

Kuzma's Listening Room

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The modern high-end audio company needs a good listening room. This is in part to determine the performance of the company's products in the best possible listening environment. It's also a fine place to show off the company's audio equipment at its best to distributors, dealers and even a few high-end end-users. And Kuzma's listening room is one of the best.

There's just one problem... the listening room is in Franc Kuzma's home, not at the factory. Another listening room is being built in the factory, but Kuzma's listening room sets a high standard that the factory listening room will struggle to meet, let alone better.

"If I want to develop the best products, and discover what's really on those records, you need a really good system. And, as everyone knows, the acoustics effect the listening experience. I'm still learning how to listen to music in this room!"

Franc Kuzma's listening room encapsulates Kuzma's dedication to >>

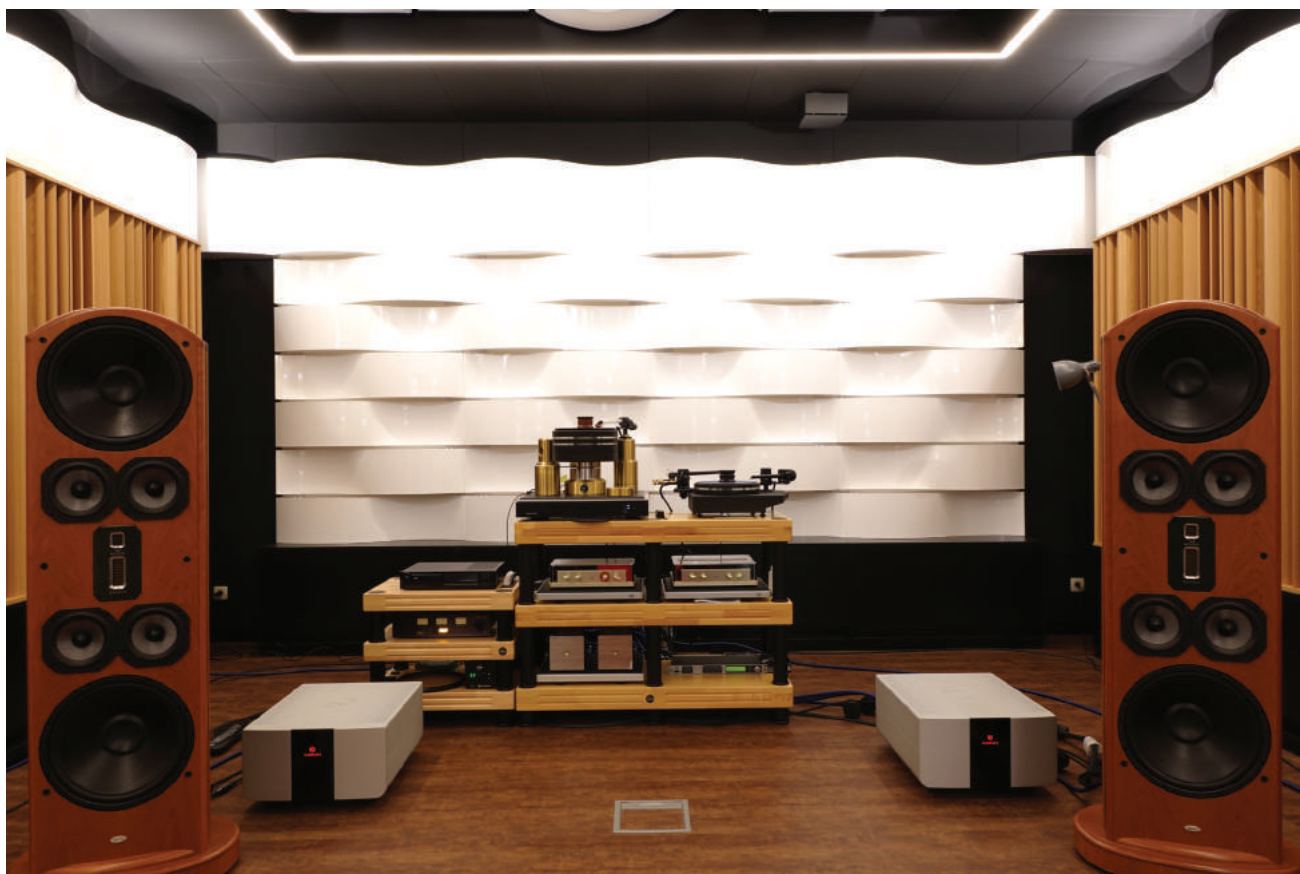


MEET YOUR MAKER SPECIAL
Kuzma's Listening Room





There are two problems in a listening room. One is the control of standing waves for the bass. The other is the absorption, diffusion and reflection of mid and high frequencies.



» the audio arts, a dedication that is reflected in the turntables, tonearms and cartridges that carry his name. It also fits Franc, the man; he would want a world-class listening room in his own house. This isn't for ego-stroking or any self-congratulatory reasons. He would want the room in his house because he's a natural *bon viveur*. This is what a good system is all about; the focal point of the house and the local music loving community. This is the modern-day equivalent of sitting around the camp-fire, sharing stories and playing music. OK, it's an expensive room to start a fire in, and most of the stories will be about music, but there will be stories, there will be food, and there will be booze!

However, despite Franc being one of the nice guys, and his house resonates

with stories and laughter, in interview he's laconic and soft-spoken. For the full interview, please visit our YouTube channel (<https://rb.gy/cpn9z>).

Kuzma moved recently into his new house on the outskirts of Kranj, the third largest city in Slovenia. Building a large, dedicated listening space in a new home is a major undertaking in any circumstance, but Kuzma decided to build his 'master' listening room and office on the second floor... of a single-story building.

Enter the experts

This is no simple project. The loading on the property of just the audio equipment is substantial, but was nothing compared to the amount of building and acoustic material that went into the construction of the room.

There were tonnes of materials going into the room itself, meaning this needed a lot more reinforcement than even a loft extension.

"When I decided to spend money for a new listening room, I wondered where to go. I mean, even I know a little bit about acoustics. But then I asked around and I decided to choose SMT (Svanå Miljöteknik AB) in Sweden."

SMT acted as consultants and helped build the room. "The goal," said Franc, "was to take the emphasis away from the dead sound of a studio and instead making it more like the listening experience in a concert hall."

Franc explained "There are two problems in a listening room. One is the control of standing waves for the bass. The other is the absorption, diffusion, and reflection of mid and





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» high frequencies. To control the bass, they added bass traps, tuned to the dimensions of the room. On the front and back wall, there is a false wall of about half a metre of absorption (it's filled with wool). The same applies to the ceiling."

It is a partial 'floating' design (like a studio) where the room is acoustically isolated from the surroundings. The room has large soffit bass traps all around the front and rear walls and along the side walls, as well as a floating ceiling diffusion panel, a rear-wall diffusion unit (the wavy white panel behind the system, designed to scatter mids and high frequencies, creating a longer delay for the rear reflected sound), more traditional diffusion panels along the side and rear walls, and the doors themselves act as useful first-reflection absorbers.

The room itself is large enough to act as a small cinema (approximately 20' wide, 24' long and 12' tall). The walls themselves are also half a metre thick, a composite formed of acoustic treatment and solid wall material. Naturally, the mains is carefully managed in a separate plant room.

What does it sound like?

For once, a review is of the room, not the system. In fairness, with the exception of the Legacy Audio speakers and subs, I know a lot of this equipment pretty well, but the shock of hearing a well set-up system in about as ideal a room as it's possible to get is a humbling experience.

Music played in this room can replicate the live venue or, when played loud enough, it has all the force of a controlled explosion of sound. I'm looking at you, Led Zep albums! We talk about 'effortless' systems, but until you have experienced that sound in a truly audio-sympathetic



room, you have no real idea what that term means.

Each piece of music scales up or down as appropriately as possible because the room is dialled out of the equation. Similarly, the bass takes on both a precision and depth that you will struggle to hear outside of a concert hall.

My worry on first looking at the room was that it would be over-damped, but those rule-of-thumb tests (how hard it is to speak in the room, how hard it is to speak over the music in that room, hand-claps to pick up any reverberation or flutter echoes) quickly showed the room had a good balance of live sound and control over reflections and bass.

The flutter echo test was perhaps most telling, because there simply wasn't any! Flutter echo is the annoying 'flappy-springy' sound you hear when sound bounces between two live surfaces at right angles to one another (say, wall and ceiling). And in this room, you had to describe it to others, because it didn't exist at all!

The set-up

Franc's system is as distinctive as he is. Naturally, it's vinyl-based (given his company makes turntables, it would be odd if he showed me around his digital-only system), but he uses a Kuzma XL AIR with a SAFIR 9 arm and a CAR-60 cartridge as his main vinyl platform. There is also a Stabi R, which at the time held two arms (a Stogi S 12 and a 4 Point 9) each suitably fettered with Kuzma CAR cartridges.

These are fed into a Zanden Model 1200 Signature phono stage and Model 3000mk2 line preamplifier, both of which sit on Kuzma Platis platforms. There is a heavily modified Rotel CD player from the early 1990s, re-engineered to perform more like Zanden's lamented CD player. This is joined by a Magnum Dynalab MD90 tuner, Master Collection POWERa mono amps from Karan Acoustics, and a pair of Legacy Audio Whisper loudspeakers with a pair of Legacy Audio Xtreme XD subwoofers. Cables are all made by US specialist Transparent Audio.

The equipment table is a Kuzma design, with another one being built for the studio in the factory. It seems unlikely that these will go into commercial production because they weigh as much as the rest of the system combined!

But, why go big or go home, when you can do both! That's what Franc Kuzma has done in his home! +

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