



Kuzma Stabi S Turn Table

03 Jan 2015

Article by WL Low



Kuzma Stabi S is as simple as turn table design comes!

I've always been impressed by Kuzma turn tables, however their price tags always seems intimidating, until that is I saw a unit of the Stabi S model on display at The Audio Store, retailing for only RM\$12,800/unit. For the price, you get a basic belt drive unit (with separated motor pod) manual speed change and a 9 inch Stogi uni pivot design tone arm (direct wired from head shell to RCA plugs) thrown in for good measure. One only needs to select a suitable cartridge and matching phono stage for a functioning analog source front end. I immediately made a review request, but alas, that unit was sold and the happy owner was on his merry way to collect the turn table. The last two years have seen few units of Stabi S come on display with a "sold" sign on them. I've come to resign perhaps that I may never get a chance to hear one in action?

Two months ago, I was lingering at The Audio Store, browsing their nice collection of LPs and I asked Mr Aw if the unit of Kuzma Stabi S on display is sold as usual? He replied that the unit was set up for a potential client audition, but wasn't sure when he'll come. I sense this is my last great chance! I ask to review the item on the condition that I return it once the potential audition is confirmed.

Like a kid with his new toy, I couldn't wait to get home to play with it. I immediately set up the turn table as I arrived home with the aim to spin some LPs.

The work of setting up a new turn table was hard and long, as I had to dismount my existing Linn Sondek LP12 and replace the Kuzma on the very same place on my FE Spider rack. Space constrain was a struggle, but I managed to complete the new turn table set up the very next day.



The motor pod, T-bone structure, sub-platter and Stogi tone arm. One has a choice of optional custom fitting the Kuzma Stabi S with, a 12 inch long Stogi arm, an electronic speed change/power supply boks, and lastly an dual main platter option.

The Stabi S came as 4 main pieces. The aluminium platter with dampening sheet, the brass motor housing pod, the brass bearing support structure which looked much like a T-bone shape attachment tubular beams, and the Stogi tone arm. Mr Aw had mounted and set up the turn table and tone arm combo to work with an Ortofon MC25 FL cartridge to the package to make the review proceedings more convenient. The review there rein will be based on this combo, connected to my Pass Lab X-Ono phono stage, set to 425ohms loading and at 72db gain setting.

From the first needle drop on vinyl, I was amazed by the ninth degree of silence, lack of surface noise and low level hum. I thought my Linn was rather noisy by comparison. the Linn always had some small degree of surface noise and low level hum with playing silent grooves. Now, for a budget table like the Stabi S, that's a BIG WOW! factor. Then a few seconds later, the music started, it hit me so hard dynamically, I had to re-learn what an analog rig can do with hard charging rock music. My first LP spinning on the Kuzma was titled, Leather & Lace, a rock compilation LP of the nineties. I've never heard this LP being playing this dynamically hard and big scale. I was never a fan of Meatloaf before, but then he never sound so good either!



*The Kuzma Stabi S playing in my cave.
The LP clamp is included in the package.
It tightens imaging and improves upon
dynamic “kick”, compared to play back
without clamping.*

The top end was super smooth, airy and refined, the mark of a well matured audio design for high end. Despite the smoothness, the highs will still bite when the recording calls for, such as the hard hitting high hats and cymbals on the drum kit dominated album "Crash" by Charly Antolini. The fierce throaty roar of a motorbike engine revving on the track Motodrum was realistic which only a healthy mid range with density can achieve. The kick drums stand out from the rest of the drum mix as should in reality. Now that my interest is totally piqued, I am looking for a bass heavy album to play with. Found it with Bad Company's album in the Ready For Love track. That full, deep diving mellow bass lines had me craving for more and more rock music.

While rock music was my staple LP diet with the Kuzma, I also had the chance to play with audiophile approved black disc, such as the M&K Super Sampler, which has everything in a test disc. Playing the Flamenco Fever sampler track Llorona the dynamics of the calypso in contrast to the floor stomping of the dancer is mind blowing. I've never quite heard such strong dynamics, stirring vocal emotion of the singing and the overall musicality of the whole presented like only the Stabi S can. Playing back the same track on my Linn, by comparison, is like listening to the music diluted off it's dynamics and micro detailing, while that stirring vocal emotion is more pronounced and musicality maintained. It's like an example of weather striped down coat of automotive paint, still semi glossy, but with lustre and depth lost.



*I've admired this Kuzma Stabi XL for years, But
it's six figure price tag is just too intimidating.
However, it's little baby bro the Stabi S
achieves much of of the sonic prowess
at about 1/10th of the asking price*

To sum up, the Kuzma Stabi S excels in near total transparency and truthfulness due to it's low noise factor. Despite it's truthfulness, it's still very forgiving of poor recordings. It also trumps on big dynamics factor and projecting big music scale. It's sound staging may not be the most 3D compared to the highest end of six figure price tag turn tables, but at tasking price, I am not complaining at all. I was totally surprised at the level of sonic performance afforded by such a toy like, skeleton compact design, it's like the sound does not match the visual simplicity of the Kuzma Stabi S.

At the point of the writing this, I want one so badly that I am considering selling a kidney! Ha! Ha!, you be surprised what other things people would sell their kidneys for. Hmmm.....

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