

Magical Magico S5 Re-invented

FIVE YEARS ON, MAGICO HAS RELEASED A MkII VERSION OF THE S5.
MARTIN COLLOMS REPORTS

Some Magico loudspeaker systems have not been to everyone's taste, partly because most of the models intentionally have very little sonic flavour. They can sound colourless, even dull, and lacking in overt dynamic expression. This can make them awkward to install in a system, and they will ruthlessly show up any unwanted 'character' in other audio components.

Conversely, many more tonally colourful loudspeakers may greatly benefit from careful timbre balancing, for both the room and the matching ancillaries, to achieve a reasonably neutral and musically well balanced result. However, having achieved an optimised combination it can subsequently prove awkward to substitute other components, as all such substitutions need to be in character and musically consonant with that particular system voicing.

Looking back at my experiences with Magico in previous years I feel that my initial experiences at UK shows may have been somewhat blunted by the frequent use of Devialet electronics, as the presentations had relatively little impact on me. My first formal review encounter, with the classic *Q1* compact stand-mount, was also flawed, due to a partial failure on my part to recognise just how neutral it was (*HIFICRITIC Vol6 No3*). With hindsight, this highly transparent reproducer had ruthlessly exposed the varied timbres and character traits of the components in my reference system, but I had tended to blame the loudspeaker for some of what I heard. The review was by no means negative, but I knew later that I had missed some of the particular aspects of sound quality which had been successfully addressed by the designers. And I also felt that driving my 25 by 35 foot open plan lounge was a step too far for these small speakers, particularly when following the then resident floorstanding Wilson Audio *Sophias*.

I was game for a bigger Magico better suited to my room, even though the larger *S5* had already been around for some two years. With the *S5* that

contentious system matching aspect reappeared, and once again the integrity of our reference audio system came under scrutiny. The great transparency and low colouration inherent in the *S5* was uncovering previously unidentified and highly subtle characteristics in every audio component, including cables, anti-vibration supports and equipment frames. The reference audio system was fully broken down and painstakingly rebuilt, these travails finally leading to a markedly better understanding of the *S5*, and ultimately led to a highly positive review outcome (*HIFICRITIC Vol7 No4*). Some months later I tried the *S3* (*Vol8 No3*), a downsized *S5* (which I hoped might become a reference), but its alloy outrigger support bars exhibited some resonant behaviour on my floor, adding undue mid-bass richness. (I note that since my review the *S3* has been found to perform well on more conventional floor constructions so it could be worth another look.)

In any case the *S5* review was more than sufficiently positive to acquire a pair, though by the time these arrived another 6 months had passed, subsequently followed by extended running in (an intrinsic aspect of the marque). I consider that Magico's *S5* has qualities well beyond its price, including huge power handling (over 500W peak programme), accurate neutrality, exceptional timing, plus great focus and clarity, a combination that is particularly useful for an audio critic. Running in brought still greater clarity, integration and dynamic resolution, allowing me to take the Naim *Statement* amplifier close to its sound quality and power limit. Auditioning this truly great combination was also shared with many colleagues.

In December 2015, Magico announced the *S5 MkII*. This did involve a substantial price rise (£42,000/pair compared to the £30,000 of the original), but based on past experience I nevertheless requested a pair, anticipating delivery in early Feb 2016. (They finally arrived in May!)

Once again the long process of running in began, and although publication might have been possible