"HARD TO THINK OF A BETTER ALL-ROUNDER. GREAT!"

Magnat

CINEMA ULTRA 5.1.2

+ Sensational macro and micro-dynamics
+ Vivid sound stage
+ Subwoofer with good level stability and depth
Magnat Cinema Ultra Test: the Hollywood sound

Still at the pinnacle of the first wave of surround sound, i.e. in the 1990's, THX was the standard for a number of German manufacturers. Whether the bar was set too high in terms of requirements or the label simply didn't provide sufficient incentive, suffice the loudspeakers was the last remaining manufacturer in this area, dominating the THX domain for years uncontested. However, Magnat is now taking the initiative again, with the early datasheets already in circulation promising explosive surround sound enjoyment. The Magnat Cinema Ultra range is available in different configurations and as individual components. LowBeats ordered what is probably the most widely sold minimal version - a 5.1.2 configuration.

The different components

THX loudspeakers are fundamentally designed as a partially active concept, i.e. nothing can happen without an actively controlled subwoofer. That means a Magnat Cinema Ultra SUB 300-THX in this case, taking up about 1/8 of a cubic metre of the space. The role of the center speaker and left and right front speakers is played by the Magnat Cinema Ultra LCR 100-THX, which is the first THX loudspeaker that can be used vertically or horizontally. It can also be used as a surround sound speaker, though the compact Magnat Cinema Ultra RD 200-THX dipole is also suitable, at least for the sides. And last but not least, there is also the extremely smart development in the form of the Magnat Cinema Ultra AEH 400 ATM add-on speaker, which is primarily designed for the treble or ceiling effect channels with the option of reflective - Dolby Atmos Enabled - or direct sound.

THX: What's that? Do I need it?

There may be some people who do not know where the idea of "THX" comes from and what its use is. When George Lucas brought "Star Wars" to the big screen in 1977, he was dis-appointed or even shocked at how his film sounded in the cinema in many places. The reason for this: it didn't really reflect what he was trying to deliver. He took the money he earned at the box office and built "Skywalker Ranch" close to San Francisco, his own small Hollywood, where he founded the THX project. He hired acoustics guru Tomlinson Holman to elaborate a concept of how movie sound could be reproduced in comparable quality in the studio, cinema and at home. In the early 80's, the first loudspeakers were created and certified according to the THX concept. The conditions included parameters like acoustic pressure and low distortion, as well as such seemingly mundane things as inaudible air-conditioning and sealing with acoustic compensation, irrespective of how many or how few viewers are present. After years of development, THX eventually made its way into the home cinema domain in the late 1980's. In this segment, distortion, achievable acoustic pressure and frequency re-sponse, as well as decoder quality and amplifier power also have to comply with a very thick catalogue of requirements to guarantee that all of the components match each other acoustically and are able to reproduce unchecked what the director and sound engineer have created. Here, too, a number of the original THX developments are now taken so much for granted that they are no longer perceived as such. This includes correct calibration with band-limited noise at the standard level, as well as the mechanical tolerances for RCA plugs and sockets, which were not subject to any standard at all prior to the introduction of THX. In brief, THX guarantees a defined minimum quality standard at a very high level. There are different THX licence packages for loudspeakers, roughly divided into THX Select2 (for small rooms up to approx. 25m²) and THX Ultra2 (for large rooms up to approx. 40m²).

Magnat Cinema Ultra

So, to get the licence, Magnat Cinema Ultra had to meet conditions and pass tests that had already been failed by many developers. And even this led to a few records being set: The largest dome tweeter in the world (42 mm in diameter) was developed specially for the set. It is the most compact THX Ultra2 loudspeaker set ever to be awarded the licence. The front speakers are the first to meet the strict requirements regarding frequency response and dispersion characteristics in both horizontal and vertical set-up mode. The subwoofer is the smallest ever to meet the requirements, even when used as a single woofer. Most manufacturers need two subwoofers to meet the acoustic pressure requirements. The detail of the solutions comes to all the components in the direct run-up. In any case, however, the zero axis of the dipole must point towards the listening position, which means in most cases, also in the LowBeats test cinema, at 90° directly next to the listening position, or sofa. For reasons of timing, the subwoofer should be positioned more forward than 90°, in order to be set up in a way that it does not leave quite enough room to run the cables. To counter this, screw connections are provided for wider wall brackets according to the VESA standard. All of the speakers have a removable, magnetically fastening front cover that does not need any visible bracket whatsoever on the housing. (...)

Listening test: Opera and space opera

Given that the guidelines are clear, the test set-up in the home cinema was typically simple. Front speakers at ear level, the dipole surround speakers at least at ear level, tending towards being positioned a little higher and, in particular, in such a way that sound radiation to the front and rear is not disturbed. In any case, however, the zero axis of the dipole must point towards the listening position, which means in most cases, also in the LowBeats test cinema, at 90° directly next to the listening position, or sofa. For reasons of timing, the subwoofer should be positioned more forward than 90°, in order to be set up in a way that it does not leave quite enough room to run the cables. To counter this, screw connections are provided for wider wall brackets according to the VESA standard. All of the speakers have a removable, magnetically fastening front cover that does not need any visible bracket whatsoever on the housing. (...)

Conclusion: Great dynamics, but with feeling

With the Magnat Cinema Ultra, the developers have created a loudspeaker set that is fun in the truest sense of the word. The concept and finish are consistent and coherent, from the well thought-out details like the VESA brackets to the add-on speaker that can serve as a Dolby Atmos enabled speaker and be switched over for wall or ceiling use. The front and dipole speakers play together in an amazingly harmonious way and reproduce acoustic events consistently throughout the room and beyond. The exceptionally powerful subwoofer also enables the set to not only play in an airy detached way with good microdynamics; it can also pack a powerful punch, easily reaching cinema or live concert level even in large rooms. Hard to think of a better all-rounder.

For the complete test, go to: www.lowbeats.de/test-magnat-cinema-ultra-der-hollywood-sound