



More than skin deep

BERGMANN AUDIO MAGNE

I immediately recognise Danish design. The well thought out minimalistic looks, the neat and elegant lines, the use of colour... Personally, it draws me in like a strong magnet and just because of that I promised myself in the past to listen to a Bergmann Audio turntable in my listening room at some point.

It took a few years, but the idea recently came to its fruition at last. The current distributor Audio Ingang temporarily provided me with the entry level model of this noble high end brand and mounted a Benz Micro Glider SL low output (0,4 mV) MC cartridge in the tangentially tracking tone arm. By the way, don't be fooled by the 'entry level model' label, as the Magne turntable including Magne tone arm still costs around

9450 euro. The name 'Magne' originates from Scandinavian mythology: its the name of the son of Thor and means 'strength'. Although extreme strength is not needed to lift the Magne, the weight of the turntable was the first thing that I noticed when placing the turntable on my audio rack: a proud 18.5 kg. Of that total weight, 5.5 kg originates from the aluminum platter with polycarbonate mat and 1.5 kg from the aluminum sub



platter. The second thing I noticed is the significant width of the plinth: a whopping 495 mm. Depth and height measure 440 mm and 165 mm respectively. The plinth is made from a composite material with a high density. The total package of plinth and platter gives an impression of solidity and quality. Fit and finish of all the parts are at a very high level.

Air bearing

The looks of a turntable in this price segment are important - not only will you be listening to it for a longer period of time, you also will be looking at it with pleasure and possibly showing it off to others as a proud owner. However, the real important thing in the end is at what level it performs and through which technology it achieves that. One specific example of the latter - which is very important to the Magne DNA and only used by very few designers of top level turntables - is air bearing. In the past I have come across turntables using air bearing arms. The downside nearly always was that the compressor needed to build up the air pressure made so much noise that it only could be placed in the listening room with much needed measures to reduce that noise. Owner Johnnie Bergmann - who designs and manufactures all the mechanical parts of his turntables and arms himself - has produced a compressor that does not have this flaw and which I placed next to my audio rack during the complete review period without hesitation. The

compressor feeds air to both the arm and the platter. In this tangential arm - which plays the record in the same way as it was cut - air through small holes is fed through the static part of the arm assembly, which makes the moving part of the arm to float without friction on a cushion of pushed out air between the two parts. In this way, the tone arm which holds the cartridge is completely decoupled from the rest of the turntable and the surface it sits on. The cartridge and arm are moved solely by the stylus tracking the groove. The arm itself is a simple construction made of an aluminum sled, a damped double-walled carbon arm tube and an aluminum head shell. The counter weight is decoupled from the arm tube. The result of this construction is a total absence of acoustic feedback from the turntable or its surroundings mechanically coupled to it. In the case of the platter, the compressed air pushes it up, avoiding any weight resting on the bearing - like in traditional systems. In a similar manner to the arm, it avoids any friction and reduces the task of the spindle to centre the LP played. At the back side of the plinth, air flow for the arm as well as the platter can be adjusted individually. With the correct setup, the air flow becomes too faint to hear - even in the vicinity of the turntable. Crucial for the optimal working conditions of the air bearing is very pure and clean air. For this purpose, the compressor has been equipped with condense and air filters and a big reservoir to ensure an air flow which is as dry, clean and constant as possible.

Setup

With closer inspection of the turntable, only the proud brand name can be seen on the front of the plinth. On top, two buttons are available to switch on and choose the correct speed (33 1/3 and 45 RPM). On the back side an IEC power inlet can be found first, for which I chose a Sonore AC power cord. Furthermore, the manufacturer offers the possibility to transport the audio signal to the phono pre amp by way of an RCA, XLR or DIN output. Because a cartridge is by nature a





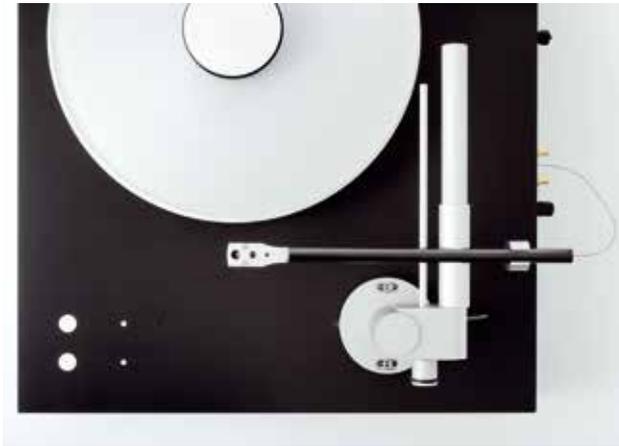
balanced device and my resident ASR Basis Exclusive Phono pre amp also has a balanced layout, I normally choose XLR. The review sample of the Magne however was equipped with the - for turntables - more commonly used RCA outputs. I chose an unbalanced interconnect from John van Gent; the Magic Link. From the phono pre amp, the balanced signal was transported via a Van den Hul D102 MKIII interconnect to the Music First Audio Classic V2 passive pre amp, which is in turn connected with the same balanced interconnect to a pair of Pass Labs X260.5 mono power amps driving Harbeth SHL5 Plus speakers using a Pink Faun SC-1-2 loudspeaker cable. The Harbeth loudspeakers are supplemented with Sonore Audio Universal Harmonizers placed on their tops.

Listening

A puck is included with the turntable. It works great, is a good fit with the spindle and has a rubber ring insert on the underside which rests on the label. The arm lift is undamped, but the user easily gets used to this. Because it uses a knob instead of a lever, it is hard to see if the arm lift is up or down. However, by adapting a standardized regime in playing an LP, any confusion or problems are easily avoided in practice. In other words: this is also a matter of getting used to. Playing the first LP, the turntable immediately proved the merit of the different design choices and with that, more than justified its existence. The absence of any friction resulted in a very stable playback of 'This I Dig Of You' from Hank Mobey's album *Soul Station*, with gripping timing and drive that came close to idler wheel turntables. Even Wynton Kelly's piano, recorded in typical Rudy van Gelder fashion, sounded more tight than usual. The 6 and 12 String Guitar from the eponymous album by American guitarist Leo Kottke showed how stable the Magne images, portraying the instrument in a lively and vivacious manner. In the next round, the Magne convincingly debunked the myth that air bearing linear tone arms are not capable of playing bass in a cogent way by laying a firm foundation underneath Dvorák's cello concerto in a performance by

Janos Starker and the London Symphony Orchestra with conductor Antal Dorati. Timing, energy, power, ambiance and realistic tonal colours were displayed in abundance. With each recording it became more clear that the combination of Bergmann Magne and Benz Micro Glider SL is very capable of presenting the ambiance of the recording space - provided this was present in the recording. An excellent example is the legendary 1963 Carnegie Hall live recording of the American folk group The Weavers, in which each member of the group





is portrayed tightly and eerily realistic in its own space, without this reducing the symbiosis of the whole. The emotion in Pete Seeger's voice whilst singing 'Ramblin' Boy' immediately made the hairs on my under arms stand on end. This effect can also be present with other beautiful turntable combinations, but I feel that the attendant emotion in his voice is seldom there so strongly as in this case, especially when he sings 'He got the chills and he got 'em bad, I lost the only friend I had'. This made me play more LP's than usual that are able to touch me emotionally or have done so in the past. With every consecutive album I pulled out of my collection the following days, it induced that same effect. *God I love vinyl*, especially when it sounds this good!

Conclusion

Those who have read the complete story above will probably agree with me that this review does not need a conclusion because all has been said already. This is not how it works

however... There will always be people only interested in the final verdict and therefore only read this final paragraph. Because of this, I would like to summarize one more time what I have experienced using this turntable combination. I didn't start describing the looks of the turntable first by accident. I love Danish Design and for this reason alone, I would love to have the Magne in my listening room permanently. A second reason to refuse to return the Magne to its rightful owners has to do with its high level of built quality and finish. Both reasons make me enjoy this turntable just by looking at it. The third reason to choose this turntable has to do with the extremely thoughtful manner in which some techniques - especially the use of air bearings - are implemented. This has resulted in a complete absence of problems related to friction and the main reason why details, dynamics, ambiance, imaging and authentic tonality are reproduced without any vagueness or smearing. The biggest quality of this turntable however is its self-effacing sound, enabling the full capabilities of the cartridge and phono pre amp to be fully appreciated. Not before was I able to recognise the unmistakable qualities of the Benz Micro Glider SL so strongly and not before did I hear every adjustment on my ASR Basis Exclusive phono with so little effort. I would like to conclude by stating the obvious; if I had 10.000 euro available for the purchase of a turntable, the Bergmann Audio Magne would be at the very top of my list.

Jan de Jeu

PRICE
BERGMANN AUDIO MAGNE
INCLUDING TONE ARM, COMPRESSOR AND POWER SUPPLY,
DEPENDING ON FINISH € 9.100,- OR € 9.450,-

AUDIO INGANG, WWW.AUDIOINGANG.NL

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