

7 days from the "NIDA Mk1" and "NOVA-Utopia"

Ceslovas Paplauskas - CTO „CP AUDIO PROJECTS”,
Algirdas Mazeika - seeker of a better music playback

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The authors chose different road to the same
common goal - maximum quality playback of music.

We were listening and comparing the audiophile
system FOCAL "Nova - Utopia" and engineering CP AUDIO PROJECTS
"Nida Mk1" in a well-equipped room seven days.

After listening to the sound system NIDA Mk1 in my room, Algirdas asked to
organize an event in his "music room". I also wanted to test the system and take
some pictures for the website, so I agreed.

Here we would like to emphasize the problem - the importance of room
quality for music playback.



Ceslovas Paplauskas:

High-quality music reproduction to a large extent depends on the acoustic parameters of the room, so the discussion should start with this. Algirdas M. I am inviting you to describe your "music room"

Algirdas Mazeika:

My road to the highest quality playback of music was not short and straight. I now have a room of such quality for music playback that I had been dreaming about for a long time. Now I can assess the playback of sound systems or their individual components in a more accurate way.

The room was originally designed and equipped for music playback. The area of the room is 1000 sq ft. All the walls are not parallel to each other. The ceiling also has a large slope and is fitted at a 16 - 20 ft height. The walls and ceiling have sound absorbers which makes it possible to adjust the acoustic parameters of the room. The wooden elements, diffusers, and furniture increase the uniformity of the sound.

C.P.:

Could you describe the current sound system you have? Are you satisfied with the sound quality?

A. M.:

The system is based on FOCAL "Nova-Utopia" speakers. Room and the sound system should be at the same level when it comes to music quality. I'm happy with my sound room now, but keep on experimenting with it, from time to time, by altering its acoustic properties. Recently I had reduced the absorption of the sound room, but this is not the final solution. The set up of a room depends on speakers, so replacing the speakers will cause me adjusting the room again.

Devices are easier to list:

- power amplifiers AYRE MX-R (mono blocks);
- preamplifier AYRE KX-R;
- AUDIO-NOTE „CDT Five" CD transport;
- AUDIO-NOTE „The Fifth Element" DAC with power module «Fifth Force».



My speaker wires are NORDOST "Odin" in Bi-Wiring connection. Interconnect cables are different, but most often "Odin" is used. The power cables are also different, but most of them LESSLOSS.

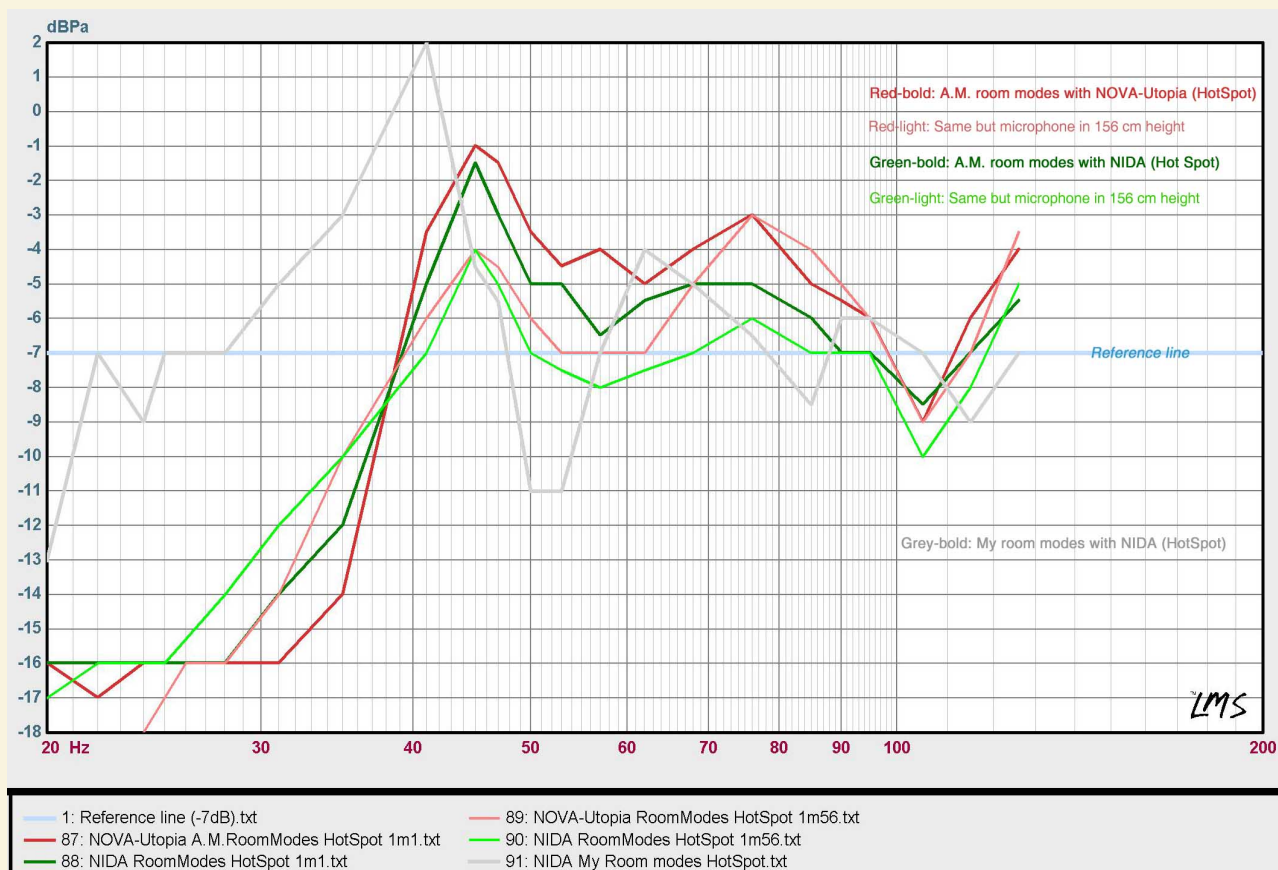
A. M.:

I would also want to ask the engineer of his opinion about my room - what are your comments?

C.P.:

Acoustically the room is excellent! Large enough, has an almost perfect sound. It is very pleasant to listen to music, or explore the operation of devices in this room. I have the results of measurements of the standing waves (modes) of the room, so I can draw some conclusions and generalizations.

In the graph we see the room response curves, measured in the central listening position using a special instrument [JBL-Pro RMC](#). The measurements were made by different speakers: NOVA-Utopia and NIDA Mk1. For a more convenient presentation graphics software package moved to LINEAR-X "LMS".



The upper red line shows the resonances of the room when NOVA-Utopia system is used. Comparing with the dark green line, we see that at the same point system with NIDA Mk1 provides a smoother response. The maximum non-uniformity of the frequency response in the case of NIDA Mk1 at low frequencies themselves placed in a tunnel 14 dB and above 50 Hz - unevenness of less than 3.5 dB. An excellent result!

I would also like to say that the maximum uniformity of playback is at about the height of the standing persons ears. This is confirmed by the other two curves: light red line - for the NOVA-Utopia, a light green - for NIDA Mk1. The last line can be considered as a benchmark, when the fluctuations of the frequency response to frequencies above 35 Hz does not exceed ± 3.5 dB.

The curves also show that the system NIDA Mk1, compared with NOVA-Utopia reproduces the lowest frequencies in the 2 dB range better. This is a factor of acoustic systems and is independent of the room.

For comparison the grey curve is given which represents my room. Here we can see that my room is also not bad, but it has a pronounced resonance at a frequency of 41 Hz. In other words, if record these frequencies presented, it would affect the music. On the other hand, the lowest music octave in my room are playing more evenly.

If you are going to improve your sound room, then I would advise you to focus on reducing the absorption of higher frequencies. On the other hand, most consumer speakers, including NOVA-Utopia, have a rise at high frequencies and this increased absorption of the room arm in arm. Also we must not forget that with a decrease in absorption, the uneven playing midrange increase.

I should add that the active system can compensate absorption of a room by setting crossover respectively. Unfortunately, passive systems does not give us such a possibility.

A. M.:

After listening to the system NIDA Mk1 one person noticed the reduced level of the higher octave. How would you respond to that?

C. P.:

The first day I noticed that our room has a much higher absorption. During the first set, I lifted the HF gain to +1 dB. Control audition allowed to leave this setting. I can say that I like to sound systems, in which the highest octave is played with a uniform inclination of frequency response. Like the stage monitors, so the system is less tiring for listeners. Most participants of auditioning liked that sound as well.

The next day after listening to repeated measurements were performed. I reconfigured the system so that it was possible to smooth frequency response. Gain had to raise to 3 dB, but again - I like the sound when the highest frequency is a bit muted. It's a matter of taste as well as the record itself - some of the records have the dominant high frequencies. Therefore we are forced to seek midpoint configuration in our systems. In that respect, active systems have a distinct advantage - they can adjust.

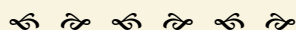
C.P.:

I evaluated your sound room, so now what do you think of the sound system NIDA Mk1 after 7 days of listening and comparing with NOVA-Utopia?

A. M.:

In my opinion, NIDA sounds very good. Extremely light and deep bass in the lower music register. It seems that the system should start the "chant", but not "mumbling" bass! Maybe our ears are not accustomed to such a beautiful and easy reproduction of the bass..?

As you can notice, at some point I also lacked the level of reproduction in highest frequencies. The disadvantages I would mention the fact that NIDA Mk1 does not allow to use different speaker cables. However, now I know that type of connectors can be selected by the buyer during the ordering.



On Saturdays representatives of manufacturers of acoustic devices and more experienced music listeners attended the session. Within 5 hours all major styles of music and recordings of various studios were listened to.

Below are list of used equipments:

- active loudspeakers NIDA Mk1;
- crossover NIDA X-24;
- power amplifiers THRESHOLD „Stasis-2" and FORTE AUDIO „Model-1a";
- preamplifier FORTE AUDIO „Model-2" (passive mode);
- CD player ARCAM „FMJ-23T".

All devices were connected by cables and wires manufacturing

[CP AUDIO PROJECTS.](#)



Vidmantas, the constructor for the player tonearms www.reed.lt

First of all I want to thank you for the chance to see and hear the sound system NIDA Mk1. I am not an expert in sound systems, and therefore the assessment of music quality I will leave for the more experienced participants of the event.

Briefly about what I am more familiar with: outstanding design, it looks harmonious and well balanced. On top of that it is a product of a very high quality and that is what makes NIDA amazing.

The event was successful - kind regards to designers and manufacturers of NIDA system.

Jozeph, photographer who evaluates the quality of music playback

First of all I am happy that I had a chance to listen to the system not only during the event described here, but also in the "native" environment - home of Mr. Ceslovas. So, my opinion will state on the basis of the both auditions.

In the beginning of this audition, the first impression I would say - "weird." We listened to the drum solo performance. The drums sounded very natural, but the cymbals - stifled. I have not a poor auditory memory. Not long ago, I photographed a soloist-drummer from a close distance so the perception of live sounding drums was still in my head. Frankly I was amazed - in fact NIDA at its "Natural habitat" fascinated by natural reproduction of instruments! It was only later that we discovered that the listening room absorbs high frequencies, and there was no time to reconfigure the crossover. At this point it is good that it is an active sound system and you can adjust it.

At the end of the listening the dynamic capabilities of the system (when the volume level gradually increase) were tested. We listened to the live Hugh Masekela album version at high volume as well. This type of volume level is usually only in concerts. Since the same test took place in the "native" environment of NIDA, as expected, no problems arise here.

Even at maximum levels, almost at the limit of hearing, the record was played clearly. Finally we listened to a music composition "Stimela" - amazing! It does not sound in a scientific or engineering way, but that is the only way I can describe the feeling that the music embraces the listener: not analyzing - how are the drums playing, or flugelhorn, well hearing every instrument. Or when the whole band is playing chords - you are enjoying the music without any effort.

My generalized impressions of the system NIDA Mk1.

A wide and linear dynamic range. The system is easy to play records with, a very quiet or a very loud music. Even with a very low volume, the reproduction of low frequency tones of instruments remains inherent. For example: touching bass body by musician all the nuances of sound even at very low volume is preserved.

The high sensitivity of the system. The passage from piano to fortissimo playing easy and smooth. Record of Cassandra Wilson, with a barely audible whisper, she goes to the loud singing, beautifully reproduced in full dynamics by the system.

The detail of the sound and high resolution. On one hand, well reproduced the singing of a singer or an instrument in all its nuances of sound, also shades of timbre, were on the other hand, while listening to group of musicians, it is easy to hear each individual instrument. Returning to the above mentioned record Masekela, where the brass band plays, you can hear every party of each instrument clearly.

Top quality production. As a photographer I visited Mr. Ceslovas and I saw the "kitchen" of production. Always wondering design thoroughness, diligence and desire to maximize quality. And so in all areas: selection of components, joinery, acoustic measurements, and the production of cables and fine tune of the system it is outstanding.

Agnius, director of "Media Benz Telekomunikacijos" www.mbt.lt

I try to play my impressions after a recent audition of NIDA Mk1. My assessment is subjective for two reasons - I'm not an expert, and the main designer of NIDA is my father.

I grew up surrounded by music and high quality music playback systems. These systems have grown with me - vaguely remember the S90 speakers with an amplifier "Brig", much clearer Bang & Olufsen with Pioneer, but from Altec Lansing "Model 19" I was just astounded. It seemed the culmination of ... until I heard the system of NIDA.

Had the opportunity to listen to NIDA in two acoustically good rooms. I knew that the acoustic environment is an important component, but only now I was able to assess the impact of the room. One room is more compact, and the other is much more spacious. One emphasizes the low frequencies, the other more "eats up" high. One thing remains unchanged - the sound of NIDA.

Enjoyed a magical impression of intimacy, when listening to jazz, seemed like if I was sitting in the front row and if I held out my hand I could touch the instruments. I tried to paste a label - "the best system for playing jazz," but the toughly that had to be abandoned, because NIDA passed the full expression of rock music as well. When we started listening to "live" volume, I realized the correctness of the paradigm - "If the mountain will not come to Muhammad, then Muhammad must go to the mountain". If you were not at the concert, NIDA will bring the experience of live music in your house!

With colleagues of listening we discussing the nuances - perhaps one music sounds "a little bit into one and the other - the other side" of the truth. These details for each of us is important, but they have no common denominator, they are purely individual. I clearly understand that a sound basis for evaluating each entry is a music playback system NIDA, and the rest is our emotions.

Music, acoustic environment, colleagues and NIDA - a great cocktail and unique adventure. Many thanks!

