

HIFI-STARS

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Special Print Manger MSSp1



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Loudspeaker Manger MSSp1

Coming Full Circle

More than 30 years ago, in 1981, a small group of hi-fi insiders met in a little hotel amidst of vineyards in the Franconian Spessart. A certain Klaus Renner was the initiator of the meeting during which he presented the concept of his new magazin “Das Ohr”, which for many years would become the “high-end bible” per se – like nothing comparable. But this wasn’t the only novelty – on that winter day the participants amicably developed a completely new trade fair concept. Since the existing German trade fair industry did not offer any opportunity for presenting high-quality hi-fi equipment in an optimal way, they had to strike a new path: An independent trade show – the “High End” – was born. In 1982 the 32nd Internationale Funkausstellung was held in Berlin, but even as one of the biggest exhibitions of its kind it didn’t offer any possibility for adequately showing and above all presenting high-quality hi-fi components in the large and loud fair halls. An exhibition which required a quiet environment for verifying minute tonal differences needed different preconditions.

So in 1982 the “High End” nominally joined the Düsseldorf “HiFi-Video” fair but the optimum product presentation of the first twelve manufacturers participating in the actual High End fair took place in the conference rooms of the Düsseldorf Interconti Hotel. This location offered the right living room environment, quietness, and relaxed atmosphere needed to convey the exciting world of beautiful sounds to the visitors. Everything was offered – except for sufficient space ...

High End Mecca

One year later things should dramatically change. In search of a central location in the middle of Germany the organizers choose Gravenbruch close to Frankfurt/Main where the big and posh “Kempinski” Hotel became the hip mecca for “High End” fans. Almost all exhibitors had the same acoustic preconditions in the form of identically equipped hotel rooms without superfluous furniture. This made it easy for visitors to directly compare the different sound systems with each

other and made it difficult for the sales staff to excuse poor audio performance by blaming bad room acoustics ... “And why does it sound so much better in other rooms?” 180 exhibitor rooms on three identically laid-out floors were confusing even longtime visitors and the regular extreme summer heat in August made things worse. The “forefather” Klaus Renner died much too early on July 19th 1991 at the age of 35 and from then on watched the rapid growth of the merely exploding High End fair from a box seat up in heaven. When after 20 years the available exhibition space in the “Hotel Kempinski” didn’t suffice anymore, although even the hotel corridors had been used, the fair had to move again. Since 2004 the High End is taking place in early May in the Munich M.O.C and it has blossomed into one of the most important fairs of its kind worldwide. And it’s not only geared to the end-consumer but it is also business enhancing in general as far as vital and indispensable international contacts are concerned.

First Contact

But let’s return to 1982 and the first High End in the Düsseldorf Interconti Hotel. I was one of the visitors and it was there that I made my first acquaintance of the Manger Sound Transducer. At that time the completely flat nine-pointed “star in a circle” was installed in an active loudspeaker of the DatAkustik company with the evocative name “Omega System 1“. The Manger transducer was vertically embedded between a JVC ribbon tweeter and a conventional LF cone driver and made an excellent job as a pure midrange driver. Its totally open and pure reproduction fascinated me right away. Unfortunately I was still a student of electrical engineering and couldn’t afford the price of DM 18 000 per pair. However, as an avid amateur loudspeaker designer, to whom the Isophon chassis available in hobby electronics shops was the ne plus ultra, I immediately had the desire to experiment with the Manger transducer in my own models. But things turned out differently: As chance would have it, only a few



weeks later me and friend, a loudspeaker cabinet maker, went to see an original Bad Salzufer High End enthusiast and I was allowed to play my own records on a Breuer pick-up arm system through the RABOX with modified Audiolabor electronics. An unprecedented sonic revolution! From then on I concentrated as intensely as my budget allowed on those strangely crumpled Podszus-Görlich



chassis coated with aluminum foil – and my whole life took a different course ...

The Circle Is Closing

Finally – more than 30 years later – the circle is closing and there it is: the Manger MSSp1. A lean, perfectly manufactured, matte floorstanding loudspeaker with dimensions of 10.6 x 46 x 8.5” (W x H x D) and a weight of 95.5 lbs. The fact that the cabinet is significantly wider than deep is unusual but visually appealing. The difference is only 2.5” – but it’s striking. All the vertical edges are gently rounded and form a tasteful contrast to the hard-

edged corners of the cover plate. The elegant look is completed by a 20 mm fixed aluminum base plate. After the p1 had the chance to acclimatize in my living room for two days playing soft chill-out music, I chose something special for the first listening session: A 30 year old classic named “Die Tänzerin” by Ulla Meinecke from her 1983 hit album “Wenn schon nicht für immer, dann wenigstens für ewig” - captured on authentic vinyl. A piece which after its release belonged to the repertoire of audiophile presentations for years but had fallen into oblivion due to the quantitative stimulus satiation of those times. In a nutshell ... I couldn’t hear it any more! However, I still know every entry of the sometimes fierce keyboard part and I can sing along with the lyrics word for word. The dynamics of Ulla Meinecke’s voice are simply fantastic – sometimes gently purring, sometimes punchy similar to those “phrases like torpedos” she mentions in the lyrics. Completely detached from the loudspeakers the song evolves on the basis of a simple rhythm machine and a powerful reverberant Yamaha DX7 keyboard into the ideal stage for Meinecke’s clear and intelligible voice. The background vocals of Edo Zanki, who also wrote the song, rounds off the image perfectly. Congratulations – this was the best listening experience I ever had with this song! Thanks to the exceptional and unique performance of the p1 which I had the privilege to enjoy within my own four walls.

Patented Air Motion

Unique in the first place is the technical concept behind the p1, which is also offered as an active model in exactly the same cabinet. The core of the loudspeaker is the Manger bending wave transducer, of course, the nine-pointed flat star in a circle, which takes care – almost like a fullrange chassis – of all the frequencies above 380 Hz as a soloist. The worldwide patented MSW doesn’t deploy piston excursions to move the air like normal bass and midrange drivers or dome tweeters do, but it produces sound via bending waves comparable to the waves that occur when a stone is thrown into the water. High frequencies stay in the center of the membrane while low frequencies propagate concentrically to the edge where they are absorbed by the star-shaped dampers to prevent reflections by the edge. The biggest advantage of this design – besides the immaculately balanced

frequency response – is the linear-phase reproduction. This optimum time-correct depiction is achieved by ultra-precise manufacturing in the domestic factory and the use of high-quality materials. 15 extremely strong neodymium magnets and an 0.95 mm air gap ensure that the lightweight 70 mm double coil achieves an efficiency factor of remarkable 91dB/1W/1m with a rise time of only 13 μ s for the chassis.

Back to Music

And this phase linearity is demonstrated par excellence during the next piece: Tim Isfort, sound engineer and short-time acoustic and electric bass student, made his dream come true by enhancing his original compositions with strings and orchestral parts. He then asked renowned names such as Blixa Bargeld (Einstürzende Neubauten), Katharina Thalbach, Sam Brown and Tom Liwa to sing or talk on top of it. The result was a 1997 album packed with magnificently old-fashioned music which bridged the swing, bar jazz, and easy listening genres. My favorite song is “Nachteulen” with Christian Brückner, who not many people know by name. But every moviegoer will definitely recognize his voice since he has been synchronizing the one and only Robert de Niro for many years. Guitar, acoustic bass and drums form the basis for a complete brass section of stopped trumpets with a wide frequency range. All this in combination with moderate dynamics lets the music flow evenly and provides the perfect stage for the clear, clean, and immediately recognizable rapping of Brückner. Perfect spatial representation, very solid positioning of the different instruments – cinema at its best!

Casting the Supporting Role

Strictly speaking the Manger transducer could handle low end frequencies as well, although its maximum power rating would suffer drastically. To avoid this, a bass driver had to be found as a congenial partner, which not only could cope with the merciless speed of the bending wave transducer but which could also depict the important bass range in an extensive and sharply defined way. After many futile efforts the team led by company owner Daniela Manger, who early on followed the footsteps of father and founder Josef W. Manger, finally had chassis specialist Scan Speak from Videbaek in Denmark develop a 7” driver to her spec-



ifications. This driver not only integrates perfectly into the sound stage but also fits neatly into the overall appearance of the p1 since its diameter is almost identical with the Manger transducer and it is covered with black transparent clothing. The two black circles form a nice contrast to the white surface and give the loudspeaker a precious and stylish look.

On the bottom of the rear sits the connector panel made of flawlessly anodized aluminum, attached with ten stainless steel screws, and flush-mounted into the cabinet. The panel provides four sufficiently large high-quality binding posts for bi-wiring. The cabinet is divided into three parts. The lower part houses the meticulously designed crossover equipped with first-grade foil capacitors, high-end resistors and air-core coils with thick wires. The middle part holds the woofer in a relatively small sealed enclosure, which ensures a dry, sharply contoured and not exaggerated bass reproduction. The top part houses the Manger bending wave transducer in a sealed enclosure as well. In the meantime I empirically determined the optimum loudspeaker angle for the listening position in my room. There is no general rule, though.

Except for this one: Take your time to detect the sweet spot. By nature the Manger transducer propagates the highest frequency portions in a rather narrow angle and when you find the sweet spot the p1 somehow “snaps into place” and unfolds a breathtakingly broad auditory image.

And Finally Dancefloor

Here comes the totally unmasking bass test. I choose “Insomnia” by “Faithless” from 1995. Faithless was a politically involved British trip hop/dance band led by the charismatic black male singer “Maxi Jazz” and the blonde female singer “Sister Bliss” who is the sister of Dido (“White Flag”). Unfortunately they disbanded in early 2011 after they had produced a number of excellent dancefloor tracks. The double CD “Insomnia – The Best of” gives a good overview of their creativeness and also contains my 8:43-minutes-long test track. Even if you recognize neither title nor performer – this dance floor magnet will mesmerize you and its constantly repeating, distinct keyboard melody will send shivers down your spine. Pumping basses, which never get out of hand, flickering keyboard chunks, the ubiquitous rapping – even at pretty loud volumes everything stays at its spatial location, rock-solid and with clockwork precision. Cool – the Manger rocks!

In a Nutshell

My summary is by no means based solely on the three soundchecks described above. Far from it – after a long time I ventured on Glenn Gould and his Bach Goldberg variations again, paid my last respect to my old hero Lou Reed and his “Set the Twilight Reeling”, enjoyed Peter Gabriel’s “Sky Blue” in full length and recognized once more that Lloyd Cole’s “No more Love Songs” is simply a wonderful, timeless piece of music. Last but not least I could assure myself that U2 has written the atmospherically densest song ever, namely “The First Time” on the CD “Zooropa” or even better on the brilliant soundtrack of “The Million Dollar Hotel”. I listened to all kinds of music, simply because I wanted to try out everything. The experience was always high-end. Never euphemistic, never concealing – but always giving so much. So I actually don’t really know what to criticize ... possibly the price, but this is put into perspective considering all the audio antiques that the Manger MSSp1 restores and brings to life again. It’s not just closing the circle, but squaring the circle. The p1 is more than cinema at its best, it’s a terrific live experience!

Information

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