hi-fi news YEARBOOK 26 OUTSTANDING PRODUCT

Three-way isodynamic/ribbon floorstanding loudspeaker
Made by: Magnepan Inc., White Bear Lake, MN, USA
Supplied by: Decent Audio, Stockton-on-Tees
Telephone: 05602 054669
Web: www.magnepan.com; www.decentaudio.co.uk
Price: £7995

AUDIO FILE

Magnepan MG2.7i

Fans of the largescale sound developed by Magnepan speakers won't mind that the MG2.7i is both big and somewhat bland-looking. Planar magnetic models, the American brand's 'Maggies' promise a musical quality somewhere between the openness of an electrostatic and the punch of a dynamic driver design.

Hidden behind the speaker's acoustically transparent cloth, and handling bass/mid frequencies, is what Magnepan calls a 'quasi-ribbon' – an isodynamic panel featuring ultra-thin aluminium foil traces bonded to a 28x145cm Mylar diaphragm. These conductors are motivated by vertical rows of bar magnets mounted behind.

High frequencies are delivered by a magnetically suspended, pleated thin-film aluminium strip. Called a 'true ribbon' by Magnepan, this runs a little over half of the speaker's height and is positioned to one side, so the MG2.7i is sold in mirror-imaged pairs. A 2ohm series resistor adds to the low ~2ohm resistance of the ribbon to ensure amps are not faced with an impossible load.

'A detailed wall of sound that's almost IMAX-like in its scale'

While the tweeter nominally operates above 3.3kHz, it also 'plays down' to 400Hz (similarly, Magnepan says the midrange section of its panel extends to 10kHz). Beneath the MG2.7i's speaker inputs are terminals linked by jumper bars – these can be replaced with supplied 1ohm resistors to alter its tonal balance, perhaps in a bright-sounding or highly reflective environment.

VANISHING ACT

These dipolar, planar-magnetic designs have a sound quite unlike a conventional moving-coil 'box' speaker. Cabinet colouration is not a concern because there is effectively no cabinet (although the panels themselves have their own resonances). Once setup, and adhering to guidelines calling for a minimum of three feet from rear walls and listening on-axis, music from the MG2.7is really did seem to arrive out of nowhere.

For some, excellent soundstaging will more than compensate for the speaker's lack of out-and-out LF extension and slam. And besides, while perhaps unsuited to certain genres (drum 'n' bass, hip-hop, *etc*) it impresses with its work in the wider bass range. Bass guitar lines are well-defined and detailed, as shown by the up-tempo rock of 'Black Country' from Black Country Communion [J&R Adventures].

Shelby Lynne's *Just A Little Lovin'* album [Lost Highway] brought high-frequency sparkle and a sense of space. The MG2.7i seemed an ideal match for these exceptional recordings, tiny percussion details enunciated by a well-extended but always smooth treble – this smoothness extending into the vocals, which sounded sublime.

The speakers crafted the prog metal of Opeth's 'Windowpane' [Music For Nations] as a detailed wall of sound, almost IMAX-like in its scale and not in the least bit muddied as its guitars, mellotron and keyboards ebbed and flowed. Sounding bigger still were Henry Jackman's themes for *Kong: Skull Island* [WaterTower Music]. 'Kong The Destroyer' moved from low-strings and brass to softer woodwind motifs, notes decaying beautifully. In 'The Battle Of Skull Island', the roar of the horns was a standout, as was the handling of its fast, snappy string rhythms. With music such as this, and given the breathing room to succeed, this mid-tier 'Maggie' is a sonic star.

VERDICT

Not a speaker for hi-fi fashionistas, but the MG2.7i offers a gloriously cohesive and refined performance on a grand scale. The price lends it bargain status, too.



RIGHT: Leaning back slightly, and stabilised by two long flat feet, the MG2.7i includes a 1m-tall ribbon tweeter and 28x145cm Mylar panel with conductive mid/bass foil traces. This iconic panel speaker design is available with a natural oak, dark cherry or black frame (or with silver, black, or gold aluminium trims), while the panels and ribbon are protected by a choice of cherry/off-white, grey or black fabric 'sock' grille

HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Sensitivity (SPL/1m/2.83V – 1kHz/Mean/IEC)	86.5dB / 83.8dB / 81.7dB
Impedance modulus: minimum & maximum (20Hz–20kHz)	3.05ohm @ 3.8kHz 4.9ohm @ 480Hz
Impedance phase: minimum & maximum (20Hz–20kHz)	–15° @ 1.6kHz +16° @ 20kHz
Pair matching/Resp. error (200Hz–20kHz)	12dB / ±5.3dB/±10.1dB
LF/HF extension (–6dB ref 200Hz/10kHz)	48Hz / 49.1kHz/45.0kHz
THD 100Hz/1kHz/10kHz (for 90dB SPL/1m)	0.55% / 0.15% / 1.2%
Dimensions (HWD, inc. feet) / **Weight** (each)	1820x560x460mm / 30kg