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Magnat

MA 1000 / MCD 1050

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Magnat MA 1000
Testresult: very good

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Magnat MCD 1050
Testresult: very good



- + Sound quality: outstanding
- + Configuration: very good
- + Workmanship: very good



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Small round windows in Magnat's MA 1000 and MCD 1050 systems offer a glimpse of their glowing tubes. Magnat has exhausted the possibilities of the PCM format through modern technology to offer a fascinating insight into the beauty of music. But does it work?

Beautiful music should sound beautiful at all times. The pursuit for the best possible sound saw the boundaries of the CD being redefined, which ultimately resulted in a new SACD format. This happened around the turn of the millennium. It is an undisputed fact, however, that the SACD has since become a niche medium. Only a few companies, such as Accuphase, have stood firmly by it and have built separate SACD-compatible drives. Others consider it to be dead. Magnat has abandoned the SACD format as a medium and has pursued a different method of enhancing sound quality. Unlike its smaller MCD 850, the MCD 1050 no longer supports playback of SACDs. Instead, in keeping with current trends, the Pulheim manufacturer has equipped the MCD 1050 with some technical innovations to enable it to stream music from a computer. The MCD 1050 does this in a traditional CD format at 44.1 kHz and a 16 bit resolution. It also offers a version that is upscaled to 192 kHz and 24 bit, which, the developers say, provides a significant improvement in sound quality. While the SACDs surrendered their data in a 1 bit DSD process, the ones and zeros go further in this upsampling procedure. This enables the MCD 1050 to breathe a new lease of life into antiquated music on a computer. A coaxial and optical digital input mean ageing equipment can also be hooked up and given a lift. Digital/analogue converters from Burr-Brown have been incorporated for this purpose. The MCD 1050 plays CDs via a shielded drive, which operates extremely quietly and is equipped with a metal housing to protect it against electromagnetic interference and the effects of dust.

The detailed music information generated by the DAC player is in good hands with its big brother, the amplifier. There is absolutely nothing to criticise in terms of its workmanship and the technology used inside the unit alludes to an integrated amplifier with ambitions. These include the toroidal transformer and the total 40,000 microfarad capacitance for increased power consumption during peak pulses, as well as a large aluminium fin, which comes into play if the power semiconductors threaten to overheat. In contrast to the MCD 1050, whose tubes potter around

in the output stage, the MA 1000 employs transistors in the power department. The two tubes in the preamplifier handle the delicate signals from a tuner, turntables and other sources. We do mean turntables in plural here, as the MA 1000 is equipped with two inputs for the analogue equipment. One input has been specially designed for MC systems, while the other has been optimised for connecting MM systems or MC pick-ups. This allows vinyl fans to run riot with two turntables connected simultaneously, thereby enabling them to make their own sound comparisons. Lovers of digital media will delight in the MCD 1050 and its optical, coaxial and USB input. Even though the two Magnat units differ in terms of what they do, there is an outstanding level of harmony in their design. With their solid, brushed black aluminium front panels and their rounded windows and displays, they look very similar. The remote control for both devices, on the other hand, is identical and enables the two components to be operated extremely easily.



Upsampling please!

When playing a CD using a Swoboda system, which supplies a clean, fine and balanced sound, the MA 1000 generated a compelling and pleasing performance, however, when used with the MCD 1050, the track "One Country" by Midnight Oil, which I have listened to on countless occasions, sounded slightly compressed, somewhat duller and less airy in comparison. Before we go on, I would like to make one thing clear: the sound generated by Magnat's duo is of a high level. When the upsampling function is activated on the MCD 1050, however, it opens up another world. The track by Midnight Oil, which increases in complexity as it progresses, is now transformed into a pleasant, well-balanced piece of music. The same can be said of the excellent recordings on the "Endangered Species" CD by Lynard Skynard: i

individual notes now emerge ceremoniously from the speakers with a thoroughly compelling degree of spatiality, a warm sound pattern and a fine treble range. Such wonderful timbres make it easier to forgive the omission of the SACD format. In principle, the MCD 1050 should always be operated in its upsampling mode, as it simply brings out more from a CD. With adapted firmware, it should also be possible to switch on the MCD 1050 in this mode - a port for firmware upgrades is located at the rear of the unit.

DAC the beat

Before you can enjoy music from your computer you will need to install a driver, which can be downloaded from Magnat's website. While Windows operating systems stretching back to Windows XP are supported, Apple users are currently left out in the cold. More comprehensive and detailed information concerning the installation and configuration process with various media players such as Foobar and Winamp would be welcome at this juncture, as it would enable less experienced computer enthusiasts to fully enjoy their music quickly and easily.

However, when this process is complete, the upsampling function ensures the music on your computer is as refreshing and invigorating as it is on CD. The track "Hallelujah" by Jeff Buckley, which was originally ripped using Exact Audio Copy, sounded more striking and pure with the higher resolution. Buckley's breath at the beginning of the piece appeared more intense, while the resonance of the track seemed to penetrate the room with more breadth and depth, as if the recording - in keeping with the title - had been made in a sacred building. The sound is excellent!

Conclusion

The two phono inputs, the USB port of the MA 1000 and the upsampling function of the MCD 1050 make Magnat's powerful components equally interesting for both analogue and digital music reproduction. While a full range of pick-up systems is available for vinyl fans, Magnat has focused on PCM enhancement and coaxes more sound from the CD format via its upsampling function. This is the right way of doing things. As has often been the case in the past, the price point for this powerful duo is located at the lower end of the spectrum, which makes them the clear winner of the i-fidelity.net "price tip" award.