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"Thanks to its lavish woofer configuration the visually appealing speaker is capable of producing a comprehensive, full-range sound that is thoroughly compelling with all musical genres."

Magnat SHADOW 209

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Testresult: very good

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Best Buy



Magnat

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Granted, the delivery driver wasn't exactly a giant. The two boxes containing Magnat's Shadow 209 speakers towered up to his head and he had to demonstrate a great amount of dexterity and strength as he heaved them up to the second floor. Measuring 1150 by 190 by 350 cm, the fully-fledged flagship model of the new series really generates a considerable first impression. This is important in the price/performance range where there's no holds barred. It's where more and bigger are always better. Magnat can even be forgiven for the lavish information it has emblazoned on the box: 360 watts, 20 - 48,000 Hz; these are values that potential buyers with a superficial knowledge worship and they are apparently necessary to make the boxes stand out amongst the other cardboard castles in the market.

At the brutally calculated budget that is available to the engineers in this price range, there must be a huge temptation for them to rearrange existing components, repackage them in slightly modified housings and market the end result as a new product. But far from it. Not at Magnat. Substantial investment has been made in developing the Shadow series to achieve an optimum audio result from the available resources. This starts with the drivers. Magnat has utilized the Klippel analysis method to construct new chassis, which are used throughout the Shadow series. The woofer and midrange speakers consist of FE Dynamics drivers with lightweight, specially coated paper cones in non-magnetic, fiber-reinforced ABS cast baskets.

After unpacking the units and succumbing to the natural first reaction of any speaker tester, i.e. removing the front panel, we are provided with a glimpse of four of these 170 mm drivers. Three of these drivers cater exclusively for the bass range in the Shadow 209, while another driver covers the midrange. Ventilated voice coil units guarantee optimum temperature management, which results in a correspondingly high load capacity. The fmax tweeter, which has also been redesigned, caters for frequencies 3,000 Hz and above. The particularly wide surround and powerful ferrite drive provide the foundations for a really good dynamic response. The driver ensemble is operated by an amplitude- and phase-optimized crossover with 24 dB filters.

Imposing presence

The Shadow 209 also fulfills high demands in terms of its visual appearance. The floorstanding speaker consists of solid MDF panels and, as the current fashion dictates, is accordingly slim. Despite its 1.15 meter height it can be integrated relatively unobtrusively into a living room environment, especially if you opt for the white version. With chic accents such as the continuous glossy front panel, a contrasting cover and decorative aluminum trim, the speaker exudes a certain level of quality that will readily appeal to prospective buyers in this class. The fact that the rear is rather plain can be excused in this regard.

Resonance-damping rubber feet and metal spikes that ensure a perfect setup in the respective living room environment are supplied with the speakers. This is one plus point, with another being the gold-plated screw terminals. These are generously dimensioned in a duplicate configuration - ideal for disciples of the bi-wiring or bi-amping philosophy.

At the rear of the speakers there are two rounded bass reflex ports that are designed to prevent flow noise. These form excellent foundations for a class-leading performance. To see just how much these factors influence the overall acoustic experience, we set up the 22.5 kg Shadow speakers at a tried and tested listening position of around a meter from the side and rear walls of our 25 square meter room.

Higher than expected

After playing the first few tracks with the Shadow 209 speakers it becomes clear that the commonly held misconception of "many woofers generate too much bass" definitely isn't true here. The large floorstanding speaker is not overly bass-oriented and its fresh design ensures a very present treble range and a good resolution in the midrange frequencies. The bass range isn't simply thrust into the foreground when it's not needed; however, it is generated immediately when required.

The album "Casting Nets" by Distance, Light & Sky, which was recorded at Sono Studios near Prague, starts with a thrifty instrumental arrangement: Acoustic guitars, occasional strikes of the piano and all manner of percussive instruments encircle the interaction of the two lead vocals, which are clearly distinguished in the track. Chris Eckmann's rather introspective tone complements the clear and gentle vocals of Chantal Acda beautifully. The Shadow 209 presents both characteristics extremely well, both in terms of their diversity as well as their overall effect. The reproduction does, however, have a tendency to be somewhat superficial. The sound is processed cleanly and the level of agility is extremely good. Although the folk-pop vocals of Distance, Light & Sky are rather subdued, it by no means represents an intermission for the woofers.

The track "Souls", for example, features the heavily accentuated tones of a deep kettledrum, which the two Magnat speakers reproduce with exactly the right amount of weight, yet with an extremely well-contoured and composed sound.

Supersonic

Diese natürliche Souveränität als Ergebnis von This natural level of sovereignty, which is a result of the sophisticated cone setup and housing volume, is also evident in the next test track. "Hateful", taken from the album "24/7" by Gus Gus, is characterized by a semi-natural sound. While the Moog filters rasp excessively, hi-hats hiss in your ear canal and the hard-hitting drum beats pound and pound incessantly, the marauding synth bass lines are kept in check and reproduced extremely well.

The Shadow 209 speakers are certainly in their element with this aggressive techno track and even reproduce higher levels without complaint. It's only when the speakers are very heavily strained do they lose a slight bit in terms of balance.

The floorstanding speakers also shoot from the hip when it comes to the bass range in "Desire" by Boz Scaggs & David Paich from the SACD "Marantz High End Audiophile Test Demo". It's not only the bass that's handled exquisitely here, however, as the sounds of the expertly played guitar also unfold wonderfully from the overall sound pattern. The Shadow 209 speakers generate a profound, room-filling sound that is mightily impressive. In this price range there is always a compromise with regard to personal preference - you either want an audiophile character with limitations in terms of the lower frequencies or a solid, all-encompassing unit that is capable of reproducing numerous musical styles at a good level and without any reason for complaint. The Shadow 209 undoubtedly falls under the latter category.

Good reuse of material

As Magnat's floorstanding speaker exhibits an exceptionally high efficiency level of 92 dB/w/m, I tried disconnecting it from the bulky Emotiva pre/end combination and operating it via a small amplifier using a Tripath chip that outputs a maximum level of 2 x 15 watts. Naturally, this resulted in a lack of authority and composed control, together with a slight deterioration in terms of charisma and stage breadth, however, the excellent level of transparency and rich bass performance were amazingly still abundant. Despite the meager power potential offered by a small class-T amplifier, the available levels are more than adequate to put the patience of even the most tolerant neighbor to the test.

The Shadow 209 is also capable of generating a remarkable listening experience with more reasonably priced electronics. This makes it an ideal speaker for working your way up to higher audio dimensions. To paraphrase an old adage: Let's keep the old system and introduce the Shadow 209 as an upgrade; then we'll see what happens. This provides the groundwork for a significant improvement in terms of acoustics and simultaneously lays the foundation for achieving a better sound.

Test result

Magnat's Shadow 209 is a floorstanding speaker that is more than suitable for everyday use and is amongst the very best in its price range. Thanks to its lavish woofer configuration the visually appealing speaker is capable of producing a comprehensive, full-range sound that is thoroughly compelling with all musical genres. As this largest member of the Shadow series is even capable of achieving remarkable feats with smaller amplifiers, it is definitely an excellent choice. The speaker is given an extra boost with the coveted "Price tip" award.