have heard of that that cost this much. I know of certain popular brands like MIT and Transparent costing upwards of \$80k and \$90k each. Hey, problem is I cannot afford any cable remotely this expensive, but I will admit, that if they made a difference that warranted owning them AND IF I WERE FILTHY RICH...Then I might be so foolish. Fact is, I love music just that much. Anyway, I was so upset I stated to Mr. Gunter "Okay, I lamented, send me the Great White and allow me the privilege to decide if these cables are the real deal or even remotely worth their asking price." As crazy as the price sounds, there are lots of

cables that cost \$30k and above (the Gobels are \$25k per pair). Twenty-years ago, I would have thought \$30k was absolutely insane. Guess I've become conditioned over the years and it's only a matter of time before we see other brands with a sticker price over the \$100k mark.

However, please note that these are not the first cables I have auditioned that are in this stratospheric price range.

Brands like MIT and Transparent have models costing upwards of \$80,000. The problem is that I (and possibly you too) cannot afford anything remotely this expensive. The sonic difference they make may possibly warrant owning them...if one is filthy rich. In any case, I was so upset I told to Mr. Gunter. *"Okay, send me the Great White and allow me to decide if these cables are even remotely worth their asking price."* That I am not a member of the 1% for whom spending this sort of money is a no-brainer must have been perfectly obvious to Mr. Gunter. He made no fuss over my pecuniary quibbles and instead extended an olive branch: suggesting I first audition the lower priced Sharkwire Bull Shark series. If I found them to be worthy, then write about it. If not, simply return them and forget the whole thing. Somewhat reluctantly, I agreed.



The cables arrived some weeks later. Gunter told me that the Bull Shark employs non-nickel plating that "magically" integrate pure gold, silver and copper using a process called Sharkwire Advanced Plating Technology or SAPT. He went on to say that *"integrating these precious metals and their Multi-Triangle, Multi-Gauge and Multi-Twisting Technologies combines the warm characteristics of copper, the high-*

resolution of silver and the delicate beauty of gold in a single wire." There is perhaps 50% silver, 30% copper and 20% gold in a single strand.



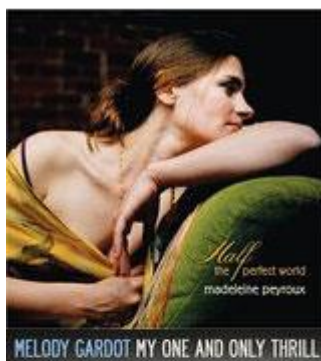
The hardware used for Sharkwire products—binding posts, RCAs and IECs—are all built in-house of tellurium copper. The fancy, oval-shaped bead centered on each cable with the Sharkwire logo engraved is very classy. There's nothing of the light-weight, Nordost-like feel to these heavily-built cables. And there is a certain weight-to-comfort ratio that many long-term audiophiles like myself find so reassuring. I am aware that weight has nothing to do with the sound. But for me, it just adds another level of comfort to a potential purchase. Weird but true.



Because the Sharkwire Bull Shark cables came in around the same time as I was finishing up another cable review, I chose to allow some friends, namely my old buddy Bill Jiggets try the Sharkwire Bull Shark cables in his system first. Of course, I mentioned to Bill about what good looking cables they were and how I think they might even give his \$30k Sunny Cable Supreme Mk II's (running a pair of Ascendo System Z loudspeakers) a run for their money. Bill obliged and picked them up a couple of days later. Some weeks later Bill reported that the Sharkwire Bull Shark cables impressed him with their "quick, extended (on both frequency extremes) and incredibly clean!" Not only did he like them, he said "these cables are the real deal!" For me, this was great news for I know Bill is quite the

nonchalant type who doesn't get too excited over cables or anything for that matter (except good food. He's a chef by trade). So, for Bill to even become remotely excited told me I had to do some research into this cable.

Replacing the excellent and affordable Audience series cables in my downstairs system which included the all-tube G9 Audio Nero mono amps and preamp, the Von Schweikert Unifield Model Two Mk II's and La Rosita music server. Four Bull Shark AC cords, 1 pair of RCA cables and a single pair of speaker cables were replaced while no serious listening was done for the first two weeks or about 100 hours although my friend Bill Jiggets did help prior to my installation by listening exclusively for a about month or thereabouts.



So Nice Duke from The Duke Jordan Trio is what I would describe as a double-trouble recording: it excels both musically and sonically (compliments of JVC's XRCD Three Blind Mice label). Featuring Duke Jordan on piano, Jesper Lundgaard (bass) and Asge Tanggaard (drums) this June, 1982 recording sounds utterly involving off my Dell laptop located in my office. However, the G9 Audio's Nero tube mono amps driving the Von Schweikert Unifield 2 monitors (or the incredibly coherent ClairAudient 1 +1s mini-monitors) never sounded nearly as vibrant and/or alive via the insertion of the Sharkwire Bull Shark cables. The one sonic characteristic that I think stands out the most is this cable's lightning quick transients. Piano, percussion instruments and strings for example possess a tactile feel and weight with a certain shimmer that's more pronounced and convincing of the real thing. Never in your face or forward, and recording dependent, the Bull Shark kept the soundstage tightly focused and beyond the speaker's physical location. The Bull Shark cables are vibrant sounding by way of allowing musical overtones and harmonic resonances to be heard (and felt). This gave the system an earthier character to the bass and richer mids and highs which allowed me to listen longer to the music and with a less critical ear. For voices I chose a few great lady legends that (no surprise) included Sarah Vaughn, Ella Fitzgerald and Shirley Horn. However, Madeline Peyroux, Melody Gardot and Tessa Souter are just a few of the hottest voices on the jazz scene today that have remained in constant rotation and whose earned my respect big time. And in each case, the incredibly intricate and delicate personality that makes each one of these women a standout performer is greatly expressed by a more lifelike and dynamically charged presentation. Usually, after extended listening to cables that dangerously extend high frequencies, often results in a decrease in tonal richness and harmonics which is often the flipside of too much clarity. Not so with the Shark cable Bull Shark. What you get here is a

higher purity in the treble region which goes all the way down into the midrange. This, of course, serves the human voice quite well by way of improved inflections and

harmonics. The overall results are a more genuine depiction of real instruments on a clearer three-dimensional plane.



Had it not been for the glistening soft light emitting off those tubed G9 mono amps, I would have mistaken this system for solid-state due to the improved grip and grunt in the low frequencies. Wolfgang Puschnig's *Chanting* from his 2001 CD entitled Chants [Quinton 102-2], is a longtime favorite of mine when it comes finding new and interesting forms of jazz. It's also easy to sink into this insightful though pensive recording since it's another one of those double-trouble disc that features both excellent recording quality *and* musicianship. Wolfgang's plays a mean alto saxophone as well as flute on this date but it's his bandmates Woody Schabata (vibes) and Bumi Fian (trumpet) who steal the show with their searing solo performances. What surprised me most about hearing this disc again was the sense of how much I liked the way it was recorded.- as if everyone was in the same room *at the same time*. *Chanting* sports that pristine feel to it although it was recorded over a decade ago. Listening through the Shark cables reveals even more subtleties that were only as obvious when heard in my big rig upstairs. Track two, *A Place Aside* is another daring and unique instrumental that really showcases the talents in this septet. Moreover, *A Place Aside* features an accompaniment of woodwind musicians by the Vienna Flautists who really add a certain extra layer and measure of drama to this uniquely styled song. That said, the intricate delicacies and details heard off the vibes riding alongside Vienna Flautists via the Shark cables offered a more vivid appreciation as to the overall excellent quality of the Quinton label. Separate but never apart. I got the impressions of what each artist wanted to convey through their solo without having to concentrate. They were simply right in front without ever once appearing forceful. Writing my notes, I caught myself nodding my head and patting my feet in appreciation.

In the final analysis I found the Sharkwire Bull Shark to be among the best cables I have heard (in my downstairs rig) at allowing the music to flow unfettered and unforced, yet at the same present itself with such immediacy and detail. It was only through their addition that I found myself leaning more toward a softer, airier and more gentile presentation offered by G9 Audio's compliment of push/pull KT120 tubes. However, the addition of the Sharkwire Bull Shark added more zest and zeal to my all tube setup than I would have believed possible. Again, frequency extremes reach further out with a increase in both speed and articulation I have not experienced prior from this rig.

Yes, the Sharkwire Bull Shark series cables are expensive and considering it's price, you will certainly want to avail themselves to the "try before you buy" policy. However, I highly recommend giving these cables a good listen because in many ways they seem to offer something a little different from the rest. Especially those at its lofty price. Again, the Bull Shark sounds more natural than it has any right to without sounding rolled off. It appears to offer a heightened high-frequency with lots of sparkle. There was not one instance during the review process where I found the Sharkwire Bull Shark to possess any bite (no pun intended) in its high-frequencies or any inadequacies whatsoever in the midbass or low-end for that matter (though the three-times more expensive Gobel Lacorde Statement still remain king of bass). The

Sharkwire Bull Shark cables have an expansive soundstage coupled to a very earthy and lively overall character. I've heard cables more than twice the asking price sound less favorable but I'd be hard put to state that I've heard a less-expensive cable that performed this good. I'm afraid of sticking my toe into the Sharkwire-infested waters to hear what their Tiger and Great White would sound like. I got to admit, as good as the Bull Shark performed in my system, I cannot wait to be thrown overboard into the mouth of a Great White! Highly recommended!

Clement Perry

