

Magnat Monitor Reference 5A

Fancy powered towers around your TV instead of a soundbar? **Martin Dew** finds out if these German speakers can stand and deliver...

AV INFO

PRODUCT: Powered tower speakers with HDMI ARC connection

POSITION: Big brother to the Reference 2A bookshelf speaker

PEERS: Klipsch The Fives; Q Acoustics M40

THE MONITOR REFERENCE 5As from Magnat are powered stereo speakers with HDMI ARC, making them ready for both music and movie/TV duties. They're floorstanders, suggesting a beefy, full-range performance, and keenly priced at £759. Should you be looking

here instead of at a soundbar?

Magnat might be an unfamiliar name, although it has been producing loudspeakers in its native Germany since 1973. More recently it's become part of the Premium Audio Company, whose other brands include Klipsch, Jamo, Onkyo and Pioneer, meaning you can expect to see more of its catalogue (including conventional hi-fi speakers) fighting for your pennies at UK retailers.

Double bass

The 5As aren't tall for a floorstanding speaker at 90.8cm, nor particularly wide at 20cm, but will still look more imposing than a slinky soundbar. The rear-ported cabinets are given a stylish matte black hairline finish, which makes a nice change from wood grain veneers, and are supported by stubby chrome feet.

Each speaker has two 6.5in drivers (one a bass/mid unit, the other a standalone woofer), plus a 25mm tweeter. The Class D amplification and connections, however, are all found on the right speaker, which in turn connects to the left enclosure via a generous length of supplied speaker cable. There are analogue stereo RCA and 3.5mm inputs, the



first of these with a toggle switch to select MM phono if you plan to use the 5As with a turntable, plus optical digital and the aforementioned HDMI ARC. Bluetooth is also integrated for wireless playback.

Control is via a black plastic remote that feels a little lightweight. It does offer volume, input, Bluetooth pairing, treble and bass buttons, but response can be on the slow side. An LED light with various colours for different inputs sits next to the right speaker's tweeter (and is visible through the supplied grille).

Voice of reason

Magnat recommends positioning its speakers at least 20cm from the rear wall and 30cm from the sides. I also toe'd them in, as this

SPECIFICATIONS

DRIVERS: 1 x 6.5in woofer; 1 x 6.5in bass/mid; 1 x 1in dome tweeter **ENCLOSURE:** 'Airflex' ported **ONBOARD POWER (CLAIMED):** 2 x 60W (RMS) **CONNECTIONS:** HDMI ARC; analogue stereo input with switchable MM phono stage; 3.5mm analogue in; optical digital audio in **REMOTE CONTROL:** Yes **DIMENSIONS:** 205(w) x 908(d) x 282(d)mm **WEIGHT:** 14.7kg (active speaker); 13.8kg (passive)

FEATURES: Claimed 25Hz-40kHz frequency response; Bluetooth (v5.0) with aptX low-latency; 192kHz/24-bit DAC

Front of the 'master' speaker has a status LED

yielded the best sonic response and achieved impressive imaging. With The Proclaimers' 'Sunshine on Leith' (Spotify) they placed the track's heartfelt vocal spot-on in the phantom centre position, and gave both voices plenty of expression. When the band entered, the 5As blended the mid-range with the low frequencies, delivering controlled bass with no loose ends or errant boominess.

The chorus of Charlotte Gainsbourg's 'Deadly Valentine' from *Rest* (CD) was notable for the wave of power sent through the room. Here, the scale of presentation of the 5As, and their imaging ability, will beat a similarly priced soundbar into submission.

There was articulation to the high frequencies, but not without some stridency; the soundtrack to *Sweeney Todd* (Blu-ray) impressed more for its rich organ and brass than the higher-register strings. At the other end of the spectrum, a subwoofer would be a useful companion when movie moments, such as the gunshots during the opening car brawl in *Kingsmen: The Golden Circle* (4K BD), demand genuine depth, although the bass performance here is overall admirable.

Towering above

Powered speakers with HDMI ARC make an intriguing soundbar alternative, particularly if you want to enjoy music as well as AV content. Magnat's Monitor Reference 5As are big, but offer scale, weight and musical finesse, plus accommodating connectivity, at a price with bang-for-your buck appeal. What they don't do is provide any multichannel immersion/virtual wizardry, or the smart skills of a modern 'bar. But how many soundbars can you plug a turntable into? ■

HCC VERDICT ★★★★★

Magnat Monitor Reference 5A
→ £759 → www.magnat.de

WE SAY: For the price of a mid-tier soundbar system, Magnat's HDMI-equipped active floorstanders deliver largescale, musical sonics.