

15 Jan 24

By David Simmons

Half a century of audio: High-end SA speaker maker celebrates milestone

Since 1974, an Adelaide company has been designing, engineering and manufacturing some of the world's top-performing speaker systems for cinemas, music-obsessed audiophiles and at-home movie buffs.



Krix founder Scott Krix. Photo: Provided.

When Scott Krix sat down to engineer his first-ever speaker system in 1974 all he had was a “pair of pliers, a hacksaw and a hammer”.

Now, 50 years down the track, the founder of high-end speaker brand Krix works with better gear. What hasn’t changed, however, is his commitment to high standards and customer service.

Based at Hackham in Adelaide’s south, Krix makes speakers for home entertainment, home cinemas, and commercial cinemas. These aren’t the mini Bluetooth speakers you struggle to connect to at a house party – they’re for audio-obsessed types willing and able to spend thousands on the best sound money can buy.

For context, a pair of bookshelf speakers will set you back by more than a grand. Modular home cinema systems start at around \$8000 and can be as pricey as \$30,000.

And chances are you’ve heard a Krix speaker before.

Since the 1980s, the company has been manufacturing systems for cinema surround sound, and Krix systems can be found in movie theatres nationwide. Over the past decade, Krix has been rapidly expanding the international arm of the business too, cracking into Asia, Europe and parts of the Middle East.

In celebration of 50 years of Krix, the company has announced its plans for 2024, including a three-day international dealer conference in Adelaide, a limited-edition 50th-anniversary speaker release, and competitions for the most enthusiastic fans of the brand.

“I got into audio because I love sound and I love rock’n’roll,” the founder of the eponymous hi-fi brand told *InDaily*.

“I was a little bit of a Luddite at school because I didn’t really get into music much until later on, but all my mates were into it: Led Zeppelin, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones... it was all happening in the 70s.”

Krix discovered his passion for making speakers in high school where he made his first-ever “bloody terrible” speaker system. He then went on to study electronics at university where he found like-minded peers all “pretty keen on audio”.



Scott in 1974. Photo: Supplied.

It was in 1974 when he completed his degree in electronic engineering that he founded Krix Speaker Systems – the beginning of his company that would go on to become a globally recognised player in the audio world.

At the time there was a large sales tax on hi-fi speakers, but Krix discovered a loophole to sell his products to mates at affordable prices.

“If you wanted to buy anything it was extremely expensive. We got around that by building ‘speaker kits’ – DIY,” he said.

“A lot of people we appealed to were young students, and because they were broke and interested in audio they were quite discerning.”

He sold the “Design Your Own Systems” kits from his first showroom in Adelaide called the Acoustic Foundry. Krix told *InDaily* the hi-fi store was ahead of its time.

“Nobody else in the world had ever done that, but I didn’t know – I didn’t get out much,” he said.

A few years into running the showroom, Krix purchased an acre of land at Hackham to build a 120-square-metre factory that still houses the company’s administration staff.

Around the same time, the business also launched its Home Grown series of speakers, borne from the three most popular DYOS kits. The stylish speakerboxes commanded a position in the window of the shop, which eventually attracted the attention of the Capri cinema’s owner.

“He saw the speakers and dropped in one day and said ‘I wouldn’t mind some of these for the cinema’,” Krix said.

The founder designed a custom suite of speakers for the Capri – a move that “got the attention of the whole country”.

That one deal led to a swathe of similar jobs for the company, which went on to design cinema systems for Greater Union (now called Event Cinemas). The cinema giant remains a Krix client.

A multiplex boom in the 1980s meant plenty of work for the budding South Australian firm, which built a larger factory at Hackham spanning 500 square metres and christened ‘Shed 1’.



The first Krix manufacturing facility being built in 1979. Photo: Supplied.

By 1990, Krix was in more than 200 cinemas nationwide and had built a second factory called Shed 2. Three years later the company went global by

shipping commercial cinema speakers to New Zealand, Singapore and Thailand.

Success continued through the 90s, and by the year 2000 Krix secured agreements with cinemas and distributors in Ireland, Italy and Germany at its first European expo appearance. Later that year, Krix products were installed in commercial cinemas in Poland, the Czech Republic and Turkey.

And the global success did not slow down – through the remainder of the naughties, more than 100 commercial cinema systems were installed in Korea, Ireland, Malaysia and Japan. When *InDaily* visited the Krix facilities, the founder said his staff were working on producing outdoor cinema speakers for a client in the Middle East.

Krix said China was currently the company's biggest overseas market, with Europe growing and not far behind.

With plenty of experience under his belt producing cinema-grade systems, Krix added a new product to the lineup in 2010 that would bring the theatre experience to homes globally.

The Series X is a collection of home cinema speakers and was improved on over the years to come, with the 'MX' [Modular Xtreme] series the distillation of years of work done in perfecting at-home hi-fi.

“The plan was to make it affordable – that's where the MX came from,” said Krix.



The Krix MX system was launched in 2015. Photo: Supplied.

For Krix, momentum was driven by technological advancements. The most recent was Dolby's breakthrough with its surround sound technology called Atmos, which the company jumped on as soon as possible.

In 2018, Krix debuted its world-first maximum channel-count Dolby Atmos cinema, featuring 34 decoded channels in a 24.10.10 configuration. That meant 34 speakers and ten subwoofers.

A partnership that same year with French electronics manufacturer Trinnov Audio supercharged the company's commercial and home cinema offerings. Trinnov's processors and amplifiers ensure the audio experience is top-notch.

That said, Krix said it was his staff who ensured the company's success.

"We've got a lot of people that've been here for 20 to 30 years – it's not uncommon here," he said.

"The people that work here are special, and they have their level of genius."



Krix products being made in the factory. Photo: David Simmons/InDaily.

Achieving success in the competitive audio space was also driven by strict adherence to high standards.

The company only distributes via dealers that go through Krix's own training programs, and the products themselves stand the test of time – a quick browse of sites like Gumtree and Ebay show used Krix products being sold for hundreds of dollars.

"When somebody buys something with our name on it, it'll go forever," Krix said.

"You want to make sure that the whole lot works, that the experience is good, and that it works properly."

What's in store for Krix's 50th year?

For the company's half-century milestone, Krix has planned new products and dealership events to fit the moment.

In January, Krix will exhibit alongside partners Trinnov, Barco and Officina Acustica in Barcelona at the Integrated Systems Europe 2024 conference. Later this year, Krix dealers globally will make their way to Adelaide for a three-day International Dealer Conference where Krix will showcase its latest products and celebrate the 50-year milestone.

Krix fans can also get in on the festivities with competitions planned to win exclusive products.

The company also has a 50th-anniversary speaker in the works that will embody “the pinnacle of our engineering achievements and lifts home cinema to the next level”.