

Q1







MAGICO "Q1"

2-way SPEAKER SYSTEM



MAGICO Q1 は革新的なスピーカーシステム "Q5" に続く Q シリーズファミリーの最もコンパクトな Mini モデルです。Q1 は内外ともに Q5/Q3 の血統を受け継いでいます。新しく、際立って高能率の 7 インチ口径ナノテックウーファードライバーと新しいトゥイーター MBe-1、Q デザインブラットフォームからなるキャビネット、点音源の理想形を実現した強固なスタンド、MAGICO の Mini スピーカーの進化形です。

Q1 は Q5/Q3 同様、完全に強化、ダンプ、ハードアノダイズ仕上げの #6061 アルミニウムと真鍮からなる完全密閉型エンクロージャを持ちます。また、ドライバーユニットからすべてがインハウスコントロールのもとにデザイン、世界でも初の Nano-Tec® カーボンファイバーを使用した振動板を装備する等、最先端技術で設計製造されています。Q1 の外観はシンプルでコンパクトですが、その重量は本体 27kg、スタンド 27kg で Q5/Q3 同様システム全体がまさにコンプレッションドライバーといえます。

Q1 はフリースタANDINGにより、空間に音像が浮かぶ様をもっとも享受し易いスピーカーシステムでもあります。連続的なカーブと広いバッフルにより物理的回折を極少にした結果、MBe-1 トゥイーターはそのバッフル効果によりベースとの一体化がなされ、まるでフルレンジのようなピンポイント音源を実現しています。また強固で重いスタンド / キャビネットを支えるスパイクフットなどは Q5/Q3 にも共通するものの一つです。

ドライバーユニット：

我々は世界で最も優れたドライバーユニットを開発、実装することを目指し、ここに新しいトゥイーター MBe-1 を完成させました。最新のブレイクアップモード制御されたベリリウム振動板、チタニウムより 2.5 倍軽量で 7 倍の強度を持つ適正にダンプされたベリリウムはトゥイーターの為の理想的なドーム素材です。トゥイーターハウジングは大きな Q のアルミニウムフェイスペレートと一体でリングングのないスムーズなミッドレンジとのつながりを得ています。結果、広い高域特性、低歪率、大きなパワーハンドリングを同時に達成させました。

ベースは MAGICO デザインの Nano-Tec® 7 インチドライバーで構成されます。この Nano-Tec® ドライバーはすべて MAGICO で設計、製造され、コーン構造にカーボン・ナノチューブを世界で最初に採用、三層振動板は Rohacell® フォームをコアとし、ナノテクカーボン繊維でサンドイッチしています。高効率な熱伝導を持つナノテクコーンのカーボン外皮は伸長力と弾性率双方に優れ、ハイカーボンスチールの伸長力 1.2GPa に比べ驚異的な伸長力 / 繊維引張強さ 63GPa (Fiber tensile strength) を持っています。この高強度のコーン素材はヘリコプターのローターブレードに採用されているフォームコンポジット素材と同等で、従来のチタンサンドイッチコーンの 300% の硬度で、従来の金属ダイヤフラムとは比較にならないスピード強度を持ちます。



その結果、外力に対する強度、セルフダンピング、リングの減衰、などスピーカーコーン紙に求められるすべての点で従来のコーン紙とは比較にならない高水準値を示します。また磁気回路は 75mm 口径のチタニウムボビンとアルミボイスコイル、ラジカルなネオジウム SD マグネットで構成されており、全ての可動範囲において完全なピストンモーションを実現しています。Q シリーズでは更にインダクタンスキャンセラースリーブを装備、0.15 インチ厚、4.9 インチ口径のカッパー / 銅スリーブがボイスコイルギャップに装備され、Q5/Q3 同様、ボイスコイル上での通常インダクタンスを一桁未満に低下させています。また、ハイパワーハンドリング能力も大幅にアップされ、ドライバーの非直線性と混変調歪みを減らします。これは MAGICO が達成可能な限り、技術コストに妥協のない開発、完成を求める姿勢から生まれました。

クロスオーバー：

MAGICO のスピーカーシステムの機械的電子的要素は全て最新の CAD ツールで設計、デザインされています。我々はその必要とするソフトウェアも自社で開発しています。MAGICO では電子制御同様のステップスロープを実現したフィルター回路の "Elliptical Symmetry Crossover" (ESXO) を開発しました。ESXO による 2 ウェイはまるで 1 本のフルレンジのようなサウンドイメージを実現し、ほかに類がありません。

Q シリーズのクロスオーバーパーツ / ネットワーク素材は現在最高の品質を誇る製品を採用しています。中でも特に抵抗 / レジスターは重要な要素です。レコード音楽は電流値が均一性なく絶えず変化している信号です。典型的なパッシブ抵抗 / レジスターでは相当の熱を抵抗そのものから発散します。そして抵抗の周囲でいろいろな電子パーツ、エレメントの温度を上昇させます。それはいろいろな信号レベル全体に抵抗値の変化として大きな影響を与えます。

この望まれない影響を払拭する為に、Q シリーズでは軍用や航空宇宙用に開発された厳しい高信頼性、高安定度を満たすバルクメタルフォイル抵抗 / Bulk Metal Foil resistor を世界でも初めてクロスオーバーネットワークの為に特別に設計、採用しました。この抵抗の低温係数 (TCR) は $\pm 2\text{ppm}/^\circ\text{C}$ 、超高精度で一般のどの抵抗よりも優れ、50 倍以上の長期負荷安定度を示します、結果、どのような周波数、電圧でも安定した抵抗値を保ち正確なクロスオーバー特性をキープします。貴方はその違いをはっきりと聴き取れるでしょう。MCap/MCap-Supreme/MCap-Supreme Silver/Gold コンデンサー、インダクション・フリーの無酸素銅フラットロールコイルをインダクタンスが効率的にキャンセルされるような配置で独創的に組み合わせています。またドライバー間のワイアリングは 6N 単銅線と、我々の哲学はこうしたパーツコストにおいて妥協しません。

オールメタルエンクロージャ & 専用スタンド：

MAGICO はスピーカーデザインで最先端の #6061 系アルミニウム合金をいち早く採用したメーカーです。我々は 1994 年に最初のアルミニウム合金エンクロージャを開発しました。強く、ダンプリ易く、適切にデザインされれば不活性で最高の明解さと力学をもってドライバー・オペレーションから色づけを排除できる理想的なエンクロージャ素材なのです。その効果、重要性は周波数帯域と各周波数でのレゾナンス減衰時間のプロットとして次頁にあります。いかにアルミニウム合金が優れた素材であるか、また Q シリーズに施された技術が高いかが明白です。エンクロージャの不要な共振による時間対減衰量 = エネルギーロス、この図はアルミニウム合金の優位性を示すだけではなく、手前に現れるプロット部分はすべてエネルギーロスなのです。このアルミニウム合金の採用は非常にハイコストですが、我々のデザイン哲学における重要な役割を演じています。Q シリーズエンクロージャは我々の新しいファクトリーで製造されています。アルミニウムと真鍮を素材に機械化された切削加工によって造られています。

楽器ボディのレゾナンス / 共振はその性質と品質を定義することにおいて不可欠な要素です。それに正反対なのがスピーカーに求められる要素です。MAGICO は多くの年月をエンクロージャの開発に費やしました。3 つの要素、スチフネス、マス、ダンブネスを従来のコストという壁を打ち破って達成しています。エンクロージャのフロントのみならずすべての面とエッジは研磨されて、美しいアノダイズ加工が施されています。このエンクロージャ全体は我々の過去から現在までの機能性、美的追求の結果としてのデザイン表現です。

MAGICO は Mini モデルもそうでしたが、スピーカースタンドの重要性を最も認識して専用スタンドを提供してきました。回析の影響、デザイン性、強靱な支えとして、空間にエンクロージャが浮かぶような形状、これらの条件を満たすべく、本体と同素材の #6061 アルミニウムで切削加工された Q1 のスタンドはスリムで美しく、類を見ない仕上げとなっています。

エンクロージャインサイド：

実際にアルミニウムエンクロージャとしての確実な設計に挑戦しています。各コンポーネント間での相互依存の加減において、すべての妥協を排して我々のエンジニア、機械工と技術者間の調整がなされています。エアプレーンの内部構造にも似たこのエンクロージャ内部のフレームは多くの高精度に切削加工されたパーツからなります。そのすべては一定のシーケンスとして整然と配列固定されています。一つの側面には数多くのスクリーホールがあります。バッフルのフィットを含めキャビネット全体で何十本もの止め具があります。0.002 インチを超える差異は寛容なスタックとしてエンクロージャが再分解されること無く組上げ完了するのに十分に貢献します。この緻密な作業で一本を組上げるのに約一週間が費やされます。この超重量級システムを支えるのは高耐腐食性に優れ、ステンレスの中でも最高硬度の SUS 440C ステンレス素材、放物線カーブの高さ調整可能なスパイクを装備しています。

周波数特性とその逸材性：

この強靱な素材の密閉箱はバスレフディップなく完全なフラットレスポンスを示します。強靱な硬質アルミニウムのキャビネットと、Nano-Tec® コーンによるダイレクトラジエターを配した Q シリーズは大型のコンプレッションドライバーにも似て、ボイスコイルに入力された信号を余すこと無く正確に伝達するでしょう。

ピアノッシモからフォルテッシモまで全帯域を偏った減衰を伴わず聴取者に運ぶのがスピーカーの理想です。ボリュームを絞っても帯域バランスが崩れず、ダイナミズムに優れたサウンドが実現、本当の意味でのカラーレーションレスを達成しました。



今まで我々は従来のスピーカーにおけるいくつかの妥協点を洗い直し、理想に向かって多くの技術革新を試みてきました。そして多くの制約や妥協はQシリーズで克服のキーストーンを示すことができたと考えています。

デザイナー Alon Wolf は生産実現可能性から市場実現可能性まで、どこのメーカーやユーザーにも妥協を強要はしませんが、自身四半世紀のスピーカー設計キャリアにおいて、このQシリーズは一つの頂を極めた造形物として自負しています。

最後にテクノロジーが音楽のサービスにおいて貢献できる方法を研究し続けることは我々だけでなく双方にとって幸福をもたらします。その技術、製品が適切に使用される時、その結果、ここではQ1ですが、音楽をこんなにリアルに楽しめる時間を与えてくれたことは開発した我々をさえ驚愕させました。



Nano-Tec® driver



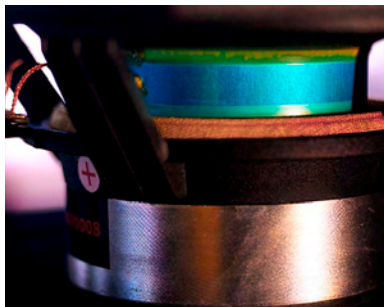
Nano-Tec® Carbon tubes



MBe-1 tweeter



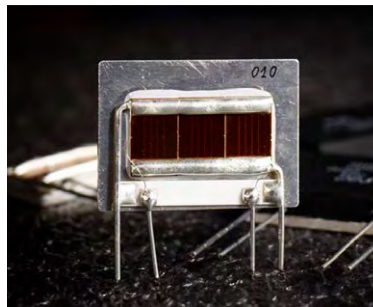
copper sleeve for low inductance



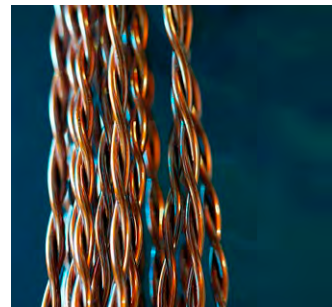
Titanium voicecoil bobbin



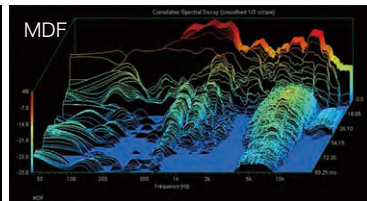
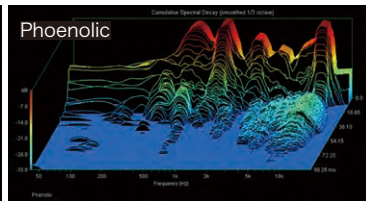
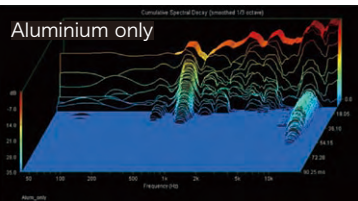
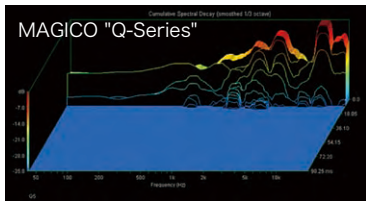
"ESXO" Network



Bulk Metal Foil resistor



6N solid-core copper wiring



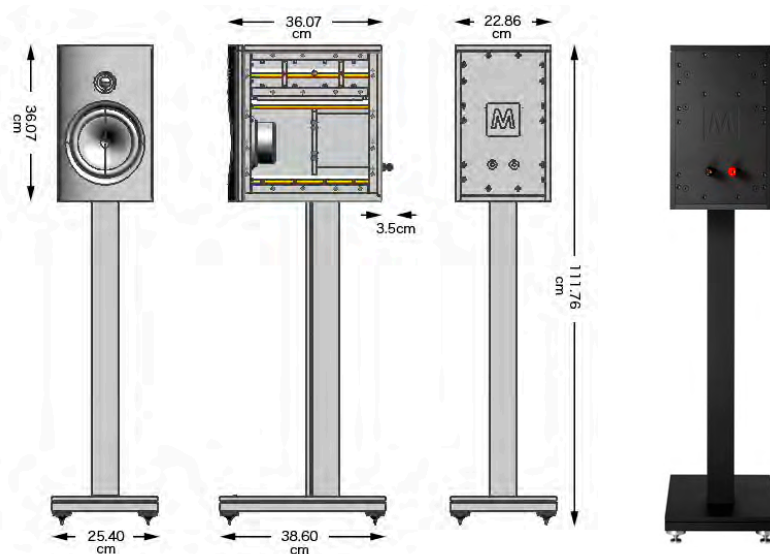
Cumulative spectral decay plots of different enclosures

製品仕様

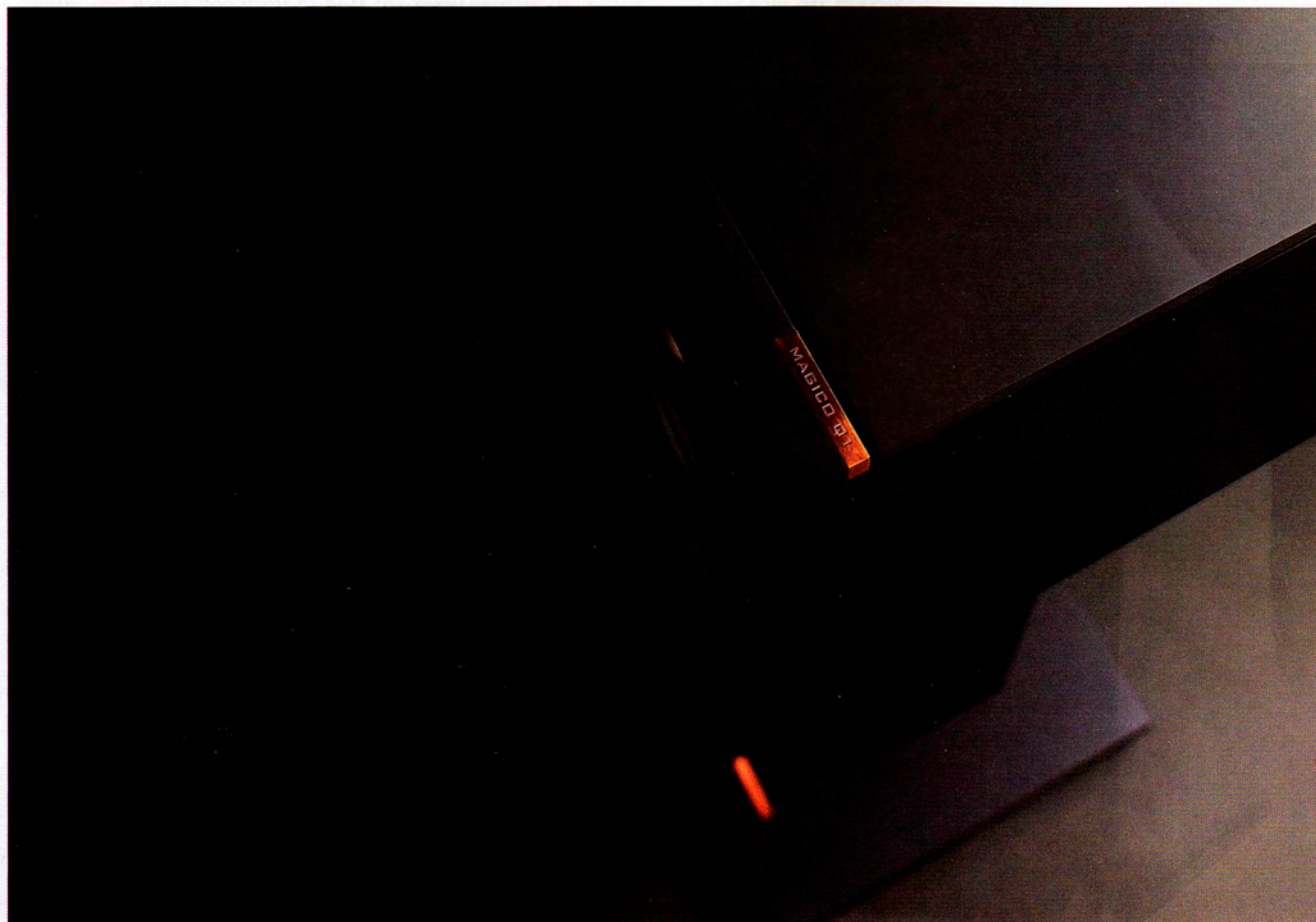
- 形式：2ウェイ2スピーカー / 密閉型
- スタンド：専用スタンド付属（ネジ止め）
- 使用ユニット：
 - 1 x 1 インチ ϕ MBe-1 Tweeter
 - 1 x 7 インチ ϕ Nano-Tec® Woofer
- 再生周波数帯域： $\pm 3\text{dB}$ 32Hz ~ 50kHz
- 推奨パワー：50W 以上
- 能率：86dB 1W/1m
- インピーダンス：5 Ω , 4 Ω minimum @146Hz
- 外形寸法：
 - 本体：228.6W $\times$ 360.7H $\times$ 360.7D mm (D:+35mm SP terminal)
 - Total-H：1117.0H (H：35mm spike 含む)
 - Base size：254.0W $\times$ 386.0D mm
- 重量：27kg (本体) 54kg (スタンド含む)
- スピーカー端子：1 結線ポスト
- スピーカー支持：
 - 440C ステンレス ラウンド / コーンスパイク付属 (3 or 4 ポイント支持)
- 仕上げ：ハードアノダイズブラック
- 価格：4,000,000 円 (2 本 1 組 税別、送料別途)



440C Stainless steel spikes



EQUIPMENT REPORT



Magico Q1 Loudspeaker

Road Trip

Jonathan Valin

I've never before written a review of a product I haven't auditioned in my home—and, trust me, don't plan to make a habit of it—but in August of last year I traveled to Berkeley, CA, and spent three solid days and nights listening to Magico's latest aluminum-enclosed loudspeaker, the \$25k stand-mounted Q1 mini-monitor in Magico's (sonically excellent) listening room. To be honest, though I'd been invited to audition the Q1s several months before, this was a trip I'd decided not to make. The way I saw it, having reviewed the Minis, the M5s, and my current references the Q5s over the past three or four years, I'd done enough Magico'ing for awhile. Plus I had my hands full with other loudspeaker-review projects, including the Scaena 3.4 that so impressed me at CES 2011 (reviewed elsewhere in this issue) and the Audio Physic Avantero that had done a bit of the same thing at this year's Munich show (review forthcoming). I simply didn't have the time or space to do another loudspeaker review.

However, when my colleague Jim Hannon raved about the Q1

in his California Audio Show report, I got curious. Like me Jim is an electrostat enthusiast—and for the very same reasons that I am. Up until recently there was simply nothing in a dynamic speaker that could match the transparency, disappearing act, and, with a first-rate source, realism (at least on acoustic music) of a really good electrostat or planar—nothing with multiple cones that could compare to the seamless presentation of a “boxless” Quad or CLX or Sound Lab or Maggie, or equal their transient speed and low-level resolution. True, as I've noted before, big multiway cone speakers own the bottom octaves and impact on the loud side of the dynamic spectrum; they also have more three-dimensional “body” than 'stats and planars and, sometimes, tighter image focus and wider soundstages. But, as I've also noted before, the price you pay for these things in octave-to-octave coherence, overall neutrality, low-level resolution (particularly at lower volume levels), room interaction, and transparency to sources can be steep—too steep, in fact, to interest a listener

EQUIPMENT REPORT - Magico Q1 Loudspeaker

like me (until the M5, followed abruptly by the Q5, came a'callin'). No bass is better than lousy bass in my book (yet to be published, BTW). And even if the bass proves passable, hearing different sounds in the low end, the midrange, and the treble from ill-matched drivers in a large noisy enclosure is simply an unacceptable trade-off for an extra octave of bottom end.

Indeed, until about two years ago the only dynamic speakers that passed muster in the Valin household were two-way mini-monitors. Why? Because they sounded more like single-driver electrostats and planars (augmented by some of the virtues of cones).

Of course, it's a lot easier to design and build a good two-way mini-monitor than it is to design and build a three-and-a-half or four-way or five-way behemoth. First, you only have to deal with two drivers and one crossover—not that this is a snap, but it is certainly simpler than wrestling with five or six drivers and multiple crossovers. Second, you only have to deal with a tiny box. Once again, engineering and constructing a really *good* tiny box isn't a walk in the park, but whatever the build-quality aimed for, it is substantially less difficult to make a small enclosure disappear into the soundfield than it is a large one.

All of which means that minis inherently have a leg up when it comes to driver coherence and enclosure inaudibility. In addition to this, they generally don't produce much (if any) low bass making them a lot less likely to excite those 60–80Hz room nodes that automatically remind you that you're listening to a woofer in a cabinet. Their much smaller footprints allow them to be placed farther away from sidewalls and backwalls, further reducing room reflections and allowing them to throw vast, minutely detailed soundstages into which they more or less disappear.

This said, many of the same things that a mini gets right it also gets wrong. First, there is the bass issue. Minis generally don't have any. From a room-interaction viewpoint, this is great (as noted)—from a musical one, not so much. Electrostatic Quads and CLXes and planar Maggie 3.7s may not plumb the depths below 45–55Hz, but they go down low enough to give you a fair semblance of the sound of bass fiddles, pianos, tubas, bassoons, etc. Oh, they may not reproduce the lowest pitches of these instruments (or all the power with which *fortes* are sounded), but they get the harmonics right and thanks to the way our brains and ears work we supply the missing fundamentals.

Many two-ways, on the other hand, are lucky to make it down to 80–90Hz. They often have a built-in bump at their LF cutoff, intended to give you the impression of deeper-going bass, but (minus the addition of a subwoofer, itself a very iffy proposition) a typical two-way mini-monitor cannot “imply” the bottom octaves or fill in the “power range” from 100Hz to 400Hz the way a good 'stat or planar can and does. As a result, two-ways tend to sound thin in balance, lacking the body and weight and power of the real thing. Of course, this lighter balance also makes them sound nimbler in the midrange and can foster the impression of great transparency and detail, in the same way that certain electronics that are depressed in the mid-to-upper bass and lower mids can sound more transparent and detailed.

Second, there is that soundstage. Because they only have two drivers, a (relatively) simple crossover, and tiny enclosures with much less surface area to reflect/diffract off (and much less mass to resonate), minis, as noted, tend to disappear into the soundfield more completely than any other kind of speaker,

including 'stats and planars. However, at the same time that their diminutive enclosures and simple complement of drivers allow them to disappear as sound sources, those selfsame diminutive enclosures and simple complements of drivers are also constantly reminding us of their presence in the thinness of timbre and lack of weight, body, and power that I've already mentioned, and the miniaturization of instruments and voices that I haven't. Detailed a mini's soundstage certainly is, often vast in width and depth and precise in focus. But realistic image height is almost always a problem. Now it's true that all loudspeakers have a “size” issue—I've never yet heard one capable of reproducing the sheer breadth (and enormous power) of, oh, a drumkit as it is heard in life, much less a symphony orchestra—but when it comes to lifelike imaging mini-monitors typically are worst-case scenarios. They tend to shrink instruments and voices to unusually small dimensions.

SPECS & PRICING

Type: Two-way, stand-mounted mini-monitor in a sealed enclosure

Drivers: One 1" beryllium tweeter, one 7" NanoTec mid/woof

Sensitivity: 86dB/1W/1m

Impedance: 5 ohms (4 ohms minimum)

Frequency response: 32Hz to 50kHz +/-3dB

Recommended amplifier power: 50W

Dimensions: 10" x 44" x 15.2" (on stands)

Weight: 120 lbs. (including stands)

Price: \$25,000 (including dedicated stands)

MAGICO, INC.

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JV'S REFERENCE SYSTEM

Loudspeakers: Magico Q5, TAD CR-1, MartinLogan CLX, Magnepan 1.7, Magnepan 3.7
Linestage preamps: Conrad-johnson GAT

Phonostage preamps: Audio Research Reference 2

Power amplifiers: Conrad-

johnson ART, Lamm ML2

Analog source: Walker Audio Proscenium Black Diamond Mk III record player, Da Vinci AAS Gabriel Mk II turntable with DaVinci Grand Reference Grandezza Mk II tonearm

Phono cartridges: Ortofon MC A90, Benz LP S-MR, Clearaudio Goldfinger Statement

Digital source: TBD

Cable and interconnect: Synergistic Research Galileo

Power Cords: Synergistic Research Tesla

Accessories: Synergistic ART system, Shakti Hallographs (6), A/V Room Services Metu panels and traps, ASC Tube Traps, Critical Mass MAXXUM equipment and amp stands, Symposium Isis and Ultra equipment platforms, Symposium Rollerblocks and Fat Padz, Walker Prologue Reference equipment and amp stands, Synergistic Research Tesla power conditioner, Walker Valid Points and Resonance Control discs, Clearaudio Double Matrix SE record cleaner, HiFi-Tuning silver/gold fuses

EQUIPMENT REPORT - Magico Q1 Loudspeaker

Unfortunately, image size isn't the only thing they shrink. A single 5-7" mid/woofer in a tiny box simply can't move the amount of air that a big panel or several large woofers in a well-engineered cabinet can move. The result isn't just a lack of low bass; it is an overall lack of dynamic range and impact on *sforzandos* and *fortissimos* and a definite SPL limit at the loud end of the loudness scale. As is the case with 'stats and planars, this dynamic shortfall on the very loud side is compensated for by superior speed of attack and greater delicacy of timbre and texture on the very soft one. Nonetheless, dynamic-range and ultimate-loudness limits are the banes of most minis.

In small rooms on a large slice of acoustic music, mini-monitors can (minus image size) sound very persuasively realistic—and very transparent to sources. But they won't do the big orchestral stuff—or any power rock—with the verisimilitude of larger dynamic, planar, or electrostatic speakers. It is just the price you pay for what mini-monitors do well.

At least, this was the scenario *chez* Valin up until the arrival of the Magico Mini and Mini II about four years ago. Thanks to the superior engineering of their cabinets, drivers, crossover, and heroic aluminum-and-birch stands, the Minis (which were rather misleadingly named, in that they were much much larger and more substantial than typical two-ways) began to turn the ship around.

The Minis and Mini IIs had all the virtues of two-ways—the neutrality, the low-level resolution, the coherence, the vast soundstage, the incomparable disappearing act—but they also had three things that other minis did not (or at least not in this abundance): bass, dynamics, and image size. Now when I say the Minis had bass, I don't mean they plumbed the depths the way the M5s or Q5s do. But their carbon-fiber drivers, massive neodymium magnets, unusually well-engineered spiders and suspensions, and sealed birch-ply-and-T6-aluminum cabinets allowed them to play down into the upper-forties flatly and to roll off below that at 12dB/octave, giving them "usable" response into the mid-to-low forties and upper thirties. Many 'stats, planars, and smaller three-way dynamic speakers would've been proud to own the Mini IIs' bass, for it was not only extended, it was also discriminating—a far cry from the humped-up bass of earlier-gen two-ways.

With this increase in bass extension and resolution came concomitant increases in neutrality through the power region, volume limits, and overall dynamic impact. The Mini IIs could play louder and with greater power than other minis I'd owned or reviewed. And this expansion of dynamic range made them more suitable on a larger variety of music, although they were still far short of the ideal speakers for certain kinds of rock-and-roll, electronica, and very-large-scale classical.

Whether because of their sleek tapered enclosures, their superb stands (which lifted them further from the floor than typical mini stands), their new-tech drivers and crossovers, or the combination of the three, the Minis and Mini IIs were also not "miniaturizing" loudspeakers. They managed to produce closer-to-life-sized voices, violins, even pianos, and they did so without the laser-cut focus of most two-ways. They were larger and more naturally expansive-sounding, without any loss of stage width or depth or inner detail.

As good as the Minis were—and they were the speakers that put Magico on the high-end map—they weren't perfect. Their

tweeter was rather bright and although that tweeter's out-of-passband breakup modes (and those of the mid/woof) were greatly reduced in the Mini II version of the speaker, the tweet was still vaguely audible on-axis (much less so off-axis). There was also a graininess—not dissimilar to the brushed-snare noise in all but the latest-gen Magneplanars—throughout the Minis' soundfield that I assumed came with the cone drivers (particularly the ring-radiator tweeter). In addition, the Minis were not easy to drive. Like all Magico speakers they were a difficult low-sensitivity load that necessitated the use of the best and most powerful amplifiers, tube and solid-state, to get the best sound.

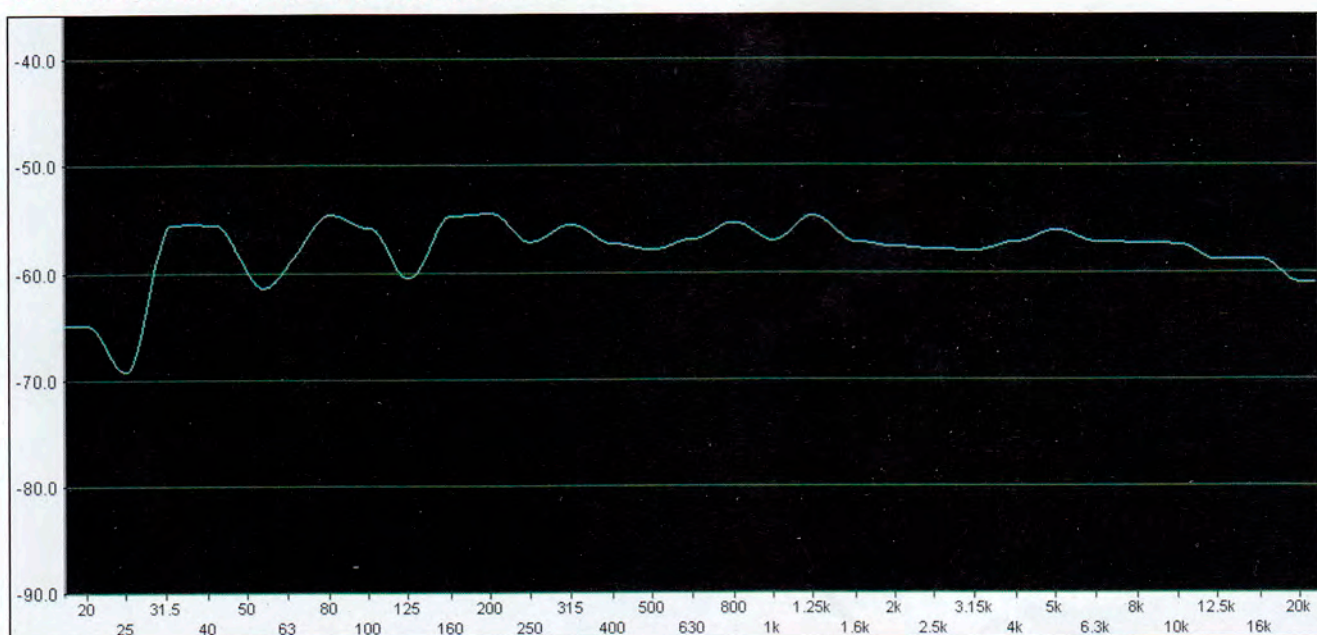
Replacing a classic is never an easy task, but Magico has made a habit of trumping its own best efforts (often with disconcerting rapidity, as in the cases of the Mini I and Mini II and the M5 and the Q5). So when Wolf and Co. showed a mockup of the aluminum-bodied, beryllium-tweetered Q1 at last year's CES, I was sure that the new speaker would be better. What I didn't guess was how much better.

As I started off by saying, it took Jim Hannon's rave write-up to get me interested enough to toy with the idea of paying Magico a visit after all. As was the case with the M5/Q5, I was promised a side-by-side comparison of the Mini II and the Q1, using the same electronics (Soulution 700 monoblocks and 720 linestage, with which I am very familiar) and, to further entice me, using the same *analog* sources—a Clearaudio Innovation Wood turntable, a Graham Phantom II Supreme tonearm, and my current reference mc, the Clearaudio Goldfinger Statement, plus a variety of phonostages from Aesthetix, Soulution, and (the surprise of the bunch) The Tube Preamp from Dan Schmalte of The Tape Project and Bottlehead Electronics. I was told I could bring as many of my own LPs as I could fit in a carry-on suitcase and listen at length to recordings I know by heart through electronics that were until lately my references. (Magico had never showed its gear with vinyl prior to this past Munich High-End Show. Now I'd be surprised if it didn't. Alon Wolf is nothing if not a true believer and once he finds a "better thing" he goes all out to find the best of breed. The wonder, to me, is that it took him this long to rediscover the joys of LPs, especially since he has thousands of albums in his home and in his showroom.)

Before I cut to the chase, a few words about me and Magico. There are folks out there who seem to think that I *only* like Magico loudspeakers (and I advise them to read my reviews of the Quad 2905s, the MartinLogan CLXes, the Magneplanar 1.7s and 3.7s, the Morel Fat Ladies, the TAD CR-1 Compact Monitors, the Nola Baby Grands, the MBL X-Tremes, etc.—and also to take a close look at my RMAF and CES show reports). Though I confess to feeling odd about reporting on yet another honest-to-goodness great loudspeaker from this little Berkeley-based company so soon after reviewing its great Q5, what should I do in the face of genuine sonic distinction? Keep mum? Pass on the opportunity? Wait till next time? Before I read Jim's CAS report, all of these thoughts went through my head. But after reading it, it came to me that my primary job at TAS is to report on cutting-edge excellence, whatever its source. And while Magico is certainly not the only speaker manufacturer at the pointy end of today's technology, it is one of the foremost. Ergo, the trip to California and this road-trip "review."

EQUIPMENT REPORT - Magico Q1 Loudspeaker

Q1 Quasi-Anechoic Frequency Response (Courtesy of Magico)



So, to get the sticky part over with, let me just outright say that the Magico Q1 is the highest-fidelity stand-mount two-way I've yet heard. It is not just a little better than its predecessor, the Mini II, it is a whole lot better in every sonic regard. Switching from the Mini II to the Q1 (on the same sources with the same electronics) is almost exactly like switching from an LS3/5a to a Quad 57—or for that matter from an M5 to a Q5, only in a couple regards the Q1 is better than the Q5.

I suppose the first thing that stands out about the Q1 is its much lower noise floor—the virtual elimination of the upper-midrange/treble hash and grain of the Mini II. As was the case with the Q5 vis-à-vis the M5, a good deal of this lower distortion has to be attributed to the Q1's superior, elaborately braced-and-damped aluminum enclosure, which, unlike the Mini II's birchply-and-aluminum enclosure, is not storing energy and then playing it back ever-so-faintly in a time-smeared fashion.

But with the Q1 the improvement in the cabinet is only half the story. The other half is the improvement in the blend of its 1" beryllium dome tweeter and its 7" NanoTec carbon-fiber-Rohacell-sandwich mid/bass. It is my understanding that, since the launch of the Q5, Magico has been "working on" its beryllium tweeter and, one assumes, on the crossover between the tweeter and the other drivers. I don't know precisely what has changed here, but I can tell you for a fact that this is the most seamless blend of a beryllium tweeter and a cone mid/woof I've heard. As a result, the Q1 comes closer to sounding like a single-driver loudspeaker (on-axis) than any loudspeaker Magico has yet made. The effect is magical—like getting a Quad or a CLX (with better bass and large-scale dynamics than either) in a 9" by 14.2" by 14.2" package. Where the Q5 comes *very* close to this same magical seamlessness (when listened to slightly off-axis), I'm not sure that it fully matches that of the Q1 in the upper-mids and treble, where the little speaker isn't "virtually" like a 'stat but is "fully" so. In the treble, its low-level resolution is at least as good (if not better) than that of the Q5. In fact, the only area in the

upper-mids and highs where the Q5 seemingly exceeds the Q1 is transient speed—and that may be because its slightly "rougher-sounding" (on-axis) beryllium tweeter is goosing up attacks. In any event, this is one very neutral, very detailed, very well-integrated, very transparent loudspeaker that not only taught me a few new things about recordings I know well but also taught me a few new things about the Soudation electronics it was being used with (for which, see below).

**The Q1 is the highest-fidelity,
fullest-range, most transparent-to-
sources two-way I've come across
(and I've heard a few)**

Let's turn to the bass and dynamics, as those are the *bêtes noires* of minis. Magico claims that the Q1 is capable of 32Hz extension +/-3dB and has the measurements to prove it (see the printout at the top of this page).

While I'm not sure that the Q1 was going quite this low this flatly when I heard it, it was certainly going lower than any other two-way I've auditioned—more-or-less flat at least into the upper 30s. In stand-mounts only the TAD CR-1 equals it in bottom-end extension (and exceeds it in bottom-end clout)—and the TAD CR-1 is a \$40k three-way with a separate 8" woofer.

Once again I'm not sure how Magico achieved this legerdemain from such a small box and driver, but musical notes that would've been veiled or absent on the Mini II—such as the capering contrabassoon and doublebasses in the Overture of Stravinsky's Symphony in Three Movements [Decca], the thunderous pedal point of the piano in Paul Dessau's First Sonata [Nova], and the sharp cracks of the drumkit in Reiner Bredemeyer's *Schlagstück* 5

[Nova]—are here reproduced almost in their entirety.

I say “almost” because while the Q1 can supply a low-end clarity and extension that puts other minis to shame, it cannot supply all the power that accompanies these deep notes (where the much larger Q5 can and does). You simply don’t get the room-shaking power and utterly clear pitch-definition of Tina’s rumbling bass intro on “Take Me To The River” through the Q1s the way you do with the bigger Q5s. Let’s face it: There is a limit to the amount of air a 7” driver can move, although I think you would be surprised, as I was, by how close the Q1 comes to reproducing lifelike bass-range dynamics, particularly in the mid-to-upper bass.

Above the bass range, the Q1 is a dynamic dynamo (as was the Mini II, to be fair), although because of the unusually smooth blend of tweet and mid/woof (and the lower noise of its enclosure) that dynamism has a less roughed-up, lower distortion, more civilized feel. The new Q is also—with the right source components—a paragon of transparency and resolution, reproducing subtleties like Joan Baez’s and Melody Gardot’s tremolo with the clarity, delicacy of timbre and texture, dynamic range, and sheer “in-the-room-with-you” realism of an electrostat, albeit with more body and dimensionality than a ’stat.

Naturally, the Q1’s soundstaging is vast (when the recording permits) and the speaker disappears into the soundfield—as all minis do—so completely that you have little-to-no sense of the sound being projected from or painted on drivers and faceplates and cabinets. On top of this, the Q1 (like the Mini II before it) does not miniaturize instruments, although it does focus them a bit more crisply than the Mini did. Thus something like the concert grand piano in the aforementioned Dessau LP has the height, volume, and most of the power of a piano reproduced by a much larger multiway loudspeaker.

Now let me say something about this speaker’s transparency to sources. With a couple of the phonostages we used, the Q1s had a sound that I associate with the Soultion 700 monoblock amps and MIT cables—very clear, neutral, and fast on transients but just the slightest bit “overcontrolled,” as if some kind of sonic brake were being applied to the duration of notes after the sounding of the starting transient. This sense of overcontrol or restraint makes music sound slightly less freed-up, slightly less vital and lively than it does through a select few other components. Frankly, I thought this mechanization was due to the very elaborate feedback circuit in the Soultion 700 and to the networking of the MIT cable and interconnect. But, as usual, I was wrong.

When we stuck in a third phonostage at the end of the second day of listening,

the Q1s sprang into even more convincing life—transparency, resolution, delicacy of tone and texture, see-through clarity, and above all liveliness markedly increased and the vague sense of mechanization vanished. Clearly it was not the amps or the cables that were causing the problem, such as it was (and you’d have to be familiar with the LPs and certain other very high-quality electronics to be aware of it); it was the other two phonostages. When a loudspeaker can discern this sort of thing, while also reproducing instruments and vocalists with astonishing realism, you have a transducer that will please “fidelity to mastertapes” listeners and “absolute sound” ones equally. And that, folks, is quite an accomplishment.

It goes without saying that I highly recommend the Magico Q1 to all but the hardest of hard-rock music lovers. It is, as I said, the highest-fidelity, fullest-range, most transparent-to-sources two-way I’ve come across (and I’ve heard a few). It is also, in my experience, one of the two finest speakers—the other being my beloved Q5s—that Magico has yet come up with. (I haven’t yet had enough listening experience with the Q3 to include it in the charmed circle, although by all reports it too may very well belong among the Magico elect.) For listeners in small-to-medium-sized rooms who can’t house (or won’t stand for) big boxes or large panels that clutter up the décor, or for classical/jazz/acoustic-pop music lovers in any size room who want very close to the ultimate in transparency, resolution, and refinement at much less than a Q3/Q5 price, the Q1 would definitely be the Magico ticket I’d ride. **tas**

