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MBL

101E MKII

L 15813 - 266 - F: 6,50 € - RD



Nagra Classic DAC II





101 E MIKII

MBL

A Concert **Experience**

In MBL's firmament, the X-Treme 101 MKII are among the most incredible loudspeakers in the world. Divided by two, and leaving out the 2 towers of active subwoofers, they become the 101 E MKII with their own passive cabinet, which we had the chance to appreciate at length. An unforgettable experience for all lovers of sound reproduction, but above all, of live music.

he 101 E MKII incorporates the famous Radialstrahler TT100 oval-shaped radial-emission woofer, which radiates at 360°. This is the cornerstone, as lower frequencies

are completely freed from their usual shackles. This 4-way is complemented by a midrange/ treble also radially emitting, using thin strips of carbon fiber, and a 12" subwoofer placed horizontally towards the floor. The overall coherence is exceptional, proving the acoustic mastery of MBL, whose technical design has been assured by Jürgen Reis for over forty years : a fidelity worthy of admiration !

IDENTIFIABLE **AMONG ALL**

The omnidirectional midrange/ treble head is the same for all MBL models, radiating 360°. The HT37 tweeter diaphragm is made of 24 fine unidirectional carbon-fiber blades. 5 mm wide and 130 microns thick. The 37 mm voice coil bathes in the air gap without any spider. The 12 segments of the MT50 midrange, 12 mm wide and 200 microns thick, are made of two-layer carbon fiber, this time woven. To reduce resonance, the blades are not all exactly the same width. The more rigid internal centering ensures perfect wedging, offering greater long-term stability. The large magnet supported by 4 colonnettes is exactly centered in relation to the voice coil, which is not held by any spider,

The loudspeaker consists of a passive subwoofer and Radialstrahl er bass/ midrange/ treble transducers that radiate 360°. And that changes everything.

moving freely in the air gap while reducing the distortion factor. These Radialstraeler loudspeakers are marvels of technology, manufactured entirely by hand at the MBL factory near Berlin, where a high post-measurement rejection rate ensures perfect quality.

A MELON WELL IN HIS HEAD

The jewel of this loudspeaker is the famous TT100 oblong ellipsoid, heir and evolution of the original concept invented over 40 years ago by Mr. Meletzky, founder of MBL in 1979, with his associates Bienecke and Lehnhardt. It processes the primordial band from 105 to 600 Hz, which corresponds to the frequencies encountered by many instruments; the range of a man's voice extends from around 100 to 800 Hz, and that of a woman's voice from 250 to 1500 Hz. This area is usually covered by loudspeakers loaded into boxes, unable to match the speed and harmonic richness of the TT100, which radiates 360° in the open air. Its 12 blades are made from an alloy of aluminum and magnesium proportioned to obtain the desired tension, and copper for the stiffening rods. A rubber gasket acts as a suspension between each blade. The blades are fixed at the top by a solid central bar, and moved by a coil in a magnetic field at the bottom, which pushes them in positive modulation and pulls them back, like a sphere pulsing 360 degrees.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Origin: Germany Price: 75400 euros Finish: black or white piano lacquer, silver or gold finishes Dimensions $(W \times H \times D)$: 450 x 1526 x 540 mm Number of channels: 4 Treble: MBL HT37 Midrange: MBL MT50 Bass: TT100 Subwoofer: 30 cm aluminium Acoustic centre: 114 cm Crossover frequencies: 105, 600, 3500 Hz Weight: 67 kg Impedance: 4 ohms Rated power: 500 W



Indirect sound waves are also created, of crucial importance, which fill the room as an instrument does, avoiding the excessive directivity inherent in conventional loudspeakers radiating from the front.

POWERFUL AND CONTROLLED BASS

The truncated-pyramid-shaped lower cabinet houses a 30 cm subwoofer, whose diaphragm is made of a light yet highly rigid double aluminum sandwich. The rear of the driver is enclosed by a closed volume with non-parallel, heavily reinforced walls, while the front, facing the floor, opens onto two wide, flared front vents.

The singular « melon » covers frequencies from 105 to 600 Hz. Dispersion fins are placed at its base. This band-pass subwoofer is therefore acoustically loaded on both the front and rear sides, so that it is ideally matched to the TT100. Linkwitz-Rilev 4th-order filtering is integrated into its own isolated cabinet at the rear, allowing bi-wiring or biamplification. Thanks to jumpers, the response can be fine-tuned: Smooth and Attack (capacitor added) in the bass, Natural and Rich in the midrange (inductance of air or iron core), Smooth, Natural or Fast in the treble, which subtly plays on the cabling : solid copper, 7-strand braided or silverplated. We stuck with Natural, and Smooth in the bass.

LISTENING

Timbres : The MBL E 101 MKII redefine sound realism, which may be disconcerting for those accustomed to the characteristics of most classic systems, even high-end ones: excessive directivity requiring a very precise sweet spot, over-definition of the treble, image projected forward, presence of speaker enclosure, etc. Here, we enter the real world of the concert, where timbres take shape in volume, materializing instruments in their real size, not magnified but accurate. The deep bass is ample and generous, building a solid foundation while blending harmoniously with the TT100. Some recordings leave you breathless, as they appear in a whole new light. Take, for example, the Tarentule-Tarentelle vinyl from the Atrium Musicae.

BANC D'ESSAI

MBL 101 E MIKII

We've listened to it so many times, where the perception of the different tessituras of the early instruments is incomparably true, materialized with their own volume, their right intensity and energy within the ensemble. The obviousness of the recording space asserts itself, without any dragging or coloration, in a natural softness of magical textures.

Dynamics : True dynamics are those that don't get noticed, just like in real life. But the loudspeaker must respond instantly to every demand of an impulse. That's exactly what the 101 E MKIIs do, with their almost infinite palette of gradable intensity. A murmur will remain a murmur, while the lively attack of a percussion will surprise with its acceleration, or an orchestral crescendo will have no limits, as it is released into space in all directions, not through a more or less narrow window. Carl Orff's illustrious Carmina Burana, conducted by Eugen Jochum and starring the sublime Gundula Janowitz, is a real unleashing in the finale, as rarely experienced. This power is not just concentrated in the middle zone, but is distilled across the entire sound spectrum, filling the room as if at a concert : the speakers then disappear. It's a great experience for the listeners present, and one reserved for MBL technology alone.

Soundstage : The most surprising thing is that you can position yourself completely on one side, listening will be identical, which is an important criterion for some enthusiasts around the world, but sometimes difficult to admit because of our habits. On a vinyl found at a high price at

Better Records, but unique : Sinatra's Swingin' Session ! the result on the 101 E MKII is breathtaking. Despite the date of the recording (1961), the orchestra is there in all its harmonic and rhythmic beauty, its presence imposes itself in a swirling and joyful energy, filling the volume of the room far beyond the speakers. When Frank Sinatra's voice arrives, deep, charming and sensual, the MBLs reveal their immense power to bring legendary performers to life for you, in your living room, like a mirage emerging from the past. Want to dive back into Stevie Ray Vaughan's Live concert ? Put the record on and listen !

Value for money :

At the very top end of the market, this notion has little meaning. But products compete within a given price range, however high that range may be. What we can say is that the 101 E MKII are truly unique, in their omnidirectional operation, tuning, musicality and outstanding workmanship. They are the foundation for even greater heights, being the only MBL to share the TT100 with the jewel in MBL's crown : the 101 X-Treme MKII, no less.

VERDICT

Their assertive personalities can be disconcerting, as they force you to really listen to the music as if you were at a concert, and not to hifi, with a magnifying effect on details or scalpel-like directivity, tending towards a hyper-realism that's ultimately... unreal. MBLs are infinitely more sensual, delectable and emotional, letting the music come to you without imposing or projecting it. You'll just have to match them carefully in terms of amplification and placement, as well as in terms of bass control. But these are the rare loudspeakers that you can listen to for hours without tiring of them, in a renewed sense of wonder : the MBL 101 E MKII are genuine electroacoustic prodigies. Bruno Castelluzzo

TIMBRES DYNAMICS SOUNDSTAGE VALUE FOR MONEY

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This changes everything!



«In MBL's firmament, the X-Treme 101 MKII are among the most incredible loudspeakers in the world. »

Bruno Castelluzzo