

# HP's GOLDEN EAR Awards 2011

Harry Pearson

## Magnepan MG3.7 Speaker

To me, this is an extraordinary system, the best overall of any Magnepan speaker design in more than a decade. It has a life and vividness and, when mated with today's best amplifiers, achieves a realism that is sometimes just plain scary, so like the real thing is it.

It contains an updated version of Jim Winey's original ribbon tweeter, wed to an update of his earlier planar-magnetic designs called quasi-ribbons. As officially explained, "planar magnetic" was a term Jim Winey devised to describe wire on a diaphragm instead of a ribbon on a diaphragm, which is a "quasi-ribbon." The quasi-ribbon in the 3.7 sounds more like an electrostatic than any electrostatic in my experience. What it also has is the dynamic punch and uncolored three-dimensional "thereness" you don't usually get from electrostatics or conventional planar units.

The Maggie 3.7s speak with a single voice, with no electronic discontinuities from the crossovers (unlike the older Maggie speakers). Perhaps the biggest breakthrough is the absence of a slight but distracting veiling in the critical middle and lower fundamental frequencies below the old system's ribbon tweeter. That sound was like a scrim or a nearly translucent theatrical curtain. It was fairly easy to disregard in earlier Magnepan editions because of the lack of box colorations and the dipolar radiation pattern, but you could hear it. No more.

The 3.7 can handle all the amplifier



power you give it (even the 1000 watts per channel of the big Bryston). It does so without strain (and sustains performance, no matter how long), nor is there any compression of massive dynamics. And it continues to sound better after it is broken in; here it has continued to subtly improve even unto this day.

No, it isn't perfect. It sounds shy below 40Hz, especially at first. Later, after you've achieved optimal positioning and warmed the low-frequency quasi's into submission with heavy-duty low-frequency sounds (organ pedal points or synths), it will sound as if it goes even lower, catching the second harmonic overtones of frequencies below 40Hz. It is so remarkably well balanced, almost ideally in the relationship of top to bottom, that you're not likely to dwell on what is, in the context of that achievement, a forgivable shortcoming. Let me emphasize (and in the amplifier reviews to come, I shall elaborate): The 3.7s can take your breath away because they come closer to the real thing (really and truly) than any other speaker in my experience. And all of this at the price-per-pair of \$5500. Unbelievable. If there is better, it will be an order of magnitude more expensive. Nicely built and good-looking, too.