More than a chip off the Magico block, the A1 sets the standard for pint-sized standmounts

Review: Paul Miller Lab: Keith Howard

Call it what you will, but the transition between Avantgarde's huge, horn-loaded Duo Primo XD [p36] departing my listening room, and the diminutive A1 arriving, demanded a recalibration of reality. Just 20kg versus 185kg per enclosure and a drop of 20dB in recalibration of reality. Just 20kg versus diminutive A1s arriving, demanded a departing my listening room, and the huge, horn-loaded Duo Primo XDs [p36] are more practical to unpack, install and enjoy. 395x216x268mm (hwd), also somewhat to Magico's core design ideals and, at aluminium speaker that's arguably closer to Magico's signature features.

Nevertheless, to achieve the necessary economy of scale, the A series is not built in house but at an approved construction and finish remains truly exceptional. The A1's cabinet is not a bubular extrusion but comprises six machined aluminium panels bolted together from within (at the final panel affixed through the baffle before the mid/bass driver is installed). These are 9.5mm-thick slabs of 6061 T6 'aircraft grade' aluminium that converts vibration to heat. As one concession to cost, none of the A series has external panels and midway up the enclosure. These extra panels are clearly visible in the cutaway shot [p61].

Magico's costlier ranges. That is the composite design of the driver itself is a sandwich of two carbon fibre layers in front and a single layer Rohacell filling. Only once the laminate is assembled is a further layer of 'XG Graphene' applied to the surface, contributing significantly to the stiffness of the cone. Graphene is a one atom-thick lattice of carbon, a 20 structure that's claimed to be 100x stronger than steel with the ability to conduct both heat and electricity with greater efficiency than any metal. Roll this sheet into a cylinder and you have a Graphene nanotube [see Opinion, HFN Sept ’14].

housing is rather less critical. The A1's drivers and crossover [see boxout, p61] are all culled from Magico's development of its costlier ranges. That extremely lightweight and rigid beryllium tweeter - shared across the A1, A3 and A5 - uses the same 23mm dome as the high frequency drivers in A3 Merlins, albeit without the ‘diamond coating’. The motor system is slightly simpler, but is still based on a neodymium magnet assembly and 28mm voice coil, and the driver as whole is now loaded into an improved absorptive rear chamber.

‘Oldfield spasms between jazz, rock, fusion and old Robin Hood’

 شك to each other and abetted by the pair of Constellation Inspiration Monos and the brand's all-alloy, all-active, five-way Ultimate served to illustrate. This statement piece is now discontinued, but those who experienced the Ultimate will not easily forget its presence. Yet this review is devoted to another all-aluminium speaker that's arguably closer to Magico's core design ideals and, at 395x216x268mm (hwd), also somewhat more practical to unpack, install and enjoy.

HIGH-END GATEWAY

This small but dense little loudspeaker marks the gateway to Magico's A-series and to the brand as a whole. It was inspired by the Q1 standmount [see Q1 floorstander, p61] and partnering subs are the only Qs still to cost, none of the A series has external panels and midway up the enclosure. These extra panels are clearly visible in the cutaway shot [p61]. Magico's costlier ranges. That is the composite design of the driver itself is a sandwich of two carbon fibre layers in front and a single layer Rohacell filling. Only once the laminate is assembled is a further layer of ‘XG Graphene’ applied to the surface, contributing significantly to the stiffness of the cone. Graphene is a one atom-thick lattice of carbon, a 20 structure that's claimed to be 100x stronger than steel with the ability to conduct both heat and electricity with greater efficiency than any metal. Roll this sheet into a cylinder and you have a Graphene nanotube [see Opinion, HFN Sept ’14].
Robin Hood music through this side-long saga, there are sequences of Fairlight-processed strings and keyboards that can sound crushed, thickening and coarsening the clarity of the multi-tracked mix.

Here, however, the A1’s cut through what might have descended into murk to expose a level of detail, of structured edginess and complexity that typically escapes many larger but no less costly loudspeakers. For once I could listen through all 25 minutes and relish the transitions between the acoustic and the synthesised, between the elegant simplicity of a solo bell and the dynamically-challenged Vocoder.

IN GOOD VOICE
Also like all good pint-sized boxes, the A1 is a supreme vocal performer, though not, in this case, because the midband is emphasised while bass and treble are in recession. While the A1 might not quite manage the ‘in-your-head’ acoustic trick of the aforementioned Avantgarde horns with demo quality vocals – Richard Burton’s preface to Jeff Wayne’s War Of The Worlds [Columbia, DPCD 96000; DS064] or ‘Hey Laura’ by Gregory Porter [Liquid Spirit, Deluxe Edition; Blue Note 374173-4] spring to mind – its seamless, all-of-a-piece integration will undoubtedly serve more listeners in more varied listening spaces.

But how do the A1s fare with demanding dynamics and bass that goes way down deep? The short answer ‘in their stride...’. By way of illustration I cue up the ‘volle dynamik’ 2009 remix of Yello’s ‘Oh Yeah’ [The Race; Mercury Records] and was positively startled by the attack of the synthesised percussion as it rattled right through Dieter Mieir’s deep and rumbling vocals (another Fairlight effect, if memory serves).

Once again, all the elements of the set were in balance, the bass delivered with slick attack and no artifical bloom or boom. Indeed, its bass just descends very smoothly and quietly exits – so you are barely aware of the missing octave nor, in the modestly-sized rooms likely to play host to the A1s, will you miss it.

Neither, I might add, will you soak up power and push out those SPLs as if the drivers were possessed. So if you are short on space but deep aware of the missing octave nor, in any event, with demo quality vocals – Richard Burton’s preface to Jeff Wayne’s War Of The Worlds [Columbia, DPCD 96000; DS064] or ‘Hey Laura’ by Gregory Porter [Liquid Spirit, Deluxe Edition; Blue Note 374173-4] spring to mind – its seamless, all-of-a-piece integration will undoubtedly serve more listeners in more varied listening spaces.

But how do the A1s fare with demanding dynamics and bass that goes way down deep? The short answer ‘in their stride...’. By way of illustration I cue up the ‘volle dynamik’ 2009 remix of Yello’s ‘Oh Yeah’ [The Race; Mercury Records] and was positively startled by the attack of the synthesised percussion as it rattled right through Dieter Mieir’s deep and rumbling vocals (another Fairlight effect, if memory serves).

Once again, all the elements of the set were in balance, the bass delivered with slick attack and no artificial bloom or boom. Indeed, its bass just descends very smoothly and quietly exits – so you are barely aware of the missing octave nor, in the modestly-sized rooms likely to play host to the A1s, will you miss it.

Neither, I might add, will you

**HIFI NEWS VERDICT**

For the A1 Magico has leveraged its years of engineering know-how, made sensible concessions to the bill of materials, and condensed the lot into a remarkably solid little speaker. Its design allows for great flexibility in placement, in-room, on-table or classic ‘bookshelf’ locations. And its sound is so smooth extended and integrated that many an intermediate-sized floorstander will be put out to pasture.

**Sound Quality:** 90%