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Kuzma Stabi S with tonearm Stogi S

BEITRAGSSEITEN

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Stogi S](#)

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There is hardly a record player on the market, that goes in such an opposite direction as the smallest one of Kuzma does. Whether this optical delicacy is only made for design freaks, individualists, and non-conformists or is also attractive for "ear-people" is that, what Helmut Rohrwild wanted to examine more closely, who – in spite of an intensive analogue past - only lately had his sight on Kuzma-products.

written by Helmut Rohrwild [01-2009]

There are products, like, for example, record players of Franc Kuzma, of which you don't take any notice for a long time without being able to tell why, before they catch the eye one day and possibly even leave a deep impression. In the case of Kuzma, I was granted a late light-bulb moment with two tone arms: everything made sense und offered, above all, an excellent equivalent value in relation of price and sound. As I have been a friend of affordable listening-enjoyment for a long time, I have looked around in the portfolio of Kuzma – motivated by the two tone arms – and chose the smallest record player for a further test, which was available unmodified for a long time. Anyway, at least in the basic version, I believe this record player to be "very affordable". That looks quite different when upgrading it armed to the teeth with a reference power supply unit and an Upgrade, which I could not resist to do. This also regards the tester: the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

What really impressed me with this product range of Franc Kuzma was the technical scope of drives and tone arms. The technical spectrum ranges from a minimalist design of the Stabi S over the classical appearing and spring-loaded Stabi reference to a monumental Stabi XL with a mass-drive of utmost dimensioning, and the tone arms are not less rich of species – the Stogi S as a one-point-pinnacle-bearing arm, then the Stogi (Reference) in classical cardan-bearing form of construction, and the Air Line, which is the present norm of air mounted tangential tone arms. The assortment of tone arms was shortly extended by the 4 Point, an ingenious masterstroke. As you see, Franz Kuzma has dedicated himself totally to the analogue matter – remarkable. But now to the actual object of my test: the Stabi S with Stogi S.

The fun with this record player starts already with unpacking and assembling. The parts come out in the right order and nearly fit into the suitable position by themselves. Nevertheless, the properly made manual is of help as most of the customers very seldom build up a drive. The probably most unusual part is the basic construction of the Stabi S, a "T" out of two massive brass rods with the meaty

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diameter of five centimetres. That looks rather dainty, but in view of the assembly the weight should not be underestimated. At the ends of the rods O-rings are applied, which prevent sliding and on the other hand offer a decoupling, but rather weak. Even if there is the danger of getting on your nerves: please take care that the base body and the surface area of assembly are really adjusted precisely and absolutely horizontal. Those, who do not take meticulous care will give away sound potential unnecessarily. The rod-formed base of the record player only offers very little contact surface for airborne sound stimulus – a much underestimated disturbing component – which is "spread" by targeted use of a very attractive not smooth optical matt-black surface, thanks to a "technical" lacquering. Near to the "T" the upright bearing is mounted, which has to be filled with oil up to respective marking before the pivot is put in carefully (!) together with the bearing ball of the sub-turntable. Then, the motor is set in right at the end of the "T" and the belt is applied. At the end of the assembly of the drive the actual turntable is set on to the sub-turntable and it is checked, whether the motor is in its proper place – i.e., does not touch the turntable from underneath. The turntable has a rubber insertion and on top a tightly glued mat. According to experiences of measures improving the sound, such as laying on a millenium-mat or the SID-A did not result in audible improvements, which speaks in favour of the effectiveness of the turntable construction of the Stabi S. The synchronous motor – by the way, also a very heavy little bloke in a massive housing – is powered via the reference power supply unit with clean pre-processed current. The reference power supply unit, at which also the speed of revolution can be selected, needs much room in depth when being assembled. There should be voluptuous 45 centimetres plus space for the cable. Well, the drive is now ready.



Therewith, it is now the time to build in the tone arm Stogi S. This is a one-point-pinnacle-bearing-construction, which meets the demands for this tone arm construction in nearly classical way. A Kuzma-typical mix of materials out of aluminium and brass is used by the tone arm: the matt-black lacquered arm pipe which is of aluminium and is vapour-coated in the inside with a foam-kernel carries a fixed head shell with the Kuzma-own stabilisation running upwards, which allows assembly of pick-ups of every size. At the rear end the arm pipe ends in the bearing bell, the upper part of which is of aluminium and carries the rather thick bearing thorn inside, which runs out to the bearing pinnacle in an obtuse angle. Top contact remains top contact, but for this reason the cone surface is so big, that the silicone absorbability can have effect in spite of the little reservoirs in the bearing cup. The absorbability should prevent unwanted movements of the pick-up-tone-arm-combination, because it will let it "see" a higher mass and will therefore move the resonance frequency into a (hopefully) uncritical area. Depending on the pick-up, this can work very well, but not always. The only help is trying out and critical listening. The lower big part of the bearing bell is of brass as to concentrate as much mass as possible under the bearing points. From the backside of the bearing bell under the area of the arm pipe there protrudes the stump for the two-part-brass-counterbalance. You will find a counter-screw in the bigger one of the two weights, which is for fine-adjustment of the azimuth. Far upwards a little pin is mounted, on which the tone arm cable is secured for the transport. The counterpart thereof you will find in the arm basis. That is smart, because this measure makes sure of enough protection of the filigree cable-setting which sticks out at the upper end of the bearing bell, and which is probably – till transition to the fixed cabling – the most endangered part of the tone arm. The arm basis is applied with a massive shank into the tone arm receiver, which consists of a massive brass cylinder, which is fixed to the arm shaft with two grub screws and itself again is clamped to the drive. A little tip: the adjustment of the height should mainly be done with the brass cylinder so that the arm shaft is operated as low as possible. Altogether, a technically sophisticated tone arm – but, unfortunately, there is no lift for operation of same. A finger-lift à la "4 point" would really make the handling easier. As a base for the Kuzma-player I have chosen a two-layer base, the two levels of which are separated from the Acoustic Solid by absorbing elements. This guarantees an adequate cost-efficient decoupling, but still functions quite well. Last but not least: The covering hood made of Acryl offers reasonable dust-protection and looks really



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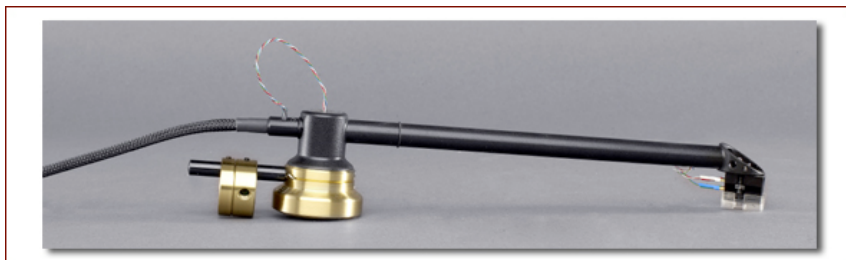
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great mounted onto the player.



Therewith, we come to listening of music, first without any Upgrade which was not included by original delivery. For the first listening round the Denon DL 103 SA - the jubilee-version of this classic device - was mounted into the head shell of the tone arm. The assembly and adjustment was rather tricky, well, a typical "one-pointer"; here, the Kuzma-arm is no exception. But, what was audible with this combination per Brocksieper Phonomax or SAC nano entrada disco was more than worth all the fuss: powerful and dynamical - totally Denon-like - but, at the same time, this combination came to work as quick as a weasel and performed with luxurious sound-colours with a not too wide paintbrush, and, therefore, offered also always unexpectedly much resolution by good spacey picturing.

In the meantime, the Upgrade was delivered. It is a second turntable with same measurements as the turntable which is simply to be inserted between the sub-turntable and the record-turntable. Additionally, there are two spacers for the hood for balancing the height difference. Actually, here "only" the mass of the record-turntable is doubled. But what does "only" mean here? After all, the Stabi S comes with remarkable eight kilo turntable-mass, which brings in quite a portion of additional pressure and superior drive and makes sure that the Denon finally lifts off; concerning the sound, of course. That fits. A big recommendation also for the Upgrade, which is worth every Euro of its price. As the first run with the Denon was so promising, I brought in a much bigger MC-calibre for the second round: a Shelter 90X. Already after a short time two things were absolutely clear: first, that the Stogi S tone arm got on with the 90X without any problems and fathoms the potential of this tone arm quite strongly, and secondly, that the considerable higher price of the 90X, which is nearly four times as much as that of the Denon, is justified by an audible difference to the Denon. More resolution, still more finer painted sound-colours and a very sensitive differentiation of dynamic shadings; all this, embedded in a powerful performance in a believable appearing display of space, you will get from Shelter. That is really brilliant!



As a convinced advocate of moving magnet/moving iron I could not resist to found out, how the Kuzma-player gets along with this species of pick-up. The Nagaoka MP 500, the top model of the actual MI-assembly series of Nagaoka, has already worked excellently in some of my record players. Here, also it was not disappointing and offered an exemplary coherent performance with the Phonomax as well as with the MM-plug-in of the preamplifier Stax SR 14 S. This is what you can hear from this combination: very balanced playing over the total frequency area. Sound-colours are slightly less opulent as from Shelter or Denon. With more broad fine-regulated dynamic of very sensitive up to non-braked vehemence. In comparison

with Shelter and Denon all that in a more compact but more exact and stabile pictured space. Well, that is a statement!

Those, who know me, will know: without a Decca usually nothing goes with me. Only, this time, it was an own goal. Not, that it did not fit concerning the sound. On the contrary. But, and this is a big but: Decca/London-pick-ups interact distinctly audible with the motor of the Kuzma. It buzzes – the nearer to the inside groove, the louder. Nothing will help here. This combination definitely does not work. What a shame!

As the last candidate I built in the smallest Kuzma pick-up: the KC-1. More of this soon, because it is still the obligatory playing-in time. A final conclusion would be unfair. But, what can be heard up to now is very promising.

STATEMENT

Kuzma's smallest record player is definitely not only for the design freak but also for the ear-people a strike home. The tone arm gets along easily with all kinds of pick-ups. For me, the reference power supply unit is just as essential as the Upgrade. It is good, that you can upgrade both sound-optimisers later and, starting with this cost-effective basis model, will reach total satisfaction with the sound step by step.

Record player Kuzma Stabi S with tone arm Stogi S

Technical data:

Weight: 13 kg

Measurements: 40 x 30 x 14 cm

Turntable: 4 kg, with Upgrade 8 kg

Revolution: 33 und 45 r.p.m.

Distribution: Gaudios, Brandhofgasse 11, A-8010 Graz

Internet: www.gaudios.info

Prices:

Stabi S: 1,760 €

Reference power supply unit: 985 €

Stogi S: 960 €

Upgrade Stabi S: 440 €

Guarantee: 2 years

Listened to with:

Preamplifier Funk MTX Monitor V3a

Power amplifier Brocksieper LC 807

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and alternatively with:

Preamplifier Ambrosia 2000 of Spread Spectrum Technologies

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Loudspeaker TMR Standard IIIc