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Magico A5

floorstanding loudspeaker

Alan Sircom

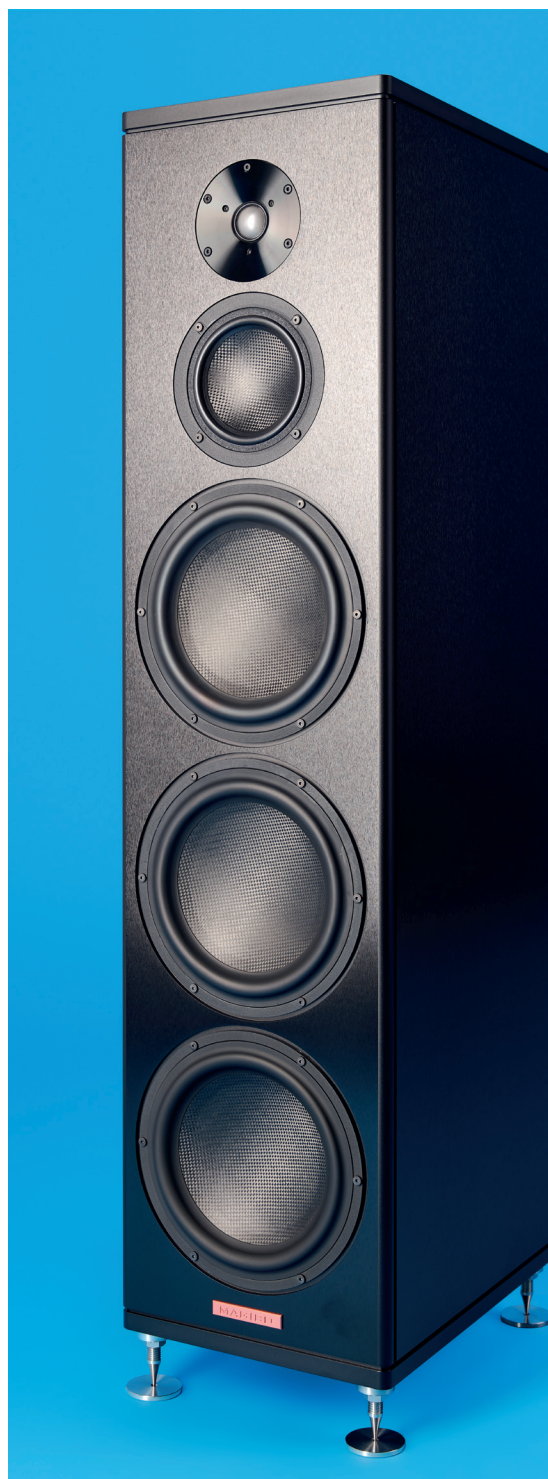
Magico's A5 floorstanding loudspeaker sits in a potentially difficult spot both in Magico's own catalogue, and in a wider context. The largest and most expensive of the company's entry-point A-Series range it not only has to compete with designs from Magico's own S-Series and see off a lot of healthy competition from the flagship designs from some of the best-known names outside the high-end. Where the more cost-no-object Magico designs exist in a more rarefied environment where there is relatively limited competition, the A5 must fight its way through a bigger field; and, boy, does it come out sluggin'!

Like all models in Magico's portfolio, the sealed-box A-Series uses a lot of aluminium. The entire cabinet is made from thick plates of brushed and black anodised 6061-T6 aircraft-grade aluminium, in fact. And like all models in Magico's line-up, that cabinet is internally braced with aluminium, too. However, where the more aspirational Magico models have essentially an internal aluminium space frame, the A-Series uses a complex internal bracing panel array alongside damping panels drawn from research used to create the mighty M-Series. In fact, there's a lot of 'trickle-down' technology in the A5, with concepts pulled from the S- and M-Series models, but there are also a few unique elements that the A-Series introduces that will doubtless trickle 'up' throughout Magico's product ranges.

Let's get physical

As mentioned earlier, the A5 is the largest model in Magico's A-Series. A three-way, five-driver featuring a trio of nine-inch Graphene Nano-Tec bass drivers – coupled with an all-new five-inch Graphene Nano-Tec midrange and a 28mm beryllium dome tweeter – means the A5 is a very 'physical' loudspeaker. However, it's deceptively room-chummy too, making it physically and sonically sit comfortably in both large listening spaces and in the smaller rooms that define city-dweller listening.

That midrange is a big deal. It's the company's first five-inch pure midrange driver. Naturally, it leveraged all the technology Magico has been putting into its drive units for the last fifteen years, including a Graphene/carbon-fibre



EQUIPMENT REVIEW
Magico A5



» sandwich cone and a new cone surround foam designed to create an optimum cone-to-surround integration, which itself should spell lower distortion and faster settling time after excursion. If the latter sounds like a bus ride to the seaside, think that the quicker the cone returns to its resting position after its pistonic effect of moving in or out, the more accurate the loudspeaker's transient response will be by definition. Even small improvements to that surround will have significant impact on the speed and transparency of the all-important midrange.

From here, the midrange unit features an all-new motor system with a pure titanium voice coil and a pure copper pole cap. This helps reduce eddy currents and makes for

an extremely stable magnetic field across the coil's travel. In other words, in making its first five-inch midrange, Magico has attempted to render all other midrange units of similar standing obsolete. While there will be a number of midrange makers who would disagree, Magico claims this is a paradigm shift in measured performance from a midrange unit. Regardless of the claim, the driver itself sits in its own sub-enclosure so any back-wave produced from a trio of bass drivers doesn't interact or interfere with the midrange performance.

The back-wave is no small consideration. The trio of 9" bass drivers are all capable of half an inch of linear excursion... that's a lot of pressure inside a sealed box!





Rear and side-wall radiation aren't an issue and you could fit the A5 into surprisingly tight spaces without sacrificing sound quality.

» In the A5, these bass units feature a newly enhanced version of Magico's Graphene Nano-Tech cones and like the midrange sport a titanium voice-coil. However, in this case that voice coil is the size of the midrange driver! Like all Magico drivers, every aspect of the unit is subject to extensive computer simulation and prototyping and a lot of measurement. This makes the cone itself achieve an excellent stiffness-to-weight ratio, while the frame itself is both optimally stiff and damped, with claimed "minimal acoustical contribution and maximised airflow."

While the tweeter itself is an old friend to those used to the A-Series, that doesn't make it outmoded. It's a 28mm dome using a pure beryllium diaphragm. Magico encases the customized neodymium motor system in an engineered back chamber with advanced damping materials. This, claims the company, "enables ultra-low distortion, high power handling, massive dynamic capabilities and extended linear voice coil movement." We've experienced this tweeter in the A1 and A3 before, and Magico's claims for the HF unit do stand up to sonic scrutiny.

The A5 is also the first product in the world to use Mundorf's new M-Resist Ultra foil resistors in its crossovers. The new resistors –the product of years of work between the two companies, apparently – are said to deliver "greater power handling, transparency and liquidity". These are incorporated into Magico's proprietary Elliptical Symmetry Crossover topology; a three-way network features a 24 dB per octave Linkwitz-Riley filter designed to maximise frequency bandwidth while preserving phase linearity and limiting potential intermodulation distortion problems.

Any colour you like

In a way, the Magico harks back to past classics in the range, thanks to its Henry Ford approach to colour schemes. Where a hitherto unheard of riot of a dozen colour finishes can be applied to the S-Series that sits above this range, the A5 is finished in an elegant brushed black anodised aluminium, in a manner akin to the mighty Q7 and previous Magico models. While this 'none more black' approach does create a monolithic look, in fact, the deep matt metal finish alongside its squared off cabinet give the Magico A5 a sort of 'null' aesthetic in the home. Curiously, because it makes no concessions to wood finishes and the rest it blends equally with everything. Those who either find five drivers staring back at them or who have kids or critters that would find such drivers an irresistible challenge can get grilles available separately as an option.

To many listeners, space is a premium and the Magico A5 takes that to heart; the combination of sealed box design and a virtually 'immovable object' enclosure means rear and side-wall radiation aren't an issue, and you could fit the A5 into surprisingly tight spaces without sacrificing sound quality. This is a boon as many of its contemporaries demand a large listening space as standard and the resultant sound in more metropolitan living arrangements is a sound that is more akin to giant, overblown headphones; something the A5 never does even in very small rooms.

Of course, that doesn't mean you can be slapdash in installation, but hopefully no-one in their right mind is ever going to be 'slapdash' with a loudspeaker costing over £30,000. Installation and partnership is important in getting the best from the A5, but – like the rest of the A-Series – it's 'important' without being 'vital'. This isn't a starter speaker in load terms, but neither is it an amp-crusher. That being said, given that so many distributors and dealers around the world are likely to be stockists of both makes this an easy recommendation, but an amplifier like the Krell K-300i integrated is clean, powerful and an ideal partner for the Magico A5. And with 115dB in room potentially on tap, the Magico A5 will play loud as well as it plays soft.

Sideburns and loon pants

There is a school of thought in audio that loudspeakers achieved an acme of fidelity about half a century ago and most things that followed are variations on a theme of distortion, however benign that distortion might be. However, we've come a long way since sideburns and loon pants were a thing, and the Magico A5 shows what you can do when you stay true to the path of honest neutrality while striving to lower distortion in driver, crossover and cabinet. Especially when such a design is built to truly uncompromising levels.

The A5 has a remarkable sense of poise; the perfect balance between transparency and coherence, detail and dynamism, rhythm and melody. But more than that, it's what you don't discuss on the listening notes that is telling; you find yourself unable to discuss the A5's tonal character because it does a very good job at trying not to have one! This is something that's not the easiest thing to describe because you are talking about the absence of a thing instead of describing its characteristics, but it's as if the studio hefts its physical presence into your room and you are met by the most honest sound you can imagine. Yes, the A5 isn't alone in acting as a pure transducer and





A quick, rich blast of 'Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau' from a male voice choir through the A5 and my Welsh roots start bubbling up!

» there are other models that do as well or even better than the Magico, but those that do what the A5 can do (or do it better) cost as much as the A5... and an Audi A5. And usually they have a Magico badge on the front.

It's incredibly difficult to convey this neutrality without cliché. It has a holographic soundstage, but when you hear it, you realise it's not Trekker hyperbole. It has powerful dynamics; and until you are shocked out of your seat by Rachmaninov played through the A5, that phrase seems trite. The loudspeaker is sensationally detailed, and until you listen to just what that means, you might equate it with a clean and bright sound or even 'worth, but dull' audio; here, that detail extends right across the frequency range and makes you wonder how good recordings were made without this level of insight. You get 'see the tonsils' vocal articulation and not simply with female vocals; a quick, rich blast of 'Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau' from a male voice choir through the A5 and my Welsh roots start bubbling up!

Hit hardest

Any speaker sound is not without its observations; some view those observations as a potential launch pad for polemic, and Magico seems to get hit with this harder than most. So, what should be seen as an extraordinarily neutral transducer is viewed as somehow 'too honest' or 'too neutral'; the A5's ability to act as an open window on frequency response is seen as 'lacking coherence'. Perhaps the most insane of these is the A5's ability to deal with dynamic range, which appears to be simultaneously too dynamic and not dynamic enough.

Most of this criticism is derived from the sheer neutrality of the A5. Almost despite the name, this is not a loudspeaker for those who think loudspeakers should add 'magic' to the sound; the magical part of Magico in general comes from music increasingly unattenuated by cabinet, crossover, or drivers... and that's a heady brew in and of itself. But there remain those fixed to the idea that a loudspeaker should be a euphonic musical instrument. In part, that's because if you are having to trade compromises in sound, then going for compromises that sound 'excitingly incorrect' is better than ones that fall into the 'accurate, but dull' category. However, Magico's A5 shows we have passed that trade-off and you can have a loudspeaker that sounds both 'accurate' and 'exciting'. Sadly, some haven't got the memo and prefer loudspeakers that might sound overly good in one aspect of performance but – when compared to the A5 – sound almost unhinged in others.

What's often forgotten here is that going for fewer compromises across the board is a better option than making huge compromises in one aspect of performance to make significant gains in another. Because where such loudspeakers can sound incredible in some aspects, they can also sound uneven by definition. The A5 and its honesty never does that. Instead, the Magico approach is one of balance; I've said that earlier in the text, but it's so fundamental to the core of what the speaker does, it's worth saying more than once.

A point of inflexion

The Magico A5 isn't just another Magico loudspeaker and isn't even just another high-end loudspeaker; it's a point of inflexion. It's the tipping point where real high-end happens, and it's flexible enough to let high-end happen in a wider range of home than usual. The combination of being capable of being driven by a good integrated amplifier and the way it integrates into smaller rooms than you might expect all lend the A5 a gravitas that sets it apart from its peers. It's the gateway to a higher-end world, but not simply a stepping-stone that leaves you wanting more. And for many this will be their first experience of what Magico can sound like and that's a big step for many. For some, it will be the only step they ever need to make, for others, it will be the first step in a wholly new journey. +

Technical specifications

Type three-way, five driver sealed floorstanding loudspeaker

Driver complement 28mm beryllium-dome tweeter (x1), 128mm Gen 8 Nano-Tec cone midrange (x1) with graphene/carbon-fibre inner and outer layers, 229mm Gen 8 Nano-Tec cone woofer (x3) with graphene/carbon-fibre inner and outer layers

Sensitivity 88dB

Impedance 4 ohms

Frequency response 24Hz–50kHz

Recommended amplifier power 50–1000 watts

Dimensions (W×H×D) 26.7 × 113.7 × 38cm

Weight 81.65kg each

Price £30,998 per pair

Manufacturer Magico LLC magicoaudio.com

UK Distributor Magico LLC

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