



The A-Team

Looking for a taste of the high life? **HFC** pretends for a moment it's won the lottery and basks in the glory of this standmount

Back in March (*HFC* 460), *Beautiful System* paid homage to two giants from the US as Krell and Magico combined to provide a mouth watering insight into the sort of sonics wealthier hi-fi enthusiasts across the pond get to enjoy. One of the stars of the show, the A1 – Magico's entry-level loudspeaker – was so impressive that we felt it would be remiss of us not to get it into the test lab to put it through its paces.

A pricetag of £10,000 swiftly underlines the A1's *Exotica* credentials, and the fact that it draws inspiration from the Q1 standmount further up Magico's range – a snip at just £35k – highlights the level of high performance under examination here.

Typical of the sort of trickle-down technology that allows entry-level products to benefit from technological developments found in far costlier siblings, the 28mm beryllium dome

Bass is delivered with effortless drive and no sign of artificial bloom

tweeter that's employed across the entire A range is the same as that found in the more expensive M-series, though admittedly without the diamond coating. It has a slightly simplified motor system too, but remains based on the neodymium magnet assembly and 28mm voice coil, while the entire driver is loaded into a new and improved absorptive rear chamber.

Unlike the tweeter, the mid/bass driver is specific to the A1. 165mm in size, it has a titanium 39mm overhanging voice coil with a copper shorting ring – to minimise coil inductance at higher frequencies – placed within a double ferrite magnet system. Described as a "multi-wall carbon fibre cone" by Magico, the composite design is a sandwich of two carbon fibre layers in front with a single one behind, separated by a vibration-deadening Rohacell filling.

This then has a further layer of XG Nano-Tec graphene embedded into its surface to make it supremely rigid. How rigid, you ask, well a one-atom thick lattice of graphene is claimed to be 100 times stronger than steel and able to conduct heat and electricity with greater efficiency than any other metal. Suddenly, the high price starts to make more sense...

Further indication that we're in the rarified arena of silk as opposed to cotton comes when you consider the standmount's enclosure. Constructed from six 9.5mm-thick panels of 6061 T6 aircraft-grade aluminium, the A1 is then further reinforced and braced by three extra aluminium sections that are connected to the top and bottom panels as well as halfway up the enclosure. To suggest this cabinet is rock solid doesn't even come close...

Magico's pricier speaker offerings traditionally employ constrained-layer damping, with a sandwich of aluminium and a lossy polymer in order to convert vibrations to heat. In the case of the A1, however, the smaller, thicker panel size ensures that this shouldn't be so much of an issue and so this damping is eschewed. One Magico calling card that has not been ditched in order to limit the impact on your wallet is the infinite baffle design that is common to all of the US company's loudspeakers. As a fully sealed box without any reflex ports, the enclosure ensures not only superior transient behaviour, but also means that the standmount is less fussy about its positioning in your room.

Sound quality

Crass considerations such as price very quickly fade away when we experience the full majesty of what the A1 has to offer. From the off, this robust standmount vividly opens up any music you care to feed it, be it simplistic acoustic guitar or more complex mixes such as Mike Oldfield's *Taurus II* from the deluxe edition of *Five Miles Out*.

Though the blend of uilleann pipes and Maggie Reilly's haunting vocals invariably sound stunning with most

DETAILS

PRODUCT
Magico A1
ORIGIN
UK/Poland
TYPE
2-way standmount loudspeaker
WEIGHT
20kg
DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
216 x 395 x 268mm
FEATURES
• 1x 28mm beryllium dome tweeter
• 1x 165mm Nano-Tec graphene mid/bass driver
• Quoted sensitivity: 84dB/1W/1m (4ohm)
DISTRIBUTOR
Absolute Sounds Ltd.
TELEPHONE
0208 9713909
WEBSITE
absolutesounds.com
magicoaudio.com

loudspeaker setups, it's the more challenging Fairlight-processed strings and keyboards that really separate the men from the boys. On lesser models than the A1 these can sound crushed, thickening and coarsening the clarity of the multi-track mix in the process. However, the Magico cuts through the murkiness like a red-hot knife through butter to reveal new levels of detail that even similarly priced rivals fail to miss. Impressively the solo bell in the performance takes on a new elegance while the dynamically challenged vocoder engrosses as detail and structure come to the fore. Suddenly the transitions between acoustic and synthesised become more embellished as the music experiences enhanced complexity.

Any speaker of note should display the ability to shrink further from view as the music takes over, but only the very best are able to perform the magic trick of disappearing completely. And in this respect, the A1 is something of a maestro.

As Carmen Lundy's glorious vocals fill the room as she belts out *Self Portrait*, the piano, percussion and strings blend in a way that is devastatingly insightful and subtle. Suddenly every inflection of her voice and brush or splash of the cymbal is punctuated by ivory to stunning effect. The result is a sound that is exceedingly special, but not in a

The 4mm WBT terminals are not suitable for bi-wiring or bi-amping



IN SIGHT



- 1 28mm beryllium dome tweeter
- 2 165mm Nano-Tec graphene mid/bass driver
- 3 Single-wire binding posts



in-your-face kind of way, more an easy going, open and highly relaxed sound that is permeated with details – large and small – for a truly immersive performance.

Regardless of the amplifier it's matched up with – and we put it through its paces with the best that Constellation, Simaudio, Audio Research and Audio Analogue have to offer – the outcome is consistently impressive, while revealing details about the individual character, colour and dynamic potential of each setup every time.

As we'd expect from a cabinet of this size, the standmount excels when it comes to reproducing vocals. And not because the midband is anyway emphasised at the expense of the bass and treble. Sure, it can't quite match the 'in-you-head' illusion of demo-quality vocals displayed by the likes

of Avantgarde horns, but challenges such as Gregory Porter's *Hey Laura* and Richard Burton's spoken word introduction at the beginning of Jeff Wayne's *War Of The Worlds* are deftly handled, revealing a seamless all-of-a-piece integration that is deeply impressive.

Even lower frequencies – so often the Achilles' heel of even the best standmounts – keep up the good work. Listening to the *Volle Dynamik* remix of Yello's *Oh Yeah*, taken from the 2009 album *The Race* sees the bass delivered with effortless drive with no sign of artificial bloom or boom. It simply descends very smoothly and then quietly exits so the absence of that missing octave goes by barely noticed. And while a glance at the specs suggests that the Magico isn't the most sensitive of speakers, the A1 still manages to soak up plenty

of power and push out those SPLs as if its very existence depends upon it.

HOW IT COMPARES

Exotic standmounts are not as plentiful as floorstanders, but if you are short on space and deep of pocket then the iconic Franco Serblin Accordo must be heard. Priced at £7,500-£8,000 depending on walnut or high-gloss finish, the elegantly shaped, mirror-image cabinet combines a 29mm silk-dome tweeter with a 150mm pulp-coned mid/bass unit. The detachable grille is composed of black elastic strands. The Accordo sounds sublime, laying claim to the term 'musical' above all else at the price.

Conclusion

Magico's A1 is an entry point to a rarified level of performance that leaves even similarly priced rivals in the shade. Flexible when it comes to placement, thanks to its infinite baffle design, this is a cabinet that you can stand anywhere and in doing so understand what all the fuss is about when it comes to high-end sonics. Hell, it even puts intermediate-sized floorstanders to shame. If you're lucky enough to afford it, it simply demands an audition. Otherwise, it's time to start saving your pocket money ●



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



VALUE FOR MONEY



BUILD QUALITY



EASE OF DRIVE



OVERALL



LIKE: Detailed, easy going, highly relaxed sound; rock-solid build

DISLIKE: Missing octave of bass

WE SAY: Prepare to be amazed, quite simply a stunning standmount