



Magico S5 (2024)

floorstanding loudspeaker

Alan Sircom

Magico is updating its S-series of loudspeakers, including the Magico S5, which was first introduced in late 2024. The new S5 is not merely a 'Mk III' upgrade of an existing product. There is no badge engineering that disguises minor changes to a popular item. In fact, one of the only parts shared between the S5 and its predecessors is the badge. These are fundamental alterations to some of high-end audio's most prized loudspeakers. The new S5 is so remarkable that Jimmy Hughes felt compelled to share his thoughts based solely on tracks played at the press conference. I've included his comments as a second opinion below.

Magico launched the original S5 in 2014. This was one of Magico's first products to feature a beryllium-domed tweeter and Nano-Tec (carbon fibre nanotube) cone technology in its midrange driver. Its successor—the S5 Mk II—arrived about three years later and was heavily influenced by the company's 10th anniversary 'thank you!' M Project statement loudspeaker. In 2024, to celebrate 20 years in the speaker-making business, the S5 was reimagined from the ground up.

Arrivederci, sourdough

While everyone else was making sourdough bread and struggling to learn a foreign language, the 2020 lockdowns represented a period of significant investment at Magico's San Francisco base. The company renovated its testing and listening facility, and the products now being released are a direct reflection of that infrastructure improvement. For example, its new Polytec Laser Vibrometer enables precise measurement of minute vibrations in the cabinet panels and the sound levels they produce.

Similarly, the company's new Klippel Near-Field Scanner robot allows for multiple acoustic measurements of the 3D sphere surrounding the S5, providing a comprehensive view of the speaker's on- and off-axis response. Together, they aid in creating a loudspeaker enclosure that minimises vibration and achieves a near-ideal acoustic response for a multi-way loudspeaker.

You begin to understand why the S5 isn't merely a 'MkIII' version when you compare enclosures. These new measurement tools, combined with 3D simulation, have led to a loudspeaker with a 31% increase in internal volume, producing a sound that reaches a realistic 20Hz in-room (5Hz lower than its predecessor) while maintaining the same sensitivity rating.

Even a cursory glance at the front baffle reveals that Magico isn't messing around here. The new curve of the front baffle and the resulting change in cabinet shape visually softens the cabinet's overall appearance. It also enhances stiffness and aids damping.

Drive time

The new S-series benefits from the latest (version eight) Nano-Tec drivers for the 15.24cm midrange and two 25.4cm bass cones. These drivers feature an aluminium honeycomb core sandwiched between graphene-reinforced carbon-fibre skins. This core structure—achievable only with recently developed manufacturing techniques—enables lower thickness, lighter weight, and more effective damping.

This is complemented by a new driver chassis, resulting from three years of meticulous research and development. Magico claims that this third-generation chassis structure enhances force distribution (no sniggering at the back, Skywalker!), permits better suspension designs, and features a dual-post configuration that balances dynamic tensile wire forces. It is also said to combine stiffness and damping while allowing minimal acoustic contribution by reducing modes and maximising airflow.

Both mid and bass units feature oversized titanium voice coils (76mm for the midrange and an impressive 130mm for the woofers), equipped with a copper cap. The long-throw voice coil in the bass units offers an impressive 1.27cm of linear movement.

The 28mm diamond-coated beryllium tweeter was developed for the M-Series and utilises a neodymium-based motor system. This design provides greater power handling compared to other models in the S-Series. Careful FEA modelling enabled Magico to enhance the mechanical and acoustical performance of the tweeter's back chamber; however, due to the meticulous nature of the design, every aspect receives the 'careful' treatment. >>

» That careful approach extends to the crossover. The S5's three-way Elliptical Symmetry Crossover (ESXO) is a 24 dB per octave Linkwitz-Riley filter featuring the highest of high-grade components, such as Mundorf MResist Ultra resistors and MCoil Foil inductors.

The loudspeaker is mounted on a new three-foot support system featuring constrained-layer damping and high-quality materials. While the front baffle is consistently black, the sides and top plate come in six smooth-feeling Softec finishes and six high-gloss options.

Two schools

There are two schools of thought in high-end loudspeaker design: 'musicality' and 'accuracy.' While there is significant middle ground (most are somewhere on a continuum between these two poles), Magico has traditionally favoured the 'accuracy' side. This aligns well with those seeking precision in their musical playback. However, the S5 bridges the gap between accuracy and musical enjoyment better than most. The reason for this is that it doesn't sacrifice Magico's signature accuracy for the sake of enjoyment, or »

Magico S5 second opinion

Jimmy Hughes

Thursday, January 30, 2025 – an unmissable invitation to visit KJ West One in London to discover Magico's latest S5 floorstanding loudspeaker. Magico's founder and CEO, Alon Wolf, flew in from the USA to lead the presentation and discuss the changes and upgrades made in creating this new loudspeaker. He emphasised his philosophy of making the S5 a high-quality, no-compromise design built to a standard rather than a price point. Wolf believed that compromising performance - by lowering build quality or using inferior components to reduce costs - was not morally justifiable.

But, what might a speaker of this calibre actually sound like?

Powered by D'Agostino electronics, the S5 sounded beautifully clean and precise. While listening, I measured peak levels typically around 65dB, with a few tracks reaching 73dB. Across all types of material, the musical presentation was relaxed yet focused, incisive, and effortlessly dynamic.

The sound quality was exceptional. The first track we heard – 'The Sound of Silence' by Nouela – featured a solo female voice accompanied by soft piano. The voice floated from the speakers and lingered in the air – both disembodied yet vivid and highly present. The voice had an abundance of breathy presence but wasn't harsh or thin. Although highly detailed and extremely revealing of subtle tonal and dynamic nuances, the S5 seems largely free of colorations that might emphasise shortcomings in the source material.

Exceptionally clean and well-behaved, the S5 neither booms nor resonates. It also does not sound harsh or edgy due to limitations in the loudspeaker driver units. It's truly an open window to the music, neither adding nor subtracting from the signals it receives.

Playing Saint-Saens' violin showpiece, the Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso with Ida Haendel, her 1696 Stradivari violin sounded crisp, immediate, and tactile without seeming edgy. Via the S5, the instrument projected powerfully and effortlessly into the room.

'Where's the sub?' was everyone's surprised reaction while listening to In the Dark by Max Richter. Magico claims its S5 goes down to 20Hz, producing acres of deep, firm, decisive, exceptionally clean bass. Interestingly, we were unaware of the Magico S5's prodigious bass capability during any of the previous tracks played. The speakers had simply seemed fast, nimble and lean. But when real bass emerged, boy, was it there.

However, when '4 Marzo 1943' by Lucio Dalla started, it seemed as if the volume had been set a notch too low. Then, unexpectedly, Dalla's raw, throaty voice entered – commandingly loud and full of presence and immediacy. Such extreme dynamic contrasts were remarkable – shocking, even...

We heard many other tracks too, but by now it was abundantly clear that the Magico S5s met the demands of just about every genre of music and recording. At the same time, one's focus remained on the music itself, rather than its reproduction.

Sure, we listened to the S5s, evaluating their technical performance. However, each time a new track played (especially one I was unfamiliar with), I found myself instantly captivated by the music and its performance. There is no greater praise...

So, is it all worth it? Musically, the results speak for themselves. Costly? Without a doubt. However, the S5 is less expensive than some rival designs. It's a beautifully crafted item that should offer a lifetime of listening pleasure.

EQUIPMENT REVIEW

Magico S5 (2024)



» vice versa. This makes it an exceptionally easy loudspeaker to listen to.

And then there's the bass. The bass is deeper and better defined than its S5 predecessors, providing a more organic sense of slam and purpose. Sealed box bass is generally tighter and more accurate than its ported counterparts, though this often comes at the expense of depth and 'meatiness'. However, the S5 again delivers a 'best of both worlds' bass performance.

The S5 and its predecessors are all about the detail. However, where the new model differs from its older brothers is that does not preclude a sense of musical scale and, especially, flow. There's a real sense of musical dimension (not just soundstage, but the ability to convey music within that soundstage). This combination of detail and flow allows a listener to pick out an individual singer within a choir while simultaneously taking in the whole musical work [Lux Aurumque, *Meditatio: Music for Mixed Choir*, Raket Edda Guðmundsdóttir, Schola Cantorum Reykjavicensis, Hörður Áskelsson, BIS]. It's an uncanny ability, and one that is only possible with a loudspeaker as intrinsically neutral and accurate as the S5.

With a quality loudspeaker, you want to play all those discs you know to judge its performance. With an exceptional loudspeaker, you can set that aside and simply enjoy the music you love. The S5 is an exceptional loudspeaker, allowing me to transition quickly to the recordings I wanted to play instead of those I needed for testing. So, it's less about 'cataloguing differences in performance' and more about Cat Power or Cat Stevens. A significant part of that is that it excelled in every test I could devise. The deliberate absence of character that Magico aims for in all its loudspeakers is still not fully realised; this is an inherently neutral transducer

– one of the most neutral available – and it isn't designed to push your fun buttons. That isn't damning with faint praise; Magico enthusiasts choose their speakers precisely for that 'just the facts' approach. However, the S5 also possesses more 'magic' than most Magicos; not hocus-pocus or undue warmth, brightness, or alterations to the frequency response; the S5's structure stays out of the way and allows you to focus on the music. However, those seeking a lush, rose-tinted approach to music should keep looking. This is not for you!

Yes, the S5 leaves no place for a recording to hide. If an engineer uses poor microphone technique, a singer moves their head excessively, or the producer applies too much reverb, the S5 reveals everything. Even well-known audio classics like Peter Gabriel's *So* album [Charisma] unveil details usually lost inside the cabinet. This makes the lyrics of 'Don't Give Up' an emotionally powerful experience, reminiscent of the first time you heard it nearly 40 years ago. However, that doesn't mean you should cherry-pick through your music collection; old Motown and Northern Soul tracks provide just as much information and – despite sometimes being recorded cheaply and harshly – aren't ruined by the loudspeaker.

On the surface, not much has changed with the original Magico S5. It remains a three-way, four-driver sealed floorstander. While it is wider, deeper, and heavier, it retains the same height, has the same number of drivers, and looks similar from a distance. The original Magico S5 is still an exceptional loudspeaker, albeit one from ten years ago. So much has evolved, and the Magico S5 2024 edition illustrates just how far we've progressed. +

Technical specifications

Type: Three-way, four driver, sealed box dynamic loudspeaker

Driver Complement: 1 x 28mm diamond-coated beryllium dome tweeter, 1 x 15.24cm Graphene Nano-Tec Gen 8 midrange cone, 2 x 25.4cm Graphene Nano-Tec Gen 8 bass cones

Sensitivity: 88dB

Impedance: 4 ohms

Frequency response: 20Hz-50kHz (in-room)

Recommended Power: 50-1,000 Watts

Finish: Piano Black, Titanium Grey, Pearl White, Racer Blue, Corsa Red, Octane Orange (Magico Gloss finishes).

Midnight Black, Graphite Grey, Silver Ash, Cobalt Blue, Sienna Bronze, Aubergine (Softec finish)

Dimensions (HxDxW): 122cm x 49cm x 48.5cm

Weight: 118 kg

Price: From £90,000

Manufacturer Magico LLC

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