

HIGH-END MASSIVELY AMPLIFIED

Magnat

MA 1000 / MCD 1050



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Two questions that are often asked when CD players and amplifiers are purchased is why is it necessary to have two separate units? Simple: it increases the audiophile quality of the components. Because when making separate units, the manufacturers do not have to make as many compromises with the sound because they've got more space to work with.

Magnat has also plumbed for separate components for its 1000 series, i.e. the MA 1000 integrated amplifier and the MCD 1050 CD player. That Magnat places great store in high-quality materials and flawless workmanship is immediately apparent from both. But the amplifier alone delivers a lot more than a cursory glance would reveal. First of all, you can't fail to notice the extremely sound full-metal casing. To say it was robust would be an understatement, the MA 1000's body is both sturdy and elegant. The contrast between the unadorned rectangular design and the round controls, window and the display looks very good. The latter is an organic LED display that, with its high resolution and strong contrasts, doesn't only look extremely noble and modern, it also demonstrates its practical nature with excellent readability.

Valves at its heart

The display is firmly located in the centre of the front panel, which is made of brushed aluminium. The operating elements have also been wrought from solid aluminium. Besides the on/off button, there's also a button for selecting the source and a knob for balance and volume. They have all been made to stand out from the front panel in an effective staging with the help of slender silver-coloured frames. The windows on the left of the front panel have also been set off with frames. However, the real eye-catcher is located behind the windows, which give a clear view of the two valves that Magnat describes as the heart of its amplifiers. Lots of care has been taken with the ECC-82 valves that have been burned in for 60 hours, that possess audiophile potential and that feature extremely low-noise properties. These pre-selected quality items have been sourced from Russia and even if the eastern Europeans have recently been severely criticised in regard to the preparations for the Winter Olympics, – they're really experts when it comes down to valves.

The MA 100 is an integrated hybrid amplifier with preamplifier and power amplifier. After all, the fact that the units are separate means that there's sufficient space to create a rich internal life. The power amplifier possesses high-quality power transistors by Toshiba that absolutely satisfy the high-end aspirations. The contacts on the rear also reveal the hybrid character. Two separate inputs for a phono preamplifier are located to the far left. These have been designed for moving-magnet pick-ups (MM for short) and moving-coil pick-ups (MC). The fact that both pick-ups can be connected and then comfortably selected and activated via the remote control is

very nice.

The unit also possesses inputs for CD players and tuners. An Aux input increases the options as do the tape input and output. A pre-out connection is also part of the wide spectrum. The bi-wiring output terminal is located next to that. With its large insulated loudspeaker connections, the MA 1000 is equipped for practically any kind of cable that might be used.

And speaking of cables: a 6.3 mm TRS socket is located on the front for headphone cables and a line-in socket is located directly next to that for 3.5 mm jack leads that have been connected to other sources.

A clear line

We used the provided CD-player connection to hook up the accompanying MCD 1050. As part of the same series, it is the amplifier's equal in regard to build quality and design. It also comes with two valves and organic LED display. The high-quality "Pure CD" drive with Sanyo laser unit, which extends gently and stably at the push of a button, is located on the top right – and is so surprisingly and pleasantly quiet that no other annoying noises can be heard when it's in use. The usual buttons and a 6.3 TRS output for headphones is located under the CD tray. The rear of the player possesses two analogue and digital outputs (optical and coaxial) that are supplied by the excellent Burr-Brown digital/analogue converters and scanning rates of up to 192 kHz / 24 bits. This also applies to the USB 2.0 output and the up-sampling function that can be switched on or off.

All functions may also be comfortably controlled with the remote that is included with both the CD player and the amplifier (along with the batteries). This signal transmitter with its clearly labelled and tactile buttons and brushed aluminium design is also very convincing. The buttons possess a clear pressure point (as do the operating elements on the units themselves) and are really pleasant to hold.

Feeling and dynamism

So much for the theoretical part. Now, we can at last get down to putting the two good pieces to a practical test. After all, we want to see (and most of all hear) how close planning and reality approach each other. In order to find this out, Magnat's combo must demonstrate its capacity to reproduce music both emotionally and dynamically. So we asked singer-songwriter, Erik Penny, to handle the emotional part. The Berlin-based US citizen realised his latest work (entitled "Heart Bleed Out") with the help of a so-called "Pledge Campaign" and pre-released it to those who supported his campaign before putting it out on general release. The very personal disc in the Americana style is full of emotion, which the Magnat duo carries to the listeners in an incredibly sensitive way. The precise emphasis and penetrating reproduction of the tunes

immediately draw listeners into the spell of the album and time passes by hardly without notice. Only the automatic gentle ending of the last song ("Feel Love") returns us to reality. Besides Erik Penny's unique live concerts, there could hardly be a more worthy way of listening to his music.

Although the Magnat combo's performance had already absolutely convinced us, we subjected it to another round of tests. This time we asked Bruce Springsteen, who returned to work last year with the release of his new album entitled "High Hopes", to do the honours. Springsteen fans would know the songs on this album, but they'd be unfamiliar with the interpretation. With the E-Street Band backing him, "The Boss" uses this release to clearly demonstrate who's in charge. After the test, we could only assume that the criticism sometimes aimed at "High Hopes" was just due to the fact that those expressing it hadn't listened to it on Magnat's components. Which does not mean to say that the disc is not good – on the contrary. But what the 1000-series combination is able to draw out of the already good material is such incredible fun that you really don't want to stop playing it. The opener and title track already gave a clear taste of what was to come. The detailed resolution presented a broad and densely populated stage on which each individual musician could be clearly located. Even the versions of "American Skin (41 Shots)" and "Down In The Hole", which are full of effects, constituted no exception in this regard. The famous "The Ghost of Tom Joad", which initially starts in a quite relaxed and reduced manner but then abruptly shifts up a few gears to give this reinterpretation of this classic masses of "umph", was particularly rousing. If you should ever have the chance of testing the two Magnat components with the above albums don't say – after you've spontaneously parted with your cash – that we hadn't warned you...

Conclusion

Excellent build, the greatest of care in production and choice of individual components along with grand audiophile potential characterise this Magnat combo, which is made up of the MA 1000 amplifier and the MCD 1050 CD player. The fact that no compromise was made between size and sound has really paid off. All this costs a few euros more than other components but you'll never be able to find such an enormously good price-performance ratio again.