

## MAGNAT SBW 250 – THE DYNAMIC DUO

# Magnat

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TEST RESULT 4,5 / 5

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**There are things that you unpack, take them in your hand, and you simply like them straightaway. That's how we were with the Magnat SBW 250. And it doesn't matter whether the name Magnat still possesses the radiance and charisma as it might once have done. We are not familiar with the early Magnat products, so we just concentrate on the here and now. And that's just what we did!**

The small SBW 250 is a combination of a slender soundbar and a wireless subwoofer. Working away inside the small bar are 2 x stereo two-way systems with 2 x 25 mm tweeters and four 35 x 90 mm mid-range drivers driven by a four-channel power amplifier. The amplifiers for the treble and deep mid-tone ranges are separate. The subwoofer has a 20 mm diameter and, according to the manufacturer, has an output of 200 watts.

Magnat has not economised on connectivity. While many soundbars provide only HDMI or optical input, the SBW 250 offers both. And not only that. There are as many as four HDMI inputs available, with the first one also ARC-capable. ARC stands for Audio Return Channel and ensures that the sound from the TV is also output to the soundbar via HDMI. So you're not limited to players like a Blu-ray device for sound: you can also listen to the evening TV program via the bar.

On top of this, there is the optical digital input in case your TV doesn't have HDMI, as well as an AUX input. The USB port has no function at all, unfortunately, and is only for firmware updates, which have to be imported via USB. The SBW 250 is not network-compatible. So this means that streaming services for music like Apple Music and Spotify are left out, though they can be directed to the soundbar from a tablet via the up-to-date Bluetooth 4.0 with aptX codec. There are four sound modes available in the form of Linear, Movie, Music and Vocal; the equaliser can be activated or deactivated, just like the surround sound mode, and the subwoofer volume can be regulated via the remote control.

Visually, the entire system has been kept simple. The top and front of the soundbar are decorated by a black grille, with the display located unobtrusively behind it. Functions and settings can be seen at the brief push of a button, after which the display switches off, apart from 2 small dashes. This means you are not dazzled in dark surroundings when watching a movie or TV show. And if you happen to mislay the handy and clearly laid-out remote control, four more buttons are provided on the side for you to operate the device. The subwoofer is made entirely of black MDF, interrupted only by the bass reflex port on the front.

The entire system can be set up in a few simple steps. With this soundbar, you can also choose between positioning it in front of the TV or mounting it on the wall. Not quite 8 cm high, the small Magnat fits in front of just about any TV without obstructing any of the picture on the screen. A corresponding bracket is provided for wall mounting. Afterwards, you can set in the menu whether the soundbar is in a standing position or mounted on the wall. The subwoofer connects to the soundbar automatically after being switched on and then there's nothing to stop you enjoying the sound experience for the first time.

If I had to describe the SBW 250 in just one word, 'powerful' is the one that would best sum it up accurately. Even at the lowest level in the standard setting, the subwoofer shows how good it is, with the soundbar banging out the action through the living room in such a way that it really is amazing just where the dynamics come from. We chose the film, Everest, as our test movie because the action here is driven by constant alternating between natural forces and dialogues.

Switched to the 'Movie' sound function, the snowstorms immediately whip through the room, breaking ice makes the subwoofer shudder and numerous dialogues, some in the eternal ice, some in absolute silence, bring a superb performance from the soundbar. The SBW 250 brings all the drama of this movie to your ears with near perfection. Numerous surround sound effects well presented by the system captivate the viewer and also draw him or her into the drama acoustically. But Everest is also a current movie with Dolby Digital soundtrack. Things are different for the streamed horror flick, Resident Evil, from 2002.

As already shown with Everest, the system performs excellently on all the action. Sound effects like gunfire, breaking glass and splashing water are conveyed in a clean and clearly locatable manner. However, the dialogue does lag behind a bit here and is overshadowed by all the other sound effects. The conversations are still intelligible, but a bit more would be nice. Although switching to the 'Vocal' sound option then makes the dialogues more understandable, every other sound or effect then echoes in the infinite vastness of the background. The 'Vocal' function is also useful for documentaries or other TV programs, but not for an older movie full of action. And, unfortunately, there is no option to raise the dialogue acoustically.

With video games, on the other hand, the SBW 250 is, once again, up there with the best. Dialogues are more of a secondary concern here, with the game and its sound effects clearly coming before extensive communication. It does, of course, depend on the genre but, all things considered, every game is intended to be entertaining. We can't get away from our Switch at the moment because that well-known "just one more game" feeling has us tied to the screen.

Although the mixture of Puyo Pop and Tetris definitely does not offer the effect fireworks, here it's the overall package of one's own reactions and sound that stimulate us to achieve ever greater heights of performance. In the meantime, developers have switched from the necessary, but often annoying background tootling to specially composed pieces that fit the action and are intended to motivate the player. And that's precisely what PuyoPuyo Tetris offers. Only when the new and, yet, already familiar Tetris sound emerges from the speakers do you know as a gamer that top performances are now called for.

But that doesn't mean anything to First Person Shooter fans. On Call of Duty, the sound has to be brutal to get the adrenaline pumping in addition to the action on the screen. Here, the sound effects have to carry the player along. Every bullet, every grenade and every explosion have to make the screen shudder and the system can do that. Those who want to put their neighbors to the test turn the bass up high and then everyone really does have the feeling of being at the center of the action, and not on the edge of it.

What the SBW 250 delivers here brings a smile to the face of every core gamer.

Just as for gaming, the small system also performs really well in the living room for music playback - if you like a bassy environment. The Bluetooth connection is established in seconds and the first songs from Apple Music this time were alternative titles from the year 2012. The playlist was started with We are Young from Fun. The huge bass support, which we didn't find as solid with other speakers, was immediately noticeable on this number. The sub was turned down to -4 dB and the sound was then right. The same was true for Madness by Muse.

Quite different, though, for numerous metal titles from Manowar, AC/DC, Volbeat and countless others. Here the bass had to be reset from -4 dB to 0 dB in order to be able to experience the deep tones. This may be due to different file formats but music is, nevertheless, subjective. Every person perceives sound differently, has different preferences and, with the SBW 250, everyone should be able to find the personal setting for them.

Regardless of what you are putting the system in the living room for, a subwoofer is intended not just to replace but, rather, upgrade the often thin sound of a TV. The SBW 250 offers the dynamics that the TV does not provide.

## Conclusion:

The SBW 250 is an extremely lively system with immensely powerful bass. What the subwoofer delivers here really does surprise us though. The soundbar itself can reproduce mid and treble tones clearly and without peaks, even at the higher levels. The three-dimensionality of sound effects in movies is impeccable, as is the broad stage and acoustics for music.

But - and this is the only shortcoming of the system - there is no way of raising dialogues and bringing them into the foreground of the action. All too often, in older movies, dialogues are overshadowed by background noise and effects in action scenes, causing them to almost go under.

Anyone who is not sure whether the Magnat SBW 250 is something for their personal requirements or not would certainly not be wrong to give the system a try-out. Younger movie and music fans, in particular, are sure to like the dynamics and the system really is top notch for video games due to its power.