



Karma AV's largest home cinema demo space is designed to showcase reference level cinema

KARMA CHAMELEON

***EI* took a trip to the beautiful Yorkshire countryside near York to check out Karma AV's new demo facilities and discover what makes the company's offer compelling.**

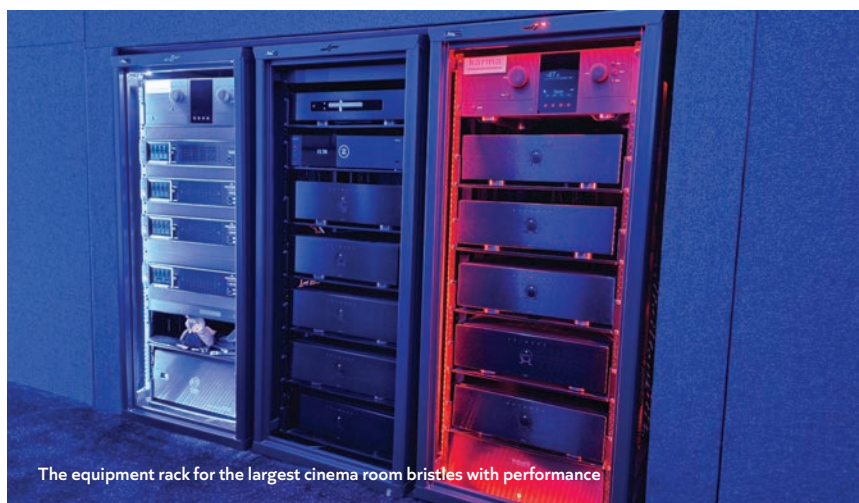
Led by industry veteran Ian Severs and a small but highly experienced team, Karma AV was founded in 2011 to offer bespoke support services, training and demonstration spaces to an evolving range of cinema and Hi-Fi brands.

As Ian explains, "Most of our team have been involved with mid-to-high-end home theatre demonstrations since the late 1990s and more basic home cinema from the early days of Pro-Logic. We started with one room showing mid-level JBL Synthesis Home Cinema, progressing to a fully-fledged £200K Synthesis system from a brand that I'd handled for nearly three decades. During that time, we've been fortunate enough to discover two new and upcoming home theatre brands, which offer a significant improvement for similar outlay. Both Ascendo Immersive Audio and Perlisten Audio deliver extraordinarily high levels of performance."

Today's Karma AV demonstration set up comprises three separate rooms, skilfully created to offer integrators and their customers a bespoke journey through all performance levels, from entry to high-end. The smaller room (43 m³) features a 5.1.2 Cornered Audio/SVS system alongside a 7.1.2 system of System

Audio on-walls and SVS subs, and a third system of more traditional SVS speakers in a 5.1 config, all driven by Emotiva amps and processing. In the middle room (51m³), Perlisten Audio in-wall and Ascendo on-wall 7.2.4 systems are driven by Emotiva processing and Primare A35.8 bridgeable 8-channel power amplifiers. The largest demo space (216m³) showcases

an Ascendo 9.6.4 system of point-source LCRs and surround/heights, four 18in subs and two infrasonic 32in subs, together with a Perlisten Audio 11.4.6 system, complete with THX Certified Dominus floor/centre/in-wall/in-ceiling speakers and four flagship D215s push-pull subs. Processing is by Trinnov and amplification by Ascendo.



The equipment rack for the largest cinema room bristles with performance

For video the smaller space features a 75in TV and the two larger spaces, JVC projectors: DLA-NZ5, DLA-NZ9BE respectively. Each room is fitted with Cinema Build Systems fabric tracking in three different styles. The screens in the mid and main room are both Cinema Build Systems 2.35:1 acoustically transparent 3m and 5m designs, and all systems are wired with In-akustik cables, designed and manufactured in Germany.

Ian explains, "The idea in each space is to show what can be achieved at different levels/budgets, so dealers and their customers can experience what's possible. In the smaller room we can demo at near entry level for a simple 5.1 lounge system and then move seamlessly to an on-wall Atmos solution. Then we can show that sound needn't be compromised in more challenging install environments through a discreet corner-installed Cornered Audio system. The smaller space features sound systems from around £3,150 to £6,800.

"The middle room shows what can be achieved for a higher outlay, but still less than the cost of many kitchen fit outs. Systems in this space range from £23,200 up to around £44,000, with the added flexibility of changing electronics or subwoofers with relative ease to help show differences and fine tune.

"The built-in speakers are fixed and concealed behind the CBS acoustic walls, but we can also install a freestanding set up to show alternatives. Since Perlisten makes in-wall, on-wall and regular bookshelf or floor-standing versions of each model, we can demonstrate a very high level of flexibility. The Ascendo system can also have different subwoofers installed. Both these systems have been Dirac calibrated.

"The two high-end systems (£200k approx.) in the main room are designed to demonstrate that we can drive even large spaces at the required 'reference' levels. The base layer speakers in the Perlisten set-up are all bi-amped with the main LCR being bi-amped with bridged amplification. The four D215 active subwoofers offer infrasonic bass. The Ascendo System, which was calibrated by Ascendo's Geoffrey Heinzl, uses all Ascendo amplification, and is supported by two 32-inch infrasonic subwoofers."

PROOF OF THE PUDDING!

Explanations completed; it was time to experience the systems in action. Played in the different rooms, the same familiar stand-out movie sequences from 'A Quiet Place', 'No Time To Die' and 'Top Gun: Maverick', will give visitors a really clear idea of the scale and quality of systems at each price level, and an appreciation of what the high-end systems bring to the immersive party. We were able to pick out particular things to listen for, like the ticking of the alarm clock in the basement scene from A Quiet Place, and the contrast between the audio inside and outside of the Aston Martin during the gun attack part of the Bond car chase

sequence, each time with greater resolution and power so that even those new to home cinema can understand and recognise the progression of performance possible. Considering the price points involved, performance in the smaller space was impressive, the discreet Cornered Audio speakers in particular proving surprisingly effective.

More immersive power is unleashed in the middle room, forcefully resolving the contrasts in the soundtrack between high impact sounds and more subtle effects: the bullet hits in the Bond sequence gain more precision and clarity, while Emily Blunt's scream at the end of the A Quiet Place sequence takes on a higher level of emotional involvement.

Moving into the largest space, it's a genuine surprise to find a room of this size making an impression even before the system is called into action. Stand out moments included the grave explosion sequence in Bond where the audio communicates the temporary deafness Bond experiences. Here the infrasonic abilities of the room really deliver. As you might expect, everything in the room is large-scale, and despite the impressive power on show during sequences, it's probably the subtlety that really impresses the most. The sequence where Emily Blunt stands on a nail and then has to remove it without making any noise is a particular stand out.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

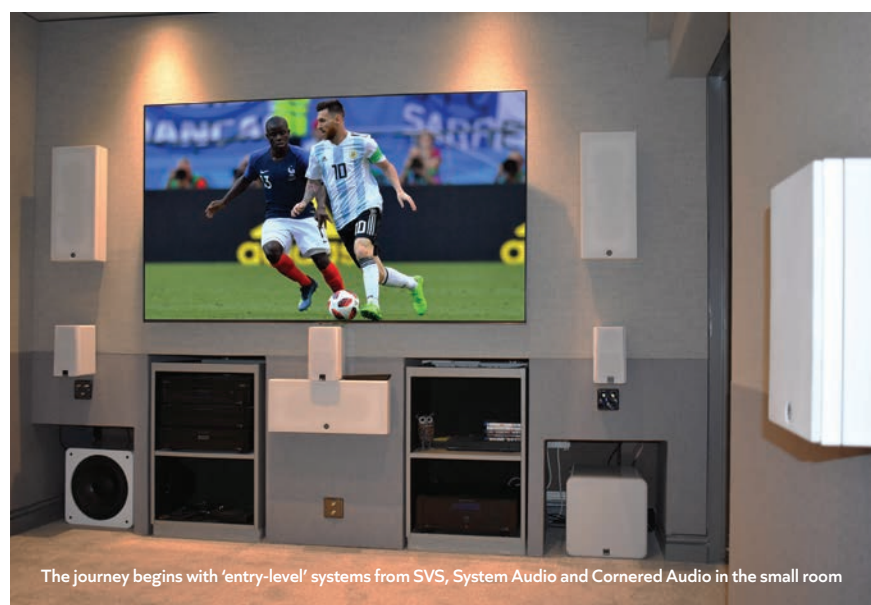
Given its relatively unassuming exterior, it's a real delight to discover such a treasure trove of demonstration facilities inside Karma AV. Ian enthuses, "We love each room and each system for what they bring as they are exceptional offerings at each level. The versatility is built-in to show what's possible at every budget from very affordable to true high-end performance.

"We hope to gain more business from the best designers/integrators because we feel that our new demo environments really showcase



Get ready to rumble: step this way to cinema heaven in the large room

the full market-leading potential of our brands. Now that we've achieved excellent performance at every level, we've had an uptick in dealer visits (mainly through word of mouth) in pretty short order. Having experienced the demonstrations, dealers are bringing their 'qualified' serious customers to us (from the South too) because the trip has now become very worthwhile. We are only 30 minutes from Leeds Bradford Airport, York and Leeds railway stations, so we are actually pretty accessible."



The journey begins with 'entry-level' systems from SVS, System Audio and Cornered Audio in the small room

ESSENTIAL KARMA AV

In support, Karma AV's brands have also thrown their weight behind the enterprise with favourable demonstration stock terms, advice and calibration. Another impressive part of the project is that the team has built everything themselves, in the process gaining useful experience, which Ian says can help installers deal with design and installation challenges. "On top of this, we offer in-field calibration in a number of ways, either through the Karma team, or with our manufacturer's assistance and support, or by collaboration with highly qualified 'external' calibrators."

GETTING INVOLVED

Says Ian, "To work with us, installers need to help us to understand their needs and requirements, and end users must of course be qualified by one of our supporting dealers to arrange a visit to discuss full systems or system upgrades."

"Once the objectives have been defined, we're very hands-on throughout the process, offering support from start to finish at the bespoke level required by the integrator. For instance, we prefer not to use a courier for deliveries of systems from mid-level up and would rather deliver the systems ourselves."

"We are a smaller company, but with an experienced team sharing a very high level of pride in what we do, in how we solve problems, and the standard of service that we offer in all departments including our own in-house product servicing."

Ian adds, "We know that our high support levels and warranties are recognised by our dealers as amongst the very best in the

industry, so obviously we hope that others may give us the opportunity to help them. At the same time, we fully respect our competition and all high-quality brands, because the best brands, distributors and installers help the industry to grow.

"We choose to offer perhaps more exclusive products to a more select number of dealers and specialise very much in home theatre and mid-to-high-end Hi-Fi too. We've noticed a recent trend in CI to embrace Hi-Fi systems as well, but this is nothing new to us: we have always offered that additional category support. Half of the team has roots in two-channel retail from the pre home cinema era, and because we've been doing this all along, we can offer design for stereo systems at every level. We have chosen deliberately not to get involved with control systems and the more volume-based areas of CI. That is not for us."

THE WAY OF KARMA

"Even though we offer a great deal of experience to our customers, says Ian, "we will never pretend that we can offer something that is outside our areas of expertise. Our desire is to identify where we can add value to systems either entirely or via component upgrades. We cannot sell products that we would not use ourselves."

"Ultimately, our approach is to treat others as you would hope to be treated, with full respect, understanding and fairness. We strive to provide the very best products in their categories and work closely with our supplier partners to help them bring new products to



Small room, big sound: Cornered Audio offers impressive high performance

market. Some recent examples include a new in-wall/on-wall subwoofer from Perlisten and their recently launched THX dominus in-ceiling loudspeaker, as well as a new 16in active subwoofer from Ascendo and the new SP25 AV processor from Primare."

Clearly much time, effort and love has gone into creating this highly impressive suite of demonstration spaces, and the abilities of the team are clear. The experience at Karma offers yet another way for the industry to inspire and inform its customers as well as a learning space for training.

As *EI* was leaving, Ian had some other news to impart, "We will very soon be offering two additional extremely high-end demo systems in the south of England. Watch this space!"



With Perlisten and Ascendo systems installed, the middle room delivers genuine immersion for the cost of a kitchen fit out