



"... Pulse fidelity, spatiality in the treble range, a powerful bass line and high level stability ensure an outstanding score"

# Magnat

## SHADOW 209



- + EXCELLENT BASS RESPONSE
- + DOMINANT PERFORMANCE IN THE REPRODUCTION OF SOME DEMANDING MUSIC GENRES
- + COHERENT GROUP DELAYS
- + VERY GOOD LEVEL OF EFFICIENCY
- + TWEETER WITH EXQUISITE SPATIALITY



# Magnat

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## The Shadow 209 3-way bass reflex floorstanding speaker – power and precision for just €1000 EUR per pair?

Magnat recently announced its new Shadow speaker series. The largest floorstanding speaker here, namely the Shadow 209, arrived in our test room in its resplendent black finish (which is also available in white), so we decided to put it to the test. Each speaker is priced at €499. This means a pair will cost just shy of €1000, which is a magic number for many buyers. A feature exhibited by all of the Shadow speakers is the newly developed 30mm fmax dome tweeter with its wide surround and dispersion-optimized sound guide. This ensures edge reflections are predominantly eliminated. A fairly large ferrite drive promises good dynamics. Powerful neodymium magnets, which are often used for tweeters because of their compact dimensions, have not been used here. This could very well be down to their cost. Specially coated FE Dynamics drivers are used for the woofer and midrange.

The housing of the Shadow 209 adheres to classical guidelines. Anyone wanting to stand out from the crowd, at least from a visual perspective, would probably be better off looking elsewhere. The housing consists of rather thick E1 MDF panels, which ensure a high level of rigidity and solidity. Magnat has also paid close attention to the design of the rear bass reflex port. However, you can't see much evidence of this – on larger Magnat models attractive aluminum rings are used to visually enhance the bass reflex port. The evolutions are of a technical nature here and are concealed.

Magnat explains that flow noise is significantly reduced thanks to the speaker's gently rounded sides. Flow noise tends to disrupt the overall acoustic harmony and regularly occurs at higher levels via the bass reflex port. According to its statements, Magnat has also significantly optimized the crossover in terms of phase and amplitude. The components used, according to the manufacturer, are of a corresponding high quality and offer long-term stability.

The Shadow 209 exhibits a 220 watt RMS rating and a maximum output of 360 watts, which are some really good values. We opt to use the powerful, dynamic Advance Acoustic stereo integrated amplifier X-i120 to explore the limits of the Shadow 209. The level of efficiency (2.83 V/1 m) is specified with a good 92 dB. The impedance level is 4 to 8 ohms. The Shadow is capable of reproducing frequencies between 20 and 48,000 Hz. Its extended treble range means it is also suitable for hi-res audio material. The crossover frequencies are 280 Hz and 3,000 Hz. The connected amplifier should provide more than 30 watts of power per channel. Each speaker weighs in at 22.5 kg and measures 1,150 mm high by 190 mm wide and 350 mm deep.

The speakers are equipped with three 170 mm woofers and a 170 mm midrange driver, each of which features a coated paper cone. The voice coil unit is vented in order to ensure the best possible resilience, while the non-magnetic cast basket is made of fiber-reinforced ABS. The tweeter measures 30 mm.

Let's now turn to the quality of workmanship and materials used. The Shadow 209 looks really good from the front due to the aluminum trim used around the chassis and its high-gloss baffle. This is slightly rounded at the top, which gives a nice finishing touch to the overall visual appearance. The base of the Shadow 209 is also rather beautiful. Nice touches such as the Magnat inscription on the aluminum trim around the chassis really highlight the company's attention to detail.

## Sound

We start our test with "The Howling" by Within Temptation, taken from the album "The Heart Of Everything". The song is recorded in normal CD quality (44.1 kHz/16 bit) and allows us to get a good feel of the speakers' capabilities. Dynamic segments, powerful bass lines, electric guitars and enthusiastic vocals are all present. The Shadow 209 copes really well everything thrown at it. The transitions between the treble and midrange, as well as those between the midrange and bass are fluid; the bass range is pleasantly tight and present in a compelling manner. The speaker doesn't overly force itself into the foreground. Vocal reproduction isn't perfect and is sometimes swept a bit too much into the background, but when you really turn things up it tends to have a sharp impact in places. The Shadow 209 cannot be criticized when it comes to its course dynamics – Magnat's speaker is definitely not boring or too heavily focused on harmony.

We continue our test with an instrumental version of the theme song from the 007 film "You Only Live Twice", performed by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and recorded on SACD. The Shadow 209 performs rather homogeneously with this track; the fluid transitions between the frequency ranges are evident here once again. The newly developed 30 mm tweeter draws attention to itself with its excellent spatial distribution. It radiates over a broad spectrum to ensure an intense sound experience.

The midrange integrates well with a good structure, while the group delays do not produce any disruptive effects in the bass range. The three 170 mm woofers produce an impeccable performance and are there immediately when needed. The foundation presented here exhibits a decent level of separation. The cones themselves have not been suspended too softly, which is clearly demonstrated by the excellent degree of pulse fidelity. What the Shadow 209 delivers with Bryan Ferry's "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" (SACD) is really impressive from a low-frequency point of view. The bass comes in quickly and at virtually the exact right point. The sound fills the room and is solid, while the level of depth is once again compelling.

In this price range, which is aimed at casual enthusiasts, it is difficult to find serious fault with the speaker; after all you need to bear in mind that just under €500 for a speaker is not an investment a discerning stereo lover would make. For beginners and intermediates with a demand for high quality standards the Shadow 209 is more than sufficient. Now things get serious with Clarinet Concerto in A major, Köchel listing 622, by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (SACD). We listen to the first Allegro and are amazed. The Shadow 209 delivers a much better performance than we were expecting here. The harmony of the orchestral ensemble is accompanied by a really good reproduction of the dynamic sound. The strings sound very clear and spatial and never appear too shrill or aggressive when the volume is cranked up. Quieter passages are reproduced exquisitely. The dynamic distribution here, compared to parts of the first Allegro in which the entire orchestra is involved, is extremely realistic. From the point of view of the classical listener, at least in this test example, the performance of the Shadow 209 is wholly satisfying.

Now let's really give things some oomph and explore the level limits of the Shadow 209. The Advance Acoustic X-i120 delivers a vast array of power; the question now is how the Shadow 209 copes with it.

"Loneliness" by Tomcraft, which is one of the trance anthems of all time, really pushes the bass range, but it doesn't tax the chassis even when played at a significantly high volume. At the other end of the scale is the tweeter, which produces slight distortions at a very high level. However, it also remains poised for an extended period; the three 170 mm bass drivers are just capable of that little bit more. Even the powerful bass drivers experienced a little trouble with the hard bass lines in "Kernkraft 400" by Zombie Nation – but only a little. The cones appear to be slightly taxed when subjected to very high levels.

Spatiality, vigor and presentation of the electronic effects are all very good. Over the course of the song, the three 170 mm bass drivers deliver a compelling performance with precision, separation and rigor. These attributes also come into their own in the bass range of "Fire Wire" by Cosmic Gate. And again the Shadow 209 steps up to the plate. Moving ahead, and how. Sound effects and bass lines course through the listening room, and we haven't even cranked up a high-performance athlete like the Advance Acoustic X-i120 yet. Due to the speakers' impeccable degree of efficiency, a lot can even be accomplished with entry-level stereo amplifiers in the €250 to €350 price range. Next level move: "Pitchin' (In Every Direction)" by Hi-Gate once again emphatically brings the cones to life. And the Shadow 209 definitely isn't a "slouch" here either with its room-filling, clear and vibrant performance. The speaker delivers a very successful, if not superior, performance with all of the tracks on the "Anthems Of Trance" 3 CD set. It's so good that that we follow up with the Quake remix of Armin van Buuren's classic track "Communication". The underlying thrust in the bass range is perfectly highlighted by the Shadow 209. But it's also the degree of spatiality in the electronic effects that are compelling. So it's on to the final battle – "Airwave" by Rank 1 simply substantiates the premium position of the Shadow 209 for sheer trance/techno enjoyment. Just how spontaneous and lively it responds here, complete with such stable levels, is a real pleasure. Just how do we classify the Shadow 209? It's not as "slick" as other speakers. Many of its other competitors distinguish themselves as all-rounders – the Shadow 209 has no interest in reproducing everything equally well. It reproduces some aspects absolutely brilliantly, well above the standard in its class, while other aspects are not quite as perfect. Trance tracks and classical pieces – a contradiction to all intents and purposes – are clearly the speaker's domain. This is where the speaker excels and offers an outstanding reproduction, which is far more than adequate considering the purchase price. The Shadow 209 is less adept with rock and metal tracks; the vocals here do not seem extremely well balanced and the overall listening experience is lacking a bit of refinement.

## Conclusion

In terms of acoustics the Shadow 209 has a clear preference for classical pieces on one hand and trance/techno tracks on the other. What seems incompatible is brought together effortlessly by the Pulheim sound transducer: Pulse fidelity, spatiality in the treble range, a powerful bass line and high level stability ensure an outstanding score here. The Shadow 209 is less adept with rock and metal tracks. Overall, it's very brave of Magnat to construct a speaker with such a clear focus – it stands out from the boring masses and thus earns our respect.