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EQUIPMENT REVIEW

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Magico V2 Loudspeakers

In the last 14 years, I've reviewed more loudspeakers than any other type of audio product. Everything about them fascinates me, and particularly that they come in all shapes and sizes, and that no two models look identical or sound exactly alike. That makes for a never-ending range of possibilities, with always the potential for surprise.

The only frustrating thing about loudspeakers *today* is that sky-high prices are not only becoming common, but often defy common sense. Too often, I've seen speakers costing five or even six digits per pair that look nice and have fancy finishes, but whose performance is laid to waste by better-designed speakers at only a fraction of the price. This happens more often than not, and makes these high-priced speakers not genuine audio components but mere trophies of status. Of course, this doesn't describe *all* high-priced speakers, and I'm not saying that I'll never touch one -- I have, in the past, reviewed some very expensive speakers, a few of which have approached the state of the art. But too often, I've been let down.

I've said similar things many times in the past; none of it should surprise anyone who reads my reviews, including manufacturers. But despite knowing my feelings about high-priced speakers, Alon Wolf, president of Magico, sent me a pair of his brand-new V2 speakers, which cost $18,000 USD/pair -- and the V2 is his *least* expensive speaker yet. Magico's V3 costs $27,000/pair, the Mini II $30,000/pair, and the M5 $89,000/pair. The Model 6 and Ultimate II cost so much you don't even want to know. Some might think Wolf crazy to send me even his lowest-priced model; others might see him as a risk taker. Whatever the case, he sent me the V2s with nary a word.

SOUNDSTAGE! NETWORK PRODUCT OF THE YEAR 2009 AWARD WINNER

Category: *Best Product Introduction*

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Description

The V2s arrived in my house in tip-top shape, packed in two big boxes. After unpacking them, I was pleased with their modest size: 42"H x 10"W x 12"D. I hate huge speakers that practically reach the ceiling.

Viewed from the side, the V2 is tilted back a few degrees, more than likely to achieve the best acoustic integration of the outputs of its three drivers. At 120 pounds the V2 is heavy, but its small footprint and backtilt make it not all that stable, particularly on a carpeted floor. Stabilizing spikes are provided; these screw into the V2's bottom plate, and I recommend using them. Once the spikes were in place, they sat solidly.

A lot of the V2's weight is due to how the cabinet is made. The walls are of 17-ply Baltic birch, although all of the panels aren't made quite the same. The top, bottom, front, and back are of more traditional plywood construction -- large layers the dimensions of those panels stacked, glued, and pressed together. The side panels, which are the largest and require the greatest strength, are made of long narrow strips Baltic birch about 1" wide that run the height of the cabinet. These strips are stacked, glued, and pressed together to make up the width of the panel. As a result, the ply lines on the side run vertically -- which is what Wolf says the *V* in V2 stands for.

While Magico prefers Baltic birch for the main cabinet body, they're adamant that wood is a poor material to screw drivers into: it won't hold them securely enough, and the screw holes are too easily stripped, even if the drivers are removed and reinstalled only a few times. Hence the approximately 1"-thick front baffle of "aircraft-grade 6061-T aluminum," to which the drivers are bolted. This baffle's surface is slightly convex to eliminate diffraction on the horizontal plane (the convexity extends to the baffle's edges). The baffle's finish is perfect, which is important -- the V2 has no grille or provision for one: baffle and drivers are exposed in full-frontal nudity.

To secure the baffle to the cabinet, three rods of stainless steel extend through the cabinet from the rear panel, their threaded ends screwing into the back of the baffle. These are tightened by turning three big, exposed aluminum pucks on the rear panel. (Magico supplies a rod with which these pucks can be tightened.) Where the rods enter the cabinet, gaskets ensure that the sealed enclosure remains airtight.

The V2 has a 1" ring-radiator tweeter and two 7" woofers governed by what's called a "two-and-a-half-way" crossover: The two woofers work together in the deepest bass region to get the most output down low; however, only one of these woofers is assigned to also handle the midrange before handing off to the tweeter. Magico doesn't talk much about the details of their crossover, but I did squeeze this out of Alon Wolf: the top woofer transitions to the tweeter at just over 2kHz, while the bottom woofer goes up to 300 or 400Hz before it's rolled off. Magico says they design their speakers for smooth frequency response both on and off axis. That response is a claimed 32Hz-40kHz.