



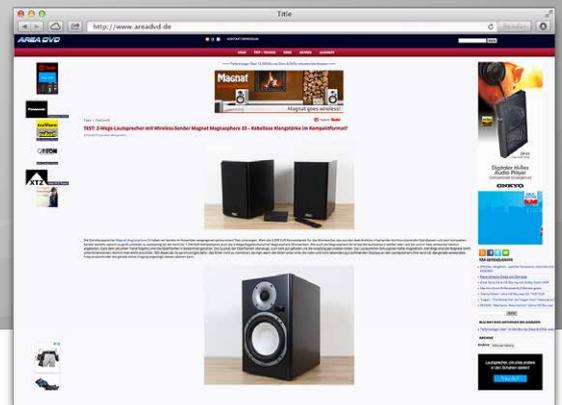
"Harmonious complete package: Very good finish combined with useful features and a great sound"



Magnat
MGNASPHERE 33



Bluetooth® Qualcomm® aptX™



Magnat

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TEST: 2-way loudspeaker with the Magnat Magnasphere 33 wireless transmitter – wireless sound power in a compact format?

We had already subjected the Magnat Magnasphere 55 floor-standing loudspeakers to a test in November last year. Those who find the €2,500 wireless set comprising the two wirelessly communicating floor-standing speakers and the compact transmitter visually too large or too expensive can also opt for the Magnasphere 33 2-way shelf-top speakers for an all-in price of €1,700. Like the Magnasphere 55, the set is available in white or, in the case of our test, as a black version. Following the current trend, the surfaces have a silk matt finish. The quality of the surfaces is impressive, and we also like the carefully rounded edges very much. The protective grille of the loudspeaker is attached magnetically, though the magnets are slightly on the small side. Brush lightly against the grille and it falls off. (...)

The Magnasphere 33 is a fully active 2-way bass-reflex speaker equipped with a 170 mm bass/mid-range unit and a 25 mm dome tweeter. The displayable frequency range is from 28 Hz (very good depth for a compact shelf-top speaker) right up to 50 kHz. The total RMS power output is 65 watts per loudspeaker, with the maximum achievable power at 110 watts. One speaker weighs 6.6 kg (dimensions: 33 cm high, 19.5 cm wide, 19.5 cm deep), the extremely compact controller (124 x 35 x 100 mm, wxhxd) weighs in at just 0.2 kg. The sturdy enclosure is made of thick E1 MDF boards, with additional bracing strengthening the stability on the inside. The base is also particularly strong to prevent undesirable resonances. Located beneath the speaker are screwed-on rubber feet to prevent slipping on just about any surface.

The Magnasphere TX11 transmitter, as the centrepiece of the digital wireless signal transmission, features Bluetooth, including Qualcomm aptX, and also has a USB DAC (bis 96 kHz/24-Bit). Two optical digital inputs and two analogue inputs (stereo, once cinch, one 3.5 mm mini-jack) are also provided. The power supply is external, but fortunately very compact. (...)

Sound (using the internal USB DAC)

We now want to check whether the Magnasphere 33 shelf-top loudspeaker also meets the quite upscale demands of the price category. €1,700 is quite something, even though you have to consider that it is not a cheap master/slave concept (where the entire electronics are housed in one speaker and the other one is purely passive) that has been implemented here but, rather, both loudspeakers are fully active and can be operated synchronously via a remote control. The fact that the loudspeaker pairs can be operated in up to 3 zones and with 3 different frequency bands increases the usefulness in just the same way as the option at the back for raising or lowering the treble and bass D (-2/+ 2 dB). (...)

Those looking at the technical data more closely will then know what at least part of the money is for. Because, while the nuPro models cannot go beyond 22 kHz, the Magnasphere 33's keep going up to 50 kHz. Sure, the common-sense individual will say you don't need this; after all, an adult human being's audible spectrum ends at 16 kHz. And some users are happy to dismiss the subject of harmonic waves as voodoo. In brief, harmonic waves are signals outside the directly audible range, though these harmonic waves do play a role for discerning a piano, a harp or a violin, for example.

Depending on what type of instrument is being played, e.g. a simple piano or a Steinway grand piano, the perception of the harmonic waves is different and, in this way, the listener then realises, provided he/she has the corresponding sensitivity, whether a noble concert grand or an average piano is being played. The seamlessly integrated wireless transmission,

the high-quality remote control and the possibility already mentioned of using the unit in up to 3 listening zones also justify the price of the Magnasphere. So those looking closely enough will see that the Magnat certainly could pay off.

So let's listen closely – how do the Magnasphere 33's fare with Flac hi-res audio material? The DAC processes up to 96 kHz/24 bits, and we listen to "River Towns" by Mark Knopfler. The number in 192/24 is converted downwards but what remains is sufficient to heap great praise on the Magnat developers. The sound meets extremely high demands. This is due to the tight and surprisingly voluminous bass, though this is just about optimally integrated and is not laid on too thick. On occasions, we have accused Magnat loudspeakers of being too concise when reproducing the treble ranges. We cannot confirm this in the case of the Magnasphere 33's. The speaker displays fine resolution and delivers a high degree of brilliance while, at the same time, sounding very pleasant and not getting aggressive even at higher levels. Mark's voice comes across to the listener in a vivid and authentic way.

We then listen to "Diamante" by Alessi in 96 kHz/24 bits. The Magnat loudspeakers present the voices of Sandra and Tony Alessi in a very successful way. The maximum attainable levels are very good. Although the harmony in the treble range just mentioned then suffers to a minimal extent, the Magnasphere 33's are still a good bit away from displaying excessively brash or excessively metallic reproduction characteristics. They not only reproduce the two voices very well, as already mentioned, they also release the vocal elements from the loudspeaker enclosure in an outstanding manner. The three-dimensionality provided is amazing and pleasing in equal measure. The two loudspeakers certainly do not display any monitor-type close-range sound characteristics but are, rather, ideally suited to the living or music room on account of their wide horizontal dispersion angle. Due to the generously proportioned power output - 65 watts doesn't sound like an awful lot, but practice shows us that there is almost always enough power available - the elegant compact speakers can also be used in listening rooms of more than 20 square metres.

We have the first allegro of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Violin Concerto, opus 218 available in 96 kHz/24 bits. And we note that the Magnasphere loudspeakers could also very well establish themselves as a tempting alternative for lovers of classical music: The violin solos come across in a delicate, lively manner with excellent detail. The full orchestra parts create an accurate impulse feeling of forceful dynamics, which also benefits from what is again great three-dimensionality. Nothing comes across as unharmonious, rigid or monotonous – the Magnaspheres display their ability particularly well with the complex Mozart allegro and also delight through small musical details being incorporated well in the levels to the rear.

CD material in 16 bit/44.1 kHz: Although "Senza Fine" from the "Passione" album by Andrea Bocelli is "only" available in normal CD quality, the sound of the Magnasphere is also presented here at its best. The voice reproduction is vivid and emotive, with Andrea's vocal spreading cleanly through the room in a balanced way and the sound never "sticking" to the speakers. The high level of harmony is rounded off by the fine transitions between the individual frequency ranges and the precise, sensitive presentation of the instrumental elements.

And now it's time for the Magnasphere 33 to deal with distinctly more bass-heavy source material: We put on "Feeling So Real" by Moby in the Westbam remix from Mayday. And just to clarify: In terms of the dynamic range and bass precision, the source material is only average. So a fair bit away from being very good quality and, in the light of these conditions, the Magnat speaker puts on a quite impressive show with a relatively hard and precise kick

bass that brings out an awful lot from the source. The fact that such a compact design can get down to business so rigorously proves that Magnat has done an awful lot right with the Magnasphere 33.

And how does the Magnasphere fare with "Desire" by Blank & Jones? Here, too, the bass is impeccable. Of course, the very demanding "clubber" will feel there should be a bit more vigour but, in the end, the compact design is not a sound transducer with the enclosure volume of a full-blown fridge/freezer combination. No, but there is no doubt that the Magnasphere delivers an extremely acceptable performance in its size category, producing a tremendously dense and superior sound. Every electronic-acoustic effect that is added during the build-up of the extended version of the song is accounted for with an accurate impulse response. Dynamic changes are presented in an excellent way.

We conclude our trance/techno checks with "Drop&Jump" from Norman Netro & DK Klubbingman. Once again, the Magnasphere pulls out all the stops to demonstrate its ability and we particularly like the rare blend of the dynamics conveyed in an extremely direct way and huge overall acoustic homogeneity. Just about everything is spot on in the soundscape, the group delay is praiseworthy and the crisp, powerful bass is in time with the rest of the acoustic performance, although it is not a loudspeaker with a coaxial chassis (point-source principle).

On balance, the Magnat Magnasphere 33's show themselves to be adept universalists in terms of the sound rating, offering an even better equivalent value than the larger Magnasphere 55's. Why? The compact speakers hardly appear inferior in acoustic terms, it is only at higher levels in a listening room of more than 20 square metres and when requiring maximum depth in the bass range that the larger speakers are definitely the better alternative. No question about it, we also liked the Magnasphere 55's very much. But a price difference of € 800 is not inconsiderable and the more expensive solution doesn't always have to be preferred to the cheaper one.

Conclusion

Admittedly, the price of the Magnat Magnasphere 33 is a princely sum. € 1,700 for the complete set is a substantial investment, but the high-quality finish of the product makes it worth the money invested. With rounded edges and bolted bass-reflex openings, it meets high quality demands, with a few points deducted only for the visible loudspeaker chassis screws on the baffle of the uni-body enclosure. A couple more points are lost on account of the undersizing of the magnets holding the protective grille in place. Otherwise, however, the Magnasphere 33 set is beyond reproach. Sound can be produced in three zones using the Magnasphere loudspeakers, and the overall set-up of the wireless system is very simple. Although there are two optical but no coaxial digital inputs, there is no lack of connectivity options with USB DAC, mini-jack, cinch and even Bluetooth supplied as standard. We were also impressed by the surprisingly rich and, at the same time, cultivated sound. The excellent level stability is also part of Magnat's "all-round carefree package".