

stereoplay

"High-quality, reliable engineering combined with great sound.
The Magnat Magnasphere 55's are convincing all-round and dominate the party as well as quiet moments alone."



Magnat

MAGNAT MAGNASPHERE 55

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HIGHLIGHT

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Who still needs cables...

Wireless music: a thought that horrifies a lot of high-enders. Magnat has approached this issue with a sophisticated hi-fi loudspeaker, a small transmitter module and a technology that is both clever and reliable.

Funny, but when it comes to the Internet, we use a wireless connection to the router without thinking about it so as not to have to be plagued by LAN cables on the laptop. With the stereo system, on the other hand, a lot of us are still overcome by a strange feeling at the thought of playing music in wireless mode. Maybe this is due to the bad experience of early Bluetooth devices... However, wireless technology has progressed a lot over the last few years. Enjoying music without the presence of loudspeaker cables is now easily possible. The trend is unmistakable, with manufacturers responding to growing demand. Magnat has also reacted to this by presenting, with the Magnasphere range, two loudspeaker models whose features set the pulse of real hi-fi enthusiasts racing. The features also put the price in perspective, i.e. €2,500 per pair for the Magnasphere 55 floor-standing loudspeakers and €1,700 for the Magnasphere 33 compact speakers. Let's start on the outside: The MDF enclosure has a "silk-matt" lacquer finish (in black or white) and is equipped with internal bracing. The base plate contains screw threads, with rubber feet and metal spikes included in the box. Those who prefer a more subtle look can attach the front covers, which are held by magnets.

Low, mid and high tones

The 170 mm subwoofer and the 170 mm woofer each have a ceramic-aluminium membrane, as also used in the Quantum 800 range loudspeakers. To ensure that the membranes operate properly, the loudspeaker baskets are flow-optimised and made of a non-magnetic carbon fibre composite material. The bass-reflex plays onto flow-optimised reflex tubes at the rear. Up to 320 Hz, the cones play together, with the range from 320 to 2750 Hz covered only by the upper unit before the 25 mm tweeter finally takes over. Here the developers have opted for a dual-compound fabric membrane with a neodymium drive, known as "fmax", to make the speaker sound pleasant and unobtrusive in the treble range. It is designed to play up to 50,000 Hz.

Reduced to the essential

There is no passive crossover in the speakers. Instead, the drivers are controlled by a DSP filter stage, which takes on the task of distributing the frequencies among the chassis. Used between the (sub)woofer and the textile dome is a third-order filter, with the subwoofer shielded by a first-order filter. The DSP is deployed in a subtle manner: It is designed to sound like analogue components and simply smooths out the frequency response a little. It also allows bass and treble tone control in the range from -2 dB to +2 dB. This enables the Magnasphere 55's to be adapted somewhat to the room and set-up situation. To provide the necessary energy, each speaker contains a Class D amplifier module with a total power output of 100 watts each and an amplifier splitter for the subwoofer, woofer and tweeter. Therefore, instead of needing a hi-fi amplifier, all the fully active loudspeakers require is a free power socket. There is not even any need for a signal cable between the speakers because the TX 11 transmitter module (see box) supplies both speakers with the required signal.

Easy-going

The set-up was delightfully simple: At the back of the speakers, each speaker is assigned a channel (left, right or mono) and a group (A, B, C). Several speakers in different rooms can be combined to form a group and then all receive the same signal, which they play back simultaneously - extremely practical for parties. In addition to the TX 11, the remote control provided also directly controls the loudspeakers. This is where the smart technology comes in. The transmitter module constantly sends all the signals present at the inputs to the speakers. The speakers are then told which signal to play back via the source selector switch on the remote control. We were amazed how cleanly the change of source proceeded. There was no switchover noise to be heard at all. The volume is also set using the remote control. Often enough, remote controls are no cause for joy. But everything is well matched here: weight, finish (aluminium), buttons and pressure points. In addition, the LED display on the front of the speaker provides valuable visual feedback and shows the source and level.

The time has come

In the listening room, the Magnasphere 55's were first placed in a free-standing position a good metre away from the back walls. They need to be given a few hours' playing-in time, otherwise they sound a bit raw and uneven. And the free-standing set-up also turned out to be somewhat counterproductive. There was simply a lack of foundation. Things looked a lot different close to the wall: The Magnaspheres then displayed real enthusiasm in the bass ranges. They knew perfectly how to build up pressure and serve up music with a punch. Even more so with a bass control at +2 dB - close to the wall, mind you. The character of the active wireless speakers is slightly on the pleasant, subtly warm side. The textile tweeter is never too forward, and the mid-tones also sound relaxed with no lack of drive. On "Mano sinistra" from the Tonbruket "Forevergreens" album, the Magnats thrilled us with Dan Berglund's fabulously springy and very detailed and controlled double bass; and the bass drum was wonderfully deep and punchy. And on "Beds Are Burning" by Midnight Oil, we particularly liked the discreet details and the space, which came across as neither sprawling nor constricted. Should you still need a final nudge to familiarise yourself with the subject of 'wireless loudspeakers': Here it is. The Magnat Magnasphere 55's will wipe away all your scepticism and simply override any disappointing 'wireless' experience. Just like that!



Inconspicuous and powerful: the TX 11 transmitter module The TX 11 transmitter unit (12.4 x 3.5 x 10 cm, 200 g) not only provides the wireless signals, it also supplies the connections and receives (aptX) Bluetooth signals. The TX 11 takes care of analogue signals via RCA connectors and a 3.5 mm jack connector. Digital signals reach the device via two TOSLINK inputs and one USB-B input. The digital inputs receive sampling rates of up to 24 bits / 96 kHz, but send these to the speakers at 12 bits / 48 kHz. Although HiRes would also be possible technically, this requires a lot of outlay and would significantly increase the costs. One of three frequency bands is set via a switch: there is a choice of 2.4 GHz, 5.2 GHz and 5.8 GHz. In addition, there are several channels available in each range and the system automatically looks for the most suitable one. This is also a radio transmission, not WLAN or BT. The familiar problems in this connection therefore do not occur.