

A REAL GEM IN TERMS OF SOUND & DESIGN



Magnat

Quantum Edelstein



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People who have high standards when it comes to design often find it difficult when choosing a suitable speaker. It's simply in the nature of things. Good-sounding speakers, for example, usually only satisfy the audio specifications of the manufacturer with visual aspects falling by the wayside. Conversely, a well designed speaker rarely lives up to premium audio requirements. The audio specialists at Magnat, however, have now developed a speaker in its Quantum series that is a delight to the eye and ear alike. The name they have given it simply says it all: Edelstein (which means "gem" in English).

Minimalist yet extravagant

Beauty may be in the eye of the beholder, but anyone I show this speaker to, regardless of their standing and reason for visiting our editorial offices, simply finds it gorgeous. Quite why this is so remains a mystery at first, because on closer inspection there are neither flashy applications nor any details that stand out or catch the eye in any other way. But that's what seems to be the secret of this timeless beauty, because even though it was planned to be a visually appealing sound transducer, Magnat made a conscious decision to dispense with embellishments and elaborate refinements when developing its "gem". Instead, straight lines, harmonious proportions and a high-quality selection of materials are the defining characters of this unit. Dieter Rams once coined a phrase which is 100% apt here: "Good design is as little design as possible!" And although the design of the two-way speaker, which is currently standing in our test room, wasn't penned by him, Magnat's most beautiful sound transducer to date can hardly be more appropriately described than by the words of the world-renowned industrial designer from Germany. This is what makes the speaker so beautiful. It's so beautiful that neither I, nor any of my visitors that pop around, can resist caressing it gently whenever possible.

Outer values

The aforementioned beauty isn't down to chance, as ultimately only high quality materials have been used in creating the Quantum Edelstein. First and foremost is the silky shimmering surface of the multi-braced MDF housing, which is optionally available in a high gloss black or white finish. Another real, albeit low-key highlight turns out to be the double base plate, which is composed of acrylic glass five mm thick and an eight mm thick aluminium layer. Wow! This not only looks elegant but also ensures additional stability and added benefits for the overall sound. Front aluminium panels, which are of identical thickness, enhance the rigidity of the housing and add a further touch of class to the unit. The elegant exterior is rounded off by the screwed and height-adjustable rubber feet on which the enchanting top models appear to float.

A savvy top model

It is often said that the most beautiful models only have something to offer in terms of appearance

instead of inner values. This doesn't apply to these "gems" in any shape or form, because, apart from their elegant, attractive appearance, they also boast premium internal components. The most apparent feature in this speaker are the two driver units, which are recessed behind the aforementioned aluminium front panel and whose meticulously calculated cut-out edges serve as the sound guide. At first glance this appears to be a rather nondescript detail, however it is of enormous importance and can significantly optimise the directional characteristics of the speaker. But let's go back to the two-way system used here, whose tweeter, as you would expect, is found in the upper section of the housing. As the name suggests, this is responsible for the reproduction of all high tones, as well as the upper mid-range; in other words, a spectrum that covers the majority of vocal segments and detailed nuances. In order to reproduce this frequency range in the best possible way the speakers need a powerful driver, which Magnat has found in the shape of a coated fabric dome that bears the name "fmax Signature". Besides its low weight and resulting speed, this tweeter is characterised by its enormous resolution, which I will discuss in more detail in the following section. Underneath this chassis unit is the impressively powerful (in relation to the overall size of the speaker) midrange/woofer unit. Thanks to its feather-light yet high-strength aluminium/ceramic sandwich cone it is extremely close to a perfect oscillating system that promises an outstanding pulse response and a high level of agility. Powerful magnetic drive systems are designed to reduce distortion to a minimum and increase efficiency. This is an important feature that primarily pays off when the "Quantum Edelstein" is operated with less powerful amplifiers.

Put to the test

Magnat has placed its Quantum Edelstein in the "audiophile speaker" category. Considering its compact dimensions, this may cause irritation in some quarters. It undoubtedly deserves this classification, however, as proven at the start of the test with Kari Bremnes' classic "Hurtigrute". It seduces in a charming manner, which is in no way inferior to its aforementioned external beauty. Everything really fits. The lightness and accuracy with which it reproduces this piece gently beguiles the auditorium and draws the listener into the track. Everything is free, well-balanced, airy and coherent, and the sound appears as if cast from a mould. The "Edelstein" also exhibits unexpected qualities in terms of spatiality and it impresses with a stage presentation and a real live atmosphere, which I feel is better than anything I could have wished for. A significantly more lively performance is produced with "Stunt" by the Barenaked Ladies and it makes me want to crank up the volume. The high quality of the chassis quickly becomes noticeable here as the track is recreated in a pleasant, full-bodied manner that exudes an amazing level of sovereignty and sounds perfectly coordinated. There's absolutely no trace of the sound being restricted or any lack of dynamics. It's quite the

opposite. The sound that is emitted from these speakers and the enthusiasm with which it is reproduced is simply infectious. It's so infectious in fact that I simply can't get enough of the agility of the fundamental tone and the catchy bass line. This is the way music is meant to be, because it's only when music is reproduced as intended by the artist does it create such a pleasurable and sensational feeling. This is clearly the case here and I find myself unable to resist cranking up the volume another notch or two. If you want to create the ideal foundation for a track like Godsmack's "I Stand Alone", this is imperative. The gripping, rich and low-distortion performance that I have experienced here is by no means self-evident for speakers of this size. But, as I have said, the Quantum Edelstein is not just another model on a retailer's shelf. Definitely not; this is clearly a top class, compact sound transducer, which unlike most of its competitors, has no difficulty whatsoever in overcoming the challenging hurdles laid in its path. Our Magnat test duo are naturally subjected to physical limitations on account of their limited volume, which doesn't allow us to delve into the deepest realms of the bass range. However, this track, despite being played at a level which is well above what's deemed a normal volume, is reproduced clearly with a spirited bottom-end. And with such impulsiveness, enthusiasm and neutrality, which I could scarcely believe was coming from an active shelf speaker at first, it is definitely one of the better speakers I have heard.

Conclusion

Those who appreciate the finer things in life will be getting their money's worth with these speakers. And I mean this in all respects, because the Quantum Edelstein combines everything long considered to be incompatible: design and sound - of the highest quality. The sleek and timeless elegance extends from the visual design to the coordination of the audio components. Overall, the Quantum Edelstein proves to be a fair-priced compact sound transducer whose resolution and neutrality will appeal to sophisticated listeners and whose amazing agility and level of power will attract fans of rock music. How anyone can make a compact two-way speaker with premium design standards even better in this price range I simply don't know.

