

» JUST WHEN YOU Thought...

▶ THE SIKU AND SIKU X are billed as the world's first and only programmable fishing devices that take over jigging for us and can even set the hook once a fish bites. Alas, we still have to reel the fish in.

With price tags of \$419.99 and \$489.99, respectively, SIKU and SIKU X aren't likely to fly out of tackle stores. But then wait a minute. Underwater cameras are priced in that range. So are many of the sonars we use. We also spend a fair share on portable shelters, not to mention the sticker shock of shopping for a wheelhouse. Perhaps the price tags also aren't so out of line once one sees what the units are purported to do—and how they're made. SIKU (*sic'-coo*), by the way, is Inuit for "ice."

So we choose a rod-and-reel combination and lure based on the fish we're after and the situation we face. Could be a 21-inch ultralight combo for crappies. Could be a 42-inch medium-heavy rod and casting reel for lake trout. The rod is held firmly in a rod holder on an arm that extends from the control unit. The angler precisely balances the rod in the holder with an adjustable magnetic detent (coupler) controlled by opposing magnets. The gap between the magnets is adjustable.

At that point we program a jigging sequence with a few button pushes on the main body of the unit. *Lift-drop, lift-drop, lift-drop, pause. Lift-drop, lift-drop, lift-drop, pause.* We determine the quickness and height of the lift-drop and the length of the pause. Strike sensor adjusted and set, the strike alarm is both visual (flashing light) and audio (buzzer).

Both units have auto-hook-set capability with the addition of an Auto Hook Set Attachment in the case of the regular SIKU. The SIKU X comes with the Auto Hook Set Attachment, plus a "dovetail" joint allowing the height to adjust from 14.5 to 27 inches, a feature that makes the rod easier to grab for folks with a bad back. Additional height also allows for bigger lift-drop sequences with longer rods. Fifty inches of lift and drop are possible with a 48-inch rod, an option for pike and lake trout.

When a fish hits a lure below a rod on a SIKU without the auto-hook-set feature, the rod balances in the holder, keeping slight tension on the fish until the angler arrives to set the hook. Should the fish run, setting the hook in the process, the base of the SIKU holds firm, with the reel drag doing its job. The units are constructed so they can't be pulled down a 10-inch hole.



The units would seem to be built more on the order of a tank than a sardine can, with anodized aircraft-grade 6061 T-6 aluminum. The components are machined aluminum. There's a 36-month warranty on the electrical components. The power comes from the same type of 12-volt battery that runs your Vexilar. Each unit comes with a protective hard case.

Legality shouldn't be an issue in most places, given being able to remove the auto-hook-setting option that would make them illegal in states like Minnesota. But we haven't looked at what might be issues, state by state and province by province.

Just when we might have thought we couldn't possibly step boldly beyond where ice anglers have gone before, well, here we go again. We have no experience with SIKU on the ice, so time will tell, as another interesting season unfolds. ■

Editor's note: To see the SIKU in action, visit profishapp.com.