

Magnepan MG30.7

All-Time Best Buy

Jonathan Valin

Over the years I've listened to just about every loudspeaker that Jim Winey's fabled Minnesota company Magnepan has engineered and manufactured. I've also owned more Magneplanars than any other kind of loudspeaker. Why? Because from the moment I first heard the Tympani 1-U's in Basil Gouletas' Chicago apartment back in 1973—and I've written about that paradigm-changing moment repeatedly—I haven't been able to get past the realism with which these planar-magnetic panels (and way back when, they were completely planar-magnetic) reproduce voices and acoustic instruments.

While it is much easier to hear what Maggies do right than to explain why, I'm gonna give explanation a try.

To begin with, Maggies have no box and, hence, no box coloration. Given the strides that have been made in dynamic drivers and their enclosures, you might think this wouldn't make as dramatic a difference as it did years ago. But with the exception of speakers that use extremely inert cabinets, like those of Magico (to my ear, Magicos have always sounded more like Maggies than any other dynamic transducers do), that really isn't the case. Boxes, no matter how skillfully made, are still boxes, and to varying degrees they still add their own resonant colorations to the sound. (They also often add confusion to the sound, due in part to the turbulence of the backwaves that are rattling around inside them.) Typically, this results in a dark, woody hue overlying the natural tonality of instruments, some elongation (or truncation) of the duration of the dynamic/harmonic envelope, and a masking of fine detail—faults the Maggies simply don't suffer from.

Now I'll grant that the sound of box speakers can often be very attractive—that the spring-like action of air trapped inside (or vented partly from within) their enclosures adds “zip” to attacks, tonal density and dynamic weight to the upper bass and lower midrange, and slam to the midbass. Indeed, for those listeners who put beauty and excitement first, the added color and power of box speakers are indispensable. For listeners looking for an approximation of the sound of the real thing, however, these are colorations that one almost *never* hears in life, unless the orchestra itself is enclosed in a box (as a pit orchestra is) or its sound is being amplified by loudspeakers in a hall or auditorium.

Second, Maggies are dipole line-source rather than dynamic point-source loudspeakers. This means they generate their sound in free space forward and backward, rather than sending half toward you and half into a sealed enclosure or an enclosure with a hole in it. Because of their highly coherent, figure-eight wave-launch, line sources like the Maggies tend to interact less destructively with listening rooms than point-source speakers do.



They have little-to-no floor or ceiling bounce, zero output immediately to their sides, a backwave that is mostly dissipated by the room itself, close-to-uniform “power response” on- and off-axis, and zero cabinet diffraction. This doesn't mean that they are a snap to set up; they are anything but. It just means that once properly positioned, they don't add as much room sound to the presentation as typical dynamic speakers do. Combine this with their boxless openness, free-standing imaging, vast soundstage, phenomenal resolution of inner detail, lightning transient response, and naturalness of timbre, and Maggies seem *markedly* less “there” as

sources than almost any dynamic-speakers-in-a-box I've heard.

Third, like electrostatics Maggies use extremely lightweight membrane drivers that have a much larger radiating area than cone drivers do and that, unlike cone drivers, are uniformly driven over their entire surface, making for lower distortion and higher linearity in their passbands. Unlike cones, Maggies do not need extremely steep crossovers to keep breakup modes at bay (although, to be fair, Magnepan has in the past played various tricks to mask the differences in speed, distortion, and resolution among its planar-magnetic, quasi-ribbon, and true ribbon drivers).

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Specs & Pricing

Type: Four-way, dual-panel, planar loudspeaker system

Drivers: True-ribbon tweeter, quasi-ribbon midrange, quasi-ribbon transitional line-source mid/bass, and quasi-ribbon bass

Frequency response: approximately 20Hz–40kHz

Impedance: 4 ohms

Dimensions: Bass/transi-

tional mid/bass panel, 29.6" x 79" x 2"; midrange/tweeter panel, 16" x 79" x 2"

Price: \$29,000

MAGNEPAN

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JV's Reference Systems

Loudspeakers: Magico M Project, Magico M3, Raidho D-1, Zellaton Reference Mk II, Avantgarde Zero 1, MartinLogan CLX, Magnepan

.7, Magnepan 1.7, Magnepan 30.7

Subwoofers: JL Audio Gotham (pair), Magico QSub 15 (pair)

Linestage preamps: Soutlution 725, Constellation Altair II, Siltech SAGA System C1, Air Tight ATE-2001, Reference

Phonostage preamps: Soutlution 755, Constellation Perseus, Audio Consulting Silver Rock Toroidal, Innovative Cohesion Engineering Raptor

Power amplifiers: Soutlution 711, Constellation Hercules II Stereo, Air Tight 3211, Air Tight ATM-2001, Zanden Audio Systems Model 9600, Siltech SAGA System V1/P1, Odyssey Audio Stratos

Analog source: Acoustic Signature Victus/T-9000, Walker Audio Proscenium Black Diamond Mk V, TW Acoustic Black Knight/TW Raven 10.5, Continuum Audio Labs Obsidian with Viper tonearm, AMG Vienna 12

Tape deck: United Home Audio Ultimate 1 OPS

Phono cartridges: Clearaudio Goldfinger Statement, Air Tight Opus 1, Ortofon MC Anna, Ortofon MC A90

Digital source: Berkeley Alpha DAC 2, MSB The Reference DAC

Cable and interconnect: Crystal Cable Absolute Dream, Synergistic Research Galileo UEF, Ansuz Acoustics Diamond

Power cords: Crystal Cable Absolute Dream, Synergistic Research Galileo UEF, Ansuz Acoustics Diamond

Power conditioner: Synergistic Research Galileo LE, Technical Brain

Support systems: Critical Mass Systems MAXXUM and QXK equipment racks and amp stands

Room treatments: Stein Music H2 Harmonizer System, Synergistic Research UEF Acoustic Panels/Atmosphere/UEF

Acoustic D system, Synergistic Research ART System, Shakti Hallographs (6), Zanden Acoustic panels, A/V Room Services Metu acoustic panels and traps, ASC Tube Traps

Accessories: Symposium Isis and Ultra equipment platforms, Symposium Rollerblocks and Fat Padz, Walker Prologue Reference equipment and amp stands, Harward Valid Points and Resonance Control discs, Clearaudio Double Matrix Professional Sonic record cleaner, Synergistic Research RED Quantum fuses, HiFi-Tuning silver/gold fuses

Even though I have some quibbles about earlier iterations of large single-panel Maggies (for which see the next paragraph), at their best, Magnepanans are very, very, very nearly as fast on transients, as high in resolution, as low in coloration and distortion, and as neutral in timbre as the most discerning electrostats (and considerably deeper-reaching and more linear in the bottom octaves than most 'stats).

Having said all this, let me admit that in my experience Maggies have also been among the most consistently frustrating loudspeakers I've heard and owned. When a component is nearly incomparable in certain respects, over time the areas in which it falls short (and all speakers fall short) start to weigh on you like Marley's chains. And until just a few short weeks ago, the Maggies, particularly the large single-panel Maggies (the 3.7s and the 20.7s), brought burdens as well as blessings.

First, there was the matter of driver-to-driver coherence. While Magnepan's true ribbon tweeter is a technological and sonic marvel, to my ear it never blended smoothly with Maggie's quasi-ribbon drivers, which also didn't blend seamlessly with Maggie's planar-magnetic panels. (This is precisely why I've always preferred Maggie's all-quasi-ribbon 1.x series to the larger single-panel speakers in its line. Yes, you lost some of the extension, resolution, and sheer glamour of Maggie's true ribbon on the top end—and you definitely lost some of the amazing soundstage size and low-end reach of the bigger “Pans—but what you gained back in octave-to-octave smoothness was well worth the sacrifice.)

Second, line-source Maggies do not have the laser-cut image focus of point-source cones; their images are quite a bit larger than those of box speakers, which is something that takes getting used to (or not). With big ensembles or big instruments like pianos or drumkits, this isn't a problem; in fact, it is quite realistic. But vocalists can sometimes seem slightly outsized—and flat in aspect.

Which brings me to three: Maggies (or at least latter-day ones) don't have quite the same three-dimensional body as cone speakers. And that is because they don't have the power-range warmth and fullness (or box coloration, depending on your point of view) of cone speakers. To be fair, large single-panel Maggies have sometimes seemed a bit sucked-out in the power range (a byproduct, perhaps, of their dipole radiation pattern—and the bass-range phase-cancellation that can engender—and the largish passband of their single woofer), and though quite extended and well defined in the bottom octaves they definitely don't do “slam” the way big dynamic speakers do. On acoustic instruments that play down into the low bass, such as doublebasses, timps, piano, organ, contrabassoon, they are high incomparably realistic. On Fender bass, synth, rock drumkit, or any instrument that is as much about power and impact as it is about pitch, timbre, and duration, the thrill, though

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not gone, is not there the way it is with, oh, big Wilsons.

Fourth, Maggies are extremely large and not particularly attractive loudspeakers that do anything but disappear in a living room. Though I've heard them perform quite well in smaller spaces, they tend to like big rooms and, regardless of the size of the listening space, they thrive on power. Though not difficult to drive, Maggies need lots of amplifier, though they don't necessarily need *crème de la crème* amplification.

Believe it or not, all of this has been by way of an introduction, because what I will be reviewing here is a big (make that huge) Maggie that greatly ameliorates almost all of the past problems of Maggies large and small—a Maggie that is, in fact, the best “Pan I've ever heard (and, once again, I've heard them all) and one of the best buys in an ultra-high-end loudspeaker I've ever come across.

For years now, I've been begging Mark Winey and Wendell Diller to build a new Tympani—a multi-panel Maggie that would inculcate the company's latest technology, solve the driver-to-driver and power-range issues that plague Maggie's large, single-panel speakers, and compete on a more even footing (as the three-panel Tympanis once did) with the flagships of the dynamic contingent.

I certainly wasn't alone in nagging Mark and Wendell to cook up a new Tympani. My late colleague, mentor, and fellow Maggie lover, Mr. Pearson, also incessantly policed for a statement Maggie (as did my pal Jacob Heilbrunn, whose initial observations are appended below). It is a genuine shame that HP

This is quite simply the best Magneplanar loudspeaker ever.

didn't live to see and hear the 30.7, for he would most certainly have loved them, as I most certainly do.

I'm not using that word “love” figuratively here, for on first listen the sound of the 30.7s brought back all of the thrill and wonder I first experienced in Basil's home forty-five years ago, when the original Tympanis fooled me (and my wife, Kathy) into thinking that someone was playing the actual grand piano that was sitting behind those “decorative screens” in Basil's living room.

Folks, if you've never heard a Magneplanar Tympani speaker (or if, like me, you haven't heard one for decades), you will be stunned and amazed by what a big Magnepan is capable of—and in this case you will also be delighted by the improvements that Mark and Wendell and the Magnepan design team have wrought. This is, quite simply, the most top-to-bottom coherent, highest-resolution, most astonishingly lifelike planar loudspeaker I've ever heard (from Maggie or anyone else). On acoustic music of any kind, it is very nearly peerlessly realistic (especially through the midband), making almost everything else I'm familiar with—and I think I've heard most of the contenders—sound a little less jaw-droppingly “there.”

So what is a Magnepan 30.7? It is a four-panel (two panels per side), line-source, ribbon/quasi-ribbon loudspeaker system of considerable width (a little under four

feet across per side), height (about six-and-a-half feet), and just a couple of inches in depth. As the four panels that comprise a stereo pair are completely separate (not hinged to one another in the way the panels on each side of the Tympanis once were), you will have considerable latitude in placement, which is both a blessing and a curse. (With great latitude comes great responsibility—for which see below.)

Unlike previous big Maggies, the 30.7s are four-way (first-order crossovers) loudspeakers, with a quasi-ribbon low-bass and a “transitional” quasi-ribbon upper-bass/low-midrange planar driver in the larger of the two panels (the use of two bass-range planars to span the bottom end and the power range dates back to the Tympani IVa, though the IVa was a three-way design with far less advanced planar-magnetics). The quasi-ribbon midrange and the true ribbon tweeter are housed in the second panel, which is the smaller (less wide, though just as tall and thin) of the pair. Wendell Diller tells me that “something new” has been incorporated in the quasi-ribbon midrange, though precisely what that is remains a secret.

However, the sonic effects of that secret—and of whatever more, and there is considerably more, that Mark, Wendell, and Maggie have done to improve sound quality (Wendell says that, properly set, the 30.7 will reproduce a near-perfect square wave—i.e., step response)—are immediately apparent to the ear. This is the first and only Maggie I've heard in which Magnepan's true ribbon tweeter doesn't immediately stick out like a sore, uh, true ribbon. The blend—in speed, resolution, output, timbre—with the quasi-ribbon midrange is forehead-slappingly good, suggesting some kind of major reduction in the quasi's breakup modes (or other distortions) through the crossover region, and perhaps some sort of taming of the ribbon tweeter itself.

All you have to do is listen to this thing to experience the same paradigm-shifting astonishment that I first experienced so many years ago, when I discovered that a loudspeaker could not only sound “good,” it could also sound quite literally “fool-you real.” Put on *Masterpieces by Ellington* [Acoustic Sounds] and just marvel at the utter naturalness with which the 30.7s reproduce Russel Procope, Paul Gonzales, Johnny Hodges, Henry Carney, and Jimmy Hamilton's tenor, alto, and baritone sax and clarinets; Nelson Williams, Andrew Ford, Harold Baker, Ray Nance, and William Anderson's trumpets; Quentin Jackson, Lawrence Brown, and Tyree Glenn's trombones; Mercer Ellington's horn and flute; Sonny Greer's drumkit; Wendell Marshall's standup bass; Ellington and Billy Strayhorn's piano; and (on “Mood Indigo” and “Sophisticated Lady”) Yvonne Llanauze's sultry contralto vocals on this now-seventy-year-old mono recording. If, in your listening life, you've ever before heard, a big band reproduced with this level of performance detail (you can not only hear every key-press on the brasses and winds, you can also hear the reeds vibrating and every breath the soloists take between skeins of notes) coupled with this level of timbral and dynamic naturalness through any other loudspeaker, then I'd like to hear *that* speaker.

Or try the great Analogue Sounds reissue of the Son House LP *Father of Folk Blues*, and once again just revel in the realism with which the 30.7s reproduce every slide, squeak, pluck, and pick of that National steel guitar (body and string) and every

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creak and cranny of that crusty old man's voice. It is like he is standing there, playing for you.

Or try the Bernstein recording of Shostakovich's Second Piano Concerto (the one that Spielberg used in *Bridge of Spies*) if you want to hear strings like shot silk, doublebasses with the color, definition, bowing detail, and acoustic power of real doublebasses, timps that shake the room, piano with genuine ivory sparkle on top and lifelike power and fully articulated harmonics on the bottom, along with touches of instrumentation and color in the scoring that you've never noticed before.

As I said at the start, it isn't hard to hear what these Maggies get more right than any other transducers (including previous Maggies); it's just, as I also said, hard to explain. I suppose what it comes down to is the sensation that singers or instrumentalists are being more *completely* reproduced.

Why Maggies sound more “complete” than other speakers has always been a bit puzzling, as their flaws are as obvious as their virtues. It has something to do with getting overall tonal balance just so, without any box-speaker-like darkening of timbre or ambience; it has something to do with the sheer amount of air they move, which is no conventional cone speaker can match; it has equally to do with a transient response that is neither so fast that it blurs everything but initial attacks, nor so slow that it softens those attacks; it also has to do with the resolution of very fine details that other transducers typically don't resolve as clearly—details that describe what I've called the

“action” of instruments (the very concept of “action” was born from listening to Maggies with ARC electronics).

Somewhat or other, Maggies are better able to reproduce “action” than almost any other kind of speaker—not just the way a guitar string, for instance, vibrates to create an intensity, a color, a pitch, and a duration, but the way the energy of that vibration comes off the string, setting the air around it in motion toward you and, again, back toward the resonant body of the instrument. Maggies are simply better able to tell you how instruments and voices *work* to create sound, because they let you hear the air in the recording venue moving in response to physical excitation. (In my experience, only a great horn loudspeaker, such as the Magico Ultimate, can reproduce this extremely low-level effect as realistically as the Maggies do.)

So...the perfect transducer, right?

Well, no. Putting aside the fact that no loudspeaker is perfect, you might have noticed that I didn't include a rock album in my short list of recordings that will wow you. This isn't because the 30.7s aren't good at reproducing rock 'n' roll. They are, in fact, quite good at it. It's just that, because of their low-end linearity, they don't have the sizable boost that many box speakers add in the midbass.

Though the 30.7s are *much* more filled out in the power range (thanks to that separate quasi-ribbon upper-bass/low-mid driver) than previous Maggies and have greater bottom-octave extension than any previous Maggies, they still don't do “slam” the way box speakers do. Thus,

cious—an attempt by Magnepan to build upon and surpass the legendary Tympani IVa, an elaborate six-panel design that continues to enchant a select group of audiophiles.

Naturally, I was all ears, as it were, when Diller pulled up in front of my house in a van containing his precious cargo. He announced that he had devised a strapping system to ease the load of transporting the two bass panels and the two midrange/tweeter panels into my basement listening room. Strap or no strap, it was a fairly heavy lift when it came to hoisting the bass panel, Diller, who is in his early seventies, was up to the job. All that outdoors activity—if you know Wendell, then you're aware that he's an avid woodsman—is really paying off for him. Then came the really tricky part—setting up the speakers. I can't say the achieved perfection. The sad truth is that we really only had an afternoon to tackle the project, especially since two local TAS reviewers, Anthony Cordesman and Alan Tafel, were scheduled to drop by in the early evening to listen to the 30.7s. I admired Wendell's *cojones*—most manufacturers would never audition their new standard product under those conditions. Diller was unfazed. I don't think that either he or I thought we got

all the way there in terms of positioning the speakers optimally, but Diller pronounced himself more than satisfied with the sonic results.

Even before we fired up the Ypsilon Hyperion amplifiers to drive Magnepan's latest invention, it was obvious to me that there are multifarious advantages to the way the 30.7 is constructed. In the 20.1 or 20.7, for one thing, the proximity of the tweeter to the bass panel means that the former is subject to a goodly amount of shaking on load passages. I expected a purer mid-tweeter sound as a matter of course from the 30.7. Another advantage to extricating the mid/tweeter panel is that you can get bigger and better bass from a larger, separate panel. What's more, Magnepan has figured out how to extend its ribbon technology to the edge of the loudspeaker in order to produce a larger radiating area. Magnepan is also using a first-order crossover throughout the loudspeaker, which means that it doesn't require an outboard crossover because the number of capacitors and coils is way down. With the third-order crossover in the 20.1, you pretty much had to bi-amp to obviate the need for the external crossover and avoid dragging down your amplifier. Finally, I would be remiss if I failed to note that the new loudspeaker looks pretty nifty as well.

How did it sound? After a few hours of listening, I can confidently say that it surpassed any of Magnepan's previous efforts. On the bass drum whacks on the Reference Recordings CD of Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man*, it produced a deep and fast bass. As you might expect, total coherence was superb. Plus a nice, deep soundstage. For those Maggie owners who have yearned for an all-out assault on planar technology, this is it.

Scuse Mullins comments:

Jessie me while I was sentimental, but I've come to realize Magneplanar speakers have a special place in my music-obsessed heart. (Though they're certainly not the only speakers I dig.) First, Maggies happen to be my audiophile father's current loudspeaker of choice. (Yes, I was indoctrinated from an early age. He's even visited my place a couple of times to listen to the amazing 30.7s, and was of course extremely impressed—not to mention envious.) Then when I first started this crazy job nearly three years ago, my first review for TAS (in conjunction with JV) was of the Magnepan .7 planar-magnetic speakers. Pound for pound (though they aren't heavy) and panel for panel, they were, and still are, a great audio deal for not a lot of coin.

But now the brilliant (and you could say bargain-minded) minds at Magnepan have designed a no-holds-barred Maggie that tops them all. They've also taken their sweet time about it—the 30.7 marks the Minneapolis-based company's first new flagship in many years. (It's also a move counter to many a manufacturer that might update and extend lineups as frequently as a salesman changes suits.)

Magnepan's Marketing Manager Wendell Diller has been taking the new 30.7s on a tour to visit dealers all over the U.S. with initial stops to the D.C. area, where Jacob Heilbrunn, Anthony Cordesman, and Alan Tafel heard them, and then on to Ohio to Jive me. As you might have guessed, this quartet of sizable panels—two per channel comprising a four-way system—requires a rather

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compared to the price of the six-figure speakers they so successfully compete against, it makes them, as noted, one of the greatest bargains in ultra-high-end history.

Jacob Heilbrunn comments:

The secret is out. Magnepan has finally bowed to the inevitable and returned to its origins by reintroducing a multi-panel loudspeaker. And not a moment too soon.

The market for high-end speakers is proliferating. Magnepan needed to get in the game. The only thing that is not high about Magnepan's latest effort is, as usual, the price. This is a company that minds its knitting.

Wendell Diller, the marketing manager of Magnepan, can be pretty tight-lipped about the company's plans. I knew that the storied manufacturer of planar loudspeakers has been contemplating a more elaborate design, but it came as something of a welcome surprise when Diller announced that he planned to visit me in September, before continuing his journey to Cincinnati to see Jonathan Valin and Julie Mullins, with a spanning new four-panel loudspeaker called the 30.7. Welcome because, as diligent TAS readers may know, I cut my audiophile teeth on the 3.6 loudspeaker before graduating to the 20.1, which I used for over a decade in a bi-amped configuration. Surprised moves at Magnepan usually because a pace best described as casual. Change does not come easily to the folks at Magnepan, who have carefully and cautiously improved their loudspeakers over the years. The 30.7 represents something more audacious—

The Magnepan 30.7s cost \$29,000 the pair—not chump change, I grant you, but far less than the six-figure speakers they so successfully compete against.

an attempt by Magnepan to build upon and surpass the legendary Tympani IVa, an elaborate six-panel design that continues to enchant a select group of audiophiles.

Naturally, I was all ears, as it were, when Diller pulled up in front of my house in a van containing his precious cargo. He announced that he had devised a strapping system to ease the load of transporting the two bass panels and the two midrange/tweeter panels into my basement listening room. Strap or no strap, it was a fairly heavy lift when it came to hoisting the bass panel, Diller, who is in his early seventies, was up to the job. All that outdoors activity—if you know Wendell, then you're aware that he's an avid woodsman—is really paying off for him. Then came the really tricky part—setting up the speakers. I can't say the achieved perfection. The sad truth is that we really only had an afternoon to tackle the project, especially since two local TAS reviewers, Anthony Cordesman and Alan Tafel, were scheduled to drop by in the early evening to listen to the 30.7s. I admired Wendell's *cojones*—most manufacturers would never audition their new standard product under those conditions. Diller was unfazed. I don't think that either he or I thought we got

during the noise unveiled on the Bernstein recording of Shostakovich's Second Piano Concerto. But by extension this also means he was equally impressed by this incredibly high resolution. Good recordings are where it's at; here, it seems you hear everything—the big picture/image fleshed out in detail.

Even friends who are audiophile but not necessarily all hardcore audiophiles were truly amazed by the 30.7's capabilities, the ease with which they projected the complete picture of any given music track with astounding realism (recording permitting, without boundaries or the central image or instruments seeming “boxed in” that you get with so many other speakers.

It's as if the 30.7s unfurl an enormous patchwork quilt with each recording's playback—the patterns are clear and present yet the entire whole also expands into the space with all its detail displayed in high resolution. Human touches and crafted handiwork and individual styles, including idiosyncrasies and imperfections, are revealed. Breath buzzes through a clarinet reed. Textures are intact, tactile. Timbral color is as spot-on as what the recording captured. Blues feel blue. You can practically see the shine on brass instruments, sense the pluck or bowing of strings as if you could touch them. The quilt metaphor's limitation is that (particularly on good recordings) you don't sense sharply defined borders or edges to the sonic material at hand. The music simply fills the room in an immersive and thoroughly engaging soundscape. It might sound strange but I've never really heard my

room sound like that before, and I've had plenty of speakers of all sizes, types, and price-points in there but few if any seemed to showcase the space's dimensions in quite the same way.

For all their highly resolved and revealingly honest reproduction of source material, the 30.7s also promise remarkably non-aggressive and non-fatiguing listening—even comforting, when called for—but that's not to say they're lacking in impact, speed, or energy. I'll say more about this in listening examples below.

Some weeks into listening, I JV suggested we try moving the treble/midrange panels on each side backward, aligning them with the same line/plane as the bass/woof ones—to approximate how they might be positioned if they had been within a single oversized panel. As you might imagine, the speakers sounded more “of a piece.” I noticed greater coherence, along with seemingly less midrange and treble emphasis. On some musical selections, the soundstage seemed deeper. And perhaps more focused. However, one tradeoff in gaining focus might have been a touch less that hugely expansive dispersion and sense of power range immediacy.

Historically and by reputation a Maggies-associated sore spot for some listeners has been the speakers' shortcomings in treble and bass reproduction. So those who favor hard-hitting rock 'n' roll served up with slam might well have wanted to look elsewhere. However, in the 30.7's development these were areas of focus where Magnepan has made outstanding improvements. I'm an omnivore of a music lover so I felt compelled to try out a little of everything, but had some initial reservations about spinning LPs that fell into either the rock or even heavier pop categories. I'm pleased to report that I wasn't ever disappointed (though a couple friends mentioned they missed some of the sock and hard-hitting impact of, say, Magicos). OK, so I didn't spin Dire Straits' “Money for Nothing” at concert levels (though Maggies benefit from a boost in volume and power) or even certain bass-laden tracks from my beloved EL VY. But a listen to cuts from the Police's *Synchronicity* highlighted Stewart Copeland's incredible percussion snap on “Wrapped Around Your Finger” and the make-you-jump drum-kit attack after the intro piano chords on “King of Pain” resonated in their sweet, simple progression. And Sting's upright bass on “Every Breath You Take” throbbled along, as equally compelling melodically as it was rhythmically.

Even now in my time with the 30.7s, what actually wowed me—often averted me—was a listen to JV's *Masterpieces by Ellington* LP [Acoustic Sounds]. Although all the instruments blew me away, what really hit me was when the baritone sax came in: that unbelievable and uncanny sense that the musicians were there, in their correct places, in my room. I know it sounds like an audiophile cliché but this the only way I can describe it. And the thrill of experiencing it with this splendid recording from 1949–50 was almost like traveling back in time.

Even though I haven't been immersed in this hobby as long as some other TAS staffers, I can say that the 30.7s are among a rare breed of loudspeakers that possess the power potential to reignite the sonic passions of even the most cynical audiophile. And while not cheap, they offer an amazing cost-to-performance ratio. Is the 30.7 destined to give the competition—in its price category and well beyond—a run for its money? All signs point to yes. **169**