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MAGICO

MINI II

Maximum performance from a misleadingly named loudspeaker

PRICE £35,000 per pair (including stand) **CONTACT** Absolute Sounds ■ 020 8971 3909 ■ www.magico.net

Although it does slot, with some difficulty, into the category of a compact standmount, the Mini II is no baby. It measures 38x106x45cm (WxHxD) and is supplied as standard with a pair of floorstanding pedestal stands. It's not out of keeping with other compact standmounts, but at 90kg per speaker and stand combination, it is extraordinarily heavy.

The hardware complement parallels that of the Magico V2, but with variations – the main difference is the enclosure, with no attempt made to simplify the construction to keep the price in check. The enclosure shape in cross section is comparable with many wood-bodied musical instruments: there are no internal parallel edges or straight lines. The structure consists of Baltic Birch plywood, layered horizontally, which Magico claims to be three times stiffer than the usual vertical panel-based MDF box structure. The claim for stiffness is credible, especially when you take into account the reamed-out internal X-shape structure which is used to reinforce and stiffen the enclosure. It's not all about mechanical integrity, though – everything about the speaker's presentation is clearly of the highest quality.

The front and rear panels are made from 1.5 inch-thick aircraft grade aluminium panels, shaped to follow the external contours of the box and to reduce diffraction. Rather than coupling the drive units to the box, they're offered up to the baffle from behind. The front and rear aluminium sections are secured to each other using steel rods in a configuration designed to ensure they loosen up over time and to reduce energy-storage effects in the cabinet.

The two-way drive unit complement is roughly similar to those of the V2. The bass/mid driver is the same home-grown Nano-Tech unit. It has a sandwich cone with textured one-piece (no dust cap) carbon front and rear outer sections that employ carbon nanotubes, sandwiching a Rohacell cellular core. The unit has a three inch titanium voice coil and a rare earth (neodymium) magnet. The result is a drive unit whose back is relatively unobstructed. It breathes well and is said to offer much lower than usual levels of distortion. The tweeter is a version of the Scan Speak Revelator also used in the V2, but is apparently a different model.

The opulent crossover is a dedicated design, using inductance-free interleaved capacitors and oxygen-free copper coil inductors, made by Raidmund Mundorf in Cologne. The pedestal stand weighs 50kg and is made from aluminium instead of the more usual steel, because it is stiffer and has less propensity for ringing and also has lower energy-storage. The speaker platform includes a 2.7-degree tilt for time-alignment and a ball bearing coupling.

The Mini II is lower in sensitivity than the V2 and it clearly benefits from an amplifier capable of laying down the law, which on this occasion was the unfeasibly powerful Krell Evolution 900 (see p92). The result is a combination that is not just devastatingly authoritative: it is also subtle, organic and responsive.

SOUND QUALITY

There were a number of surprises in store during this all too short test, which for logistical reasons took place on the distributor's premises. First, this speaker sounds absolutely and completely stunning. No matter what music was being played – which included Mahler, Brahms, Madeline Peyroux and more, with material ranging from solo soprano to full orchestra, chorus and organ – the system sounded gloriously fully grown and convincing. The sheer scale of the sound was staggering.

There is nothing about the music reproduction sound that could be described as comparable with other compact speakers: it is full, authoritative and has tremendous presence. Reach out and you can all but touch the musicians, but there is real depth to the proceedings, too.

Of course you could tell that the orchestral organ in the Mahler was not being reproduced full-scale, but it got surprisingly close, though. Stereo imagery is expansive too, not just in one dimension, but all three. This is a trick we've not heard equalled elsewhere from a speaker so compact – impressive stuff. It's also surprising at how hard the speakers can be driven, with no hint of strain or inability to cope in a far from small room.

It's not just about weight and scale, though. The speaker is also remarkably clear and transparent. It is also true to the source material and capable of giving the listener that spine-tingling quality that only a first-rate system is capable of delivering.

It is expensive, for sure, but a convincing case can be made that the bill for materials, labour costs and the limited production scale make a high price inevitable. The speaker is also demanding of the electronics it is coupled to. You don't need to use a Krell Evolution 900 of course, but this is clearly an loudspeaker that requires plenty of volts and amps.

The Magico's product name, Mini II, sounds harmless enough, but that's misleading: in our experience you simply won't find a better speaker of similar proportions. ■

"It's capable of giving the listener that spine-tingling quality that only a first-rate system can deliver"



Alvin Gold