

TEST



September 2011

Magnet

Quantum 803

“Sophisticated sound, elegant visual appearance, the fine rendition of effects, superb spatial elements - hardly any other speaker in this price class is able to produce such precise results!”

- + Very good dynamics
- + Authentic overall reproduction
- + Impeccable spatiality
- + Excellent workmanship
- + Fair price



Magnat

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"The new Magnat Quantum 803 visually underlines Magnat's claim for being a fore-runner amongst the premium league of speakers: The two-way shelf speaker looks particularly elegant in its palisander finish. With an RMS rating of 120 and a maximum load capacity of 200 watts, it is even suitable for use as a "solo entertainer" in medium-sized listening rooms. We examined what the Quantum 803 is truly capable of in our test.

Workmanship and technology

The smart, aesthetically pleasing speaker weighs in at 10 kg, measures 185 x 372 x 315 mm (W x H x D), appeals with its flawless surface quality (the high-gloss finish is deep and elegant) and features some very nice details. The bass reflex port is fitted precisely and secured in place with five screws. The circular plateau located underneath the bass reflex port, on which the speaker screw terminals are accommodated, is also screwed securely in place. The terminals themselves are of a high quality and are easy to access. The flexible bridges, which are removed for bi-amping operation, are very practical and are easier to handle than static metal bridges. The chassis units on the front are cleanly integrated into the baffle. The front cover consists of fabric that doesn't crease. The frame is extremely solid and provided with an aluminium border - the use of real metal has a positive impact (the fact that real metal has been used is evident from the coolness it imparts when touched, as well as the weight of the front grille). The entire construction is held magnetically to the baffle and it makes a very solid impression. Under the speaker is a solid base, which is normally only seen on high quality floorstanding speakers. This provides a very elegant overall impression, while also ensuring the speaker has a secure purchase on almost any surface.

The speaker cabinet houses a solidly constructed crossover, as well as plenty of insulating material. The housing has been manufactured from thick MDF and additional struts ensure rigidity under all operating conditions. The speaker chassis are additionally supported from the rear to reduce natural resonances. The bass-midrange speaker chassis (170 mm) makes a very good impression when removed and it exhibits some special features. The basket has been flow-optimised and is non-magnetic thanks to the use of die-cast aluminium as the material. This reduces unwanted air turbulence and resonance. The cone consists of a ceramic/aluminium mixture and the fmax tweeter ensures a broader upper frequency range, which means that even BD audio discs and SACDs can be rendered accurately. The powerful magnet system used by the tweeter is shielded and has been optimised to prevent distortion. The fabric cone of the 25 mm component is coated with ceramic particles. The front ventilation of the dome minimises distortion at high levels - we can confirm this as the Quantum 803 plays freely at extremely high volumes and doesn't produce any discernible formation of acoustic artefacts in the treble range. The shelf speaker has a maximum load capacity of 200 watts, while its RMS rating is 120 watts. Playback of 30 to 60,000 Hz can be realised thanks to the high quality tweeter. The speaker, which is designed for impedance ratings of 4 to 8 ohms and has a sensitivity level of 91 dB according to the manufacturer, is available in a piano black, piano white and piano palisander finish (which is the finish used for our test speakers).

Sound

Magnat's Quantum 803 is perfect for users that are looking for a neutral, dynamic and excellent sound in this price range. The shelf speaker makes an impeccable impression with Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 9: The grand dynamic sections are handled exquisitely and even small dynamic nuances are reproduced faithfully. The instruments are rendered exquisitely for such a compact and inexpensive speaker - the strings in particular appear fluid and are portrayed with verve. The treble range is compelling in terms of a spatial perspective; the result is transparent, but never aggressive or pointed. Anyone wanting to exaggerate the level and extract absolutely everything from the Quantum 803 will have to expect a slight shrill undertone. However, in practice, hardly any users will transgress this threshold. The detailing of the orchestra is very good. The Quantum 803 even carves out minute details in rear acoustic levels, a virtue that is anything but natural for a speaker in the 500 EUR price range. The rear bass reflex port means the beautiful sound transducer shouldn't be set up too close to a wall. A minimum distance of around 1 metre is recommended here. Otherwise the housing and bass reflex port are designed in a structurally open manner. No disturbing flow noise is heard even when the listener approaches close to the speaker. No rattles or other such noises which are created by rigidity problems of the speaker are discernible thanks to the elaborately strutted housing. The sound emanates from the speakers very smoothly - the Quantum 803 units can also be positioned a considerable distance from one other, as they exhibit properties that would otherwise be expected of larger floor standing speakers. It is important, however, to angle the speakers accordingly because the sound radiation angle is not huge. On the other hand this promotes a precise sound pattern for analytical requirements.

What is average, however, despite the bass reflex principle, is the degree of efficiency produced. The Quantum 803 cannot quite get to grips with entry-level stereo amplifiers or older systems that are no longer technically "fit". This requires a bit of an investment in a reasonable stereo system from the start.

The Quantum 803 is highly recommended for fans of classical music - this is reflected in Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy's concert overture "The Hebrides" (Opus 26): Fine, fluid, holistic - these are the attributes that can be used to describe the playback quality of this piece, which is difficult to reproduce accurately. The Quantum 803 embraces the orchestral composition in a sensitive and delicate manner, accompanies instrumental solos well and is able to differentiate perfectly between different musical levels. Dynamic differences between the instrument in the foreground and instruments in the background are clear but never exaggerated.

The excellent vocal qualities of the Quantum 803 are demonstrated with Andrea Bocelli's "L'Attesa". Sensitive and fine with a very nice spatial effect - this is how the voice of the gifted singer flows through the auditorium. The instruments mix together exquisitely in the overall sound pattern and are well balanced, meaning that the charisma of the singer's voice is not disrupted or restricted. Even small changes in tempo or new elements in the background can be identified reliably.

A change of music style - the CD "RMX - Superstars remixed by Superstars, curated by Blank&Jones" includes the Goldfrapp remix of Depeche Mode's hit "Halo" - with a sombre ambience and suspenseful, almost menacing, extremely imposing structure, it is not an easy piece for the Magnat speakers. But their level of finesse, coupled with a precise bass level, ensure an extremely successful, emotionally intense reproduction. A beautiful, authentic degree of spatiality is generated in the treble range, while the level of sound fidelity can only be praised here. The build-up at the beginning of the classic track "Lucifer" by the Alan Parsons Project is reproduced by the Quantum, as expected, in a delicate and poised manner. The rhythm of the excellent synthesizer is generated faithfully with a fine sense of spatiality. Huge pressure levels and fireworks are not its thing - the Quantum 803 is aimed at a more mature audience that appreciates a complete, refined sound and likes listening to music in greater detail. It also harmonises excellently with expensive stereo amplifiers, as it pays an exquisite amount of attention to detail for this price class. The excellent degree of precision in the bass range also proves advantageous with Duran Duran's hit "A View To A Kill". This track was used as the theme song to the James Bond 007 film "A View To A Kill" in 1986, and it is still a fascinating piece today thanks to the mixture of emotions and 'cool vibe'. Admittedly the voice is somewhat too shrill at a high level - but this is only due to the average recording. The very good bass response and excellent emanation of sound from the speaker, however, is credit to the Quantum 803.

In the album version of the trance classic "Insomnia" (The Best Of Faithless) the Magnat speaker generates a significant degree of finesse at the beginning of the track, as is the case with other test pieces, and, when an effect is introduced, it is incorporated quickly. The fine rendition of effects and spatial accompanying elements is superb - hardly any other speaker in this price class is able to produce such precise results.

This demonstrates that Magnat has undergone a complete change in direction - we remember previous constructions from 12 and 13 years ago - a time when Magnat speakers sounded loud and crude - and looked as such. Today, however, we are confronted by a finely composed, high-tech sound transducer which is thoroughly compelling thanks to a sophisticated, subtle sound and elegant workmanship which visually reflects these attributes.

Conclusion

Magnat's Quantum 803 is enthralling thanks to its premium workmanship, an excellent price/performance ratio, a fine, yet dynamic sound and excellent spatial presentation. Huge pressure levels and elaborate impulses are not salient features of the neutral and authentic-sounding speaker - instead it flaunts other, more sophisticated attributes, which include an excellent bass level and transparent treble range. Overall, the Quantum 803 is recommended for lovers of a clean, fine, well structured sound - a blend that is rarely found in this price class."