

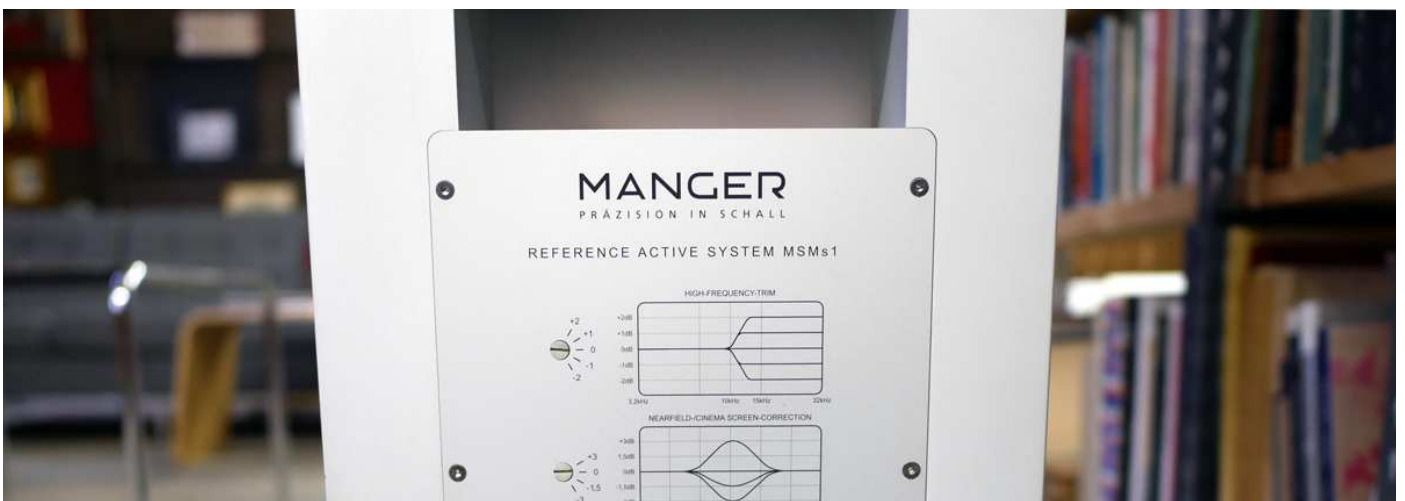


Review: Manger S1



The story of Manger Audio is a fascinating one as it is rich in history beginning in 1968 with Josef Manger's first patent application. As we all know, 1 hifi year is the equivalent of 7 human years, seeing as some hifi companies in existence today have owners who were not yet born in 1968, making Manger Audio's 40+ years. . .historic.

I recommend reading [The Manger History](#) as it includes lots of good information about the development of their loudspeakers. You may find it interesting to note, I did, that the company produced its first active speaker in 1986! I also recommend reading about the [Manger Sound Transducer](#) because it is also a good story and one filled with experimentation and science. It is also important to understand this transducer because it is largely responsible for the beautiful and captivating musical magic that the Manger S1 active speakers produce. The star of the show, so to speak.





I asked Daniela Manger, CEO of Manger, to touch on the key points of the Manger Sound Transducer:

The Manger sound transducer, invented by Josef W. Manger, is a bending wave driver. It is a bionical principle as the basilar membrane in our ears uses the same principle.

The combination of wide range frequency response from 360 Hz up to 45000 Hz and a transient behavior, which is working like a resistor without delaying or energy storing, leads to a unique transient performance in the sound reproduction.

The details to achieve this is a sandwich diaphragm which changes its thickness and structure from the inner to the outer and ends in a terminated ring. This gives a controlled frequency dispersion in the diaphragm without reflections from the outer perimeter. This means a point source radiation over the whole frequency range.

The diaphragm movement follows exactly the incoming signal, which means that its transient reproduction isn't overlayed by a mass-spring action of a dynamic driver.

In detail there are additional construction features, like a special voice coil, which was originally the very first patent related to the development of the Manger Sound Transducer.

The Manger Sound Transducer and all dedicated parts, like voice coil, diaphragm and its special plastics are made in house. To build it there is a need of highest mechanical precision, which goes down to micrometers and a high effort of handwork.

As you will soon read, I cannot argue with the points made regarding *outcome*.

There are number of settings located on the back panel of the S1s which you can see in the above pic. Here are the details of the workings:

- Input Trim Switch 11 Positions (-2.5 dB to 2.5 dB)
- Input Sensitivity Switch 6 dBu, 0 dBu
- AV Filter Hi-pass Filter (80 Hz, 12 dB)
- LF Module Switch LF -6 dB
- Room Acoustics Correction Switch Hi-pass at 100 Hz (+3 dB, 0 dB, -3 dB, -6 dB)
- Nearfield /Cinema Screen Correction Switch peaking at 3.25 kHz, 1.0 oct. (+3 dB, 0 dB, -1.5 dB, -3 dB)
- High Frequency Trim Switch Shelving Filter at 10 kHz (+2 dB, +1 dB, 0 dB, -1 dB, -2 dB)

In the barn, I left all of theses settings in their neutral position since this is the way they sounded best. These features, being able to fine-tune the speaker to the room, is a nice-to-have option.





The low frequency driver is a 200mm Glass Fiber-Polyester Sandwich Design which, when coupled with the Manger Sound Transducer, delivers a frequency response of 30 Hz – 40 kHz according to the company. The S1 are built like your proverbial tank, and a very well-built tank at that. Weighing in at 105.7 lbs each, I was very happy to be done with setup and minimal A/B'ing mainly because the S1s make comparisons to other speakers kinda pointless. More on that in a minute. The internal amplifiers provide 180 Watts of Class AB power to each Manger Sound Transducer and 250 Watts of Class AB power to each LF driver.

The front of the S1s house two LEDs near the bottom of the speaker which indicate power status (green / on) and Red when you're having too much fun (Red indicates that you've tripped the limiter which is there to protect that very special driver). There was one time when I saw a brief flash of Red, yes we were having that much fun, so I eased back a bit on the totaldac's volume control. I think the S1s are attractive in an understated way. I love (love) the finish on the review pair with the contrast between the dark gray/blue matte finish and bright silver of the heat sinks/back panel. There are other finish colors / options including matte and high end gloss and "a broad selection of the finest veneers." Overall, the build quality strikes me as top notch.

In terms of inputs, there are two on each speaker—IEC power inlet and balanced XLR—which means if you want more than one source feeding the S1s, you'll need to add a preamplifier with balanced output. In my experience, adding a preamplifier typically makes things sound more fleshed out so there's a chance, I'd say a good chance, that adding a (good) preamp into the picture, even in my review setup using the totaldac as source only, would make things sound more fleshed out.





The complete system in-use for the Manger review included my totaldac d1-seven acting as DAC and preamp paired with my dCS Network Bridge via an AudioQuest (AQ) Diamond AES cable. The totaldac sent out analog to the Mangers through lengths of Tellurium Q Black XLR cables. I recommend reading [this mini-review](#) of the AudioQuest power products because it details the reasons why I used the new PowerQuest power strip and the AQ Blizzard power cords with the S1s for the entirety of this review. In brief, everything sounded better this way. The dCS was plugged into my AQ Niagara 1000 power strip, as usual. Roon handled playback control, as usual.



In my [review preview](#) of the Manger S1s, I called them “stunning”. That’s about all I had to say back then and I wouldn’t change a word after spending a good month+ in their company. I’ve thought long and hard, listened long and hard, well it’s not really that hard to listen to music, is it?, and I’m going to try really hard to explain why they are so. Stunning.

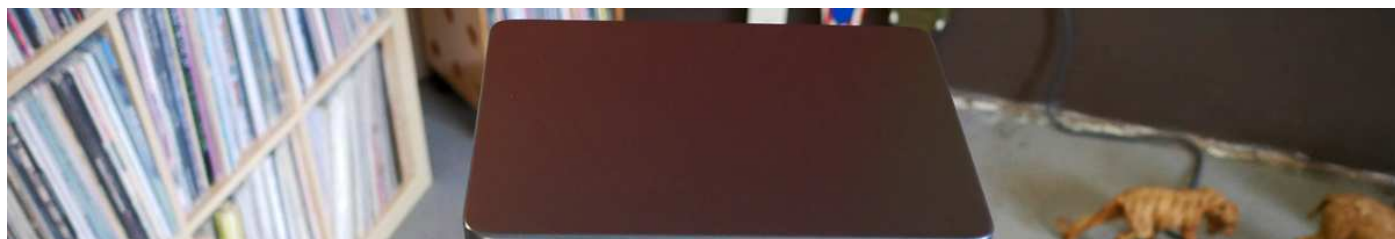
When people have asked about the S1s during the review period, I have said that there are aspects of their performance that remind me of Quad 57s. While I’ll still hold to that, it is a bit misleading unless I say more. The S1s deliver more of what’s on a recording—in a musically engrossing manner—than nearly every other speaker I’ve heard. I want to highlight *in a musically engrossing manner* so you don’t get the idea the S1s are glass cutters or offer Lowther-like razor-sharp sound and sizzle. Because they don’t. What the S1s do offer is the finest of fine detail and nuance, i.e. transient response, you’re going to hear from darn near any other loudspeaker (in my experience, of course). Familiar recordings are presented as if they’ve been re-mastered,

offering some of the most fully formed musical information I've heard.



Nice Cave's vocal inflections on "Love Letter" from *No More Shall We Part* are something I've been listen to for many years as a gauge of a systems ability to render micro-detail. The Manger S1s provided additional inflections and greater variety among them as compared to any other system I've had or heard. Tom Waits' "I'm Still Here" serves the same purpose, and all of the various elements in this short, simple, heartbreaking song are unveiled so you hang—not on every word—but on every moment of every word.

This uncanny unraveling of the recording certainly holds for every aspect of what's been recorded, it's just that when you hear a familiar vocal on the S1s for the first or 30th time you're going to think, and possibly say out loud, *stunning*. Stepping back to give a wider view of the S1s, I'll paraphrase Herb Reichert, one of my favorite writers on all things hifi, by saying things sound like they're supposed to sound. Piano rings out as true as I've heard with attack and decay fully resolved and there for the taking. Jimi Hendrix's guitar sounds *less distorted* because, at least this is my best bet, the Manger's are filling in more detail in and around the notes. Again, do not think surgical, think getting closer to the musician's intent.





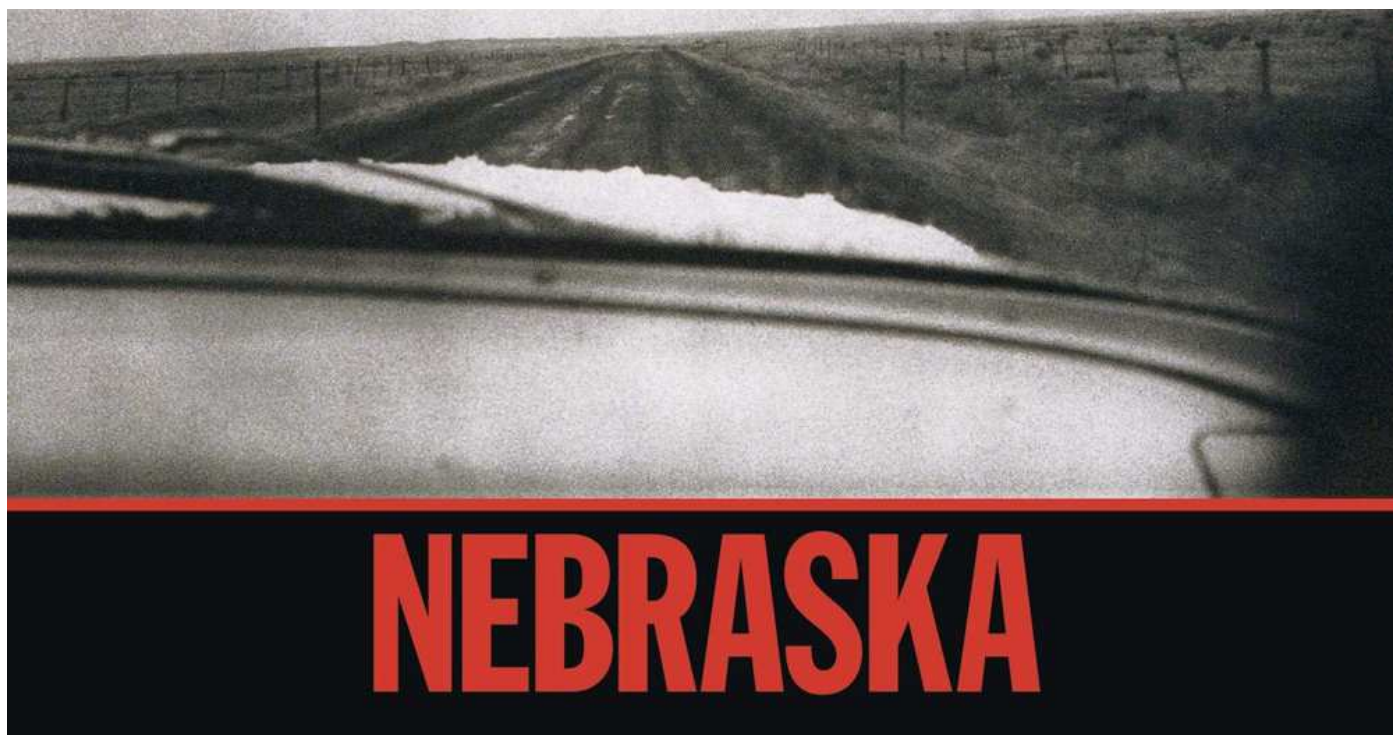
There's no genre or type of music that the Manger S1 excel at because they excel at everything. These speakers filled the 35 x 40 x 12' Barn with gut-crunching, dynamic as all get-out, rich, gripping, beautiful, big (in every dimension) music. The S1's ability to deliver a seamless bottom-to-top super-fine rendition of the recording with all of its nuance in tact is quite extraordinary. I also want to highlight *dynamic as all get-out* because the Mangers turn on a dime like no other speaker I've heard save some very high-efficiency speakers like old Altecs. They release energy as if they were ready to do so *before the event*, even when there's a maelstrom of sound going on. FKA Twigs "Figure 8" from *M3LL155X* gets fairly noisy fairly quickly and the S1s unraveled the multiple layers of sound and noise and madness like no one's business. It's as if the S1s knew "Figure 8" by heart so they were ready for everything that came their way—before it happened.

So you could say, I would, that the Manger S1 are a very fast speaker. So fast, they make other speakers sounds a bit slow and lacking in ultimate resolution by comparison. My system, the one I own and love, features the DeVore gibbon X which are another fast speaker but not as fast and super-resolving as the Manger. I know I'm repeating myself like a broken record of a horse being beaten but it's a point worth driving home—in this regard, the Manger's speed and transient response, I have not heard an equal.

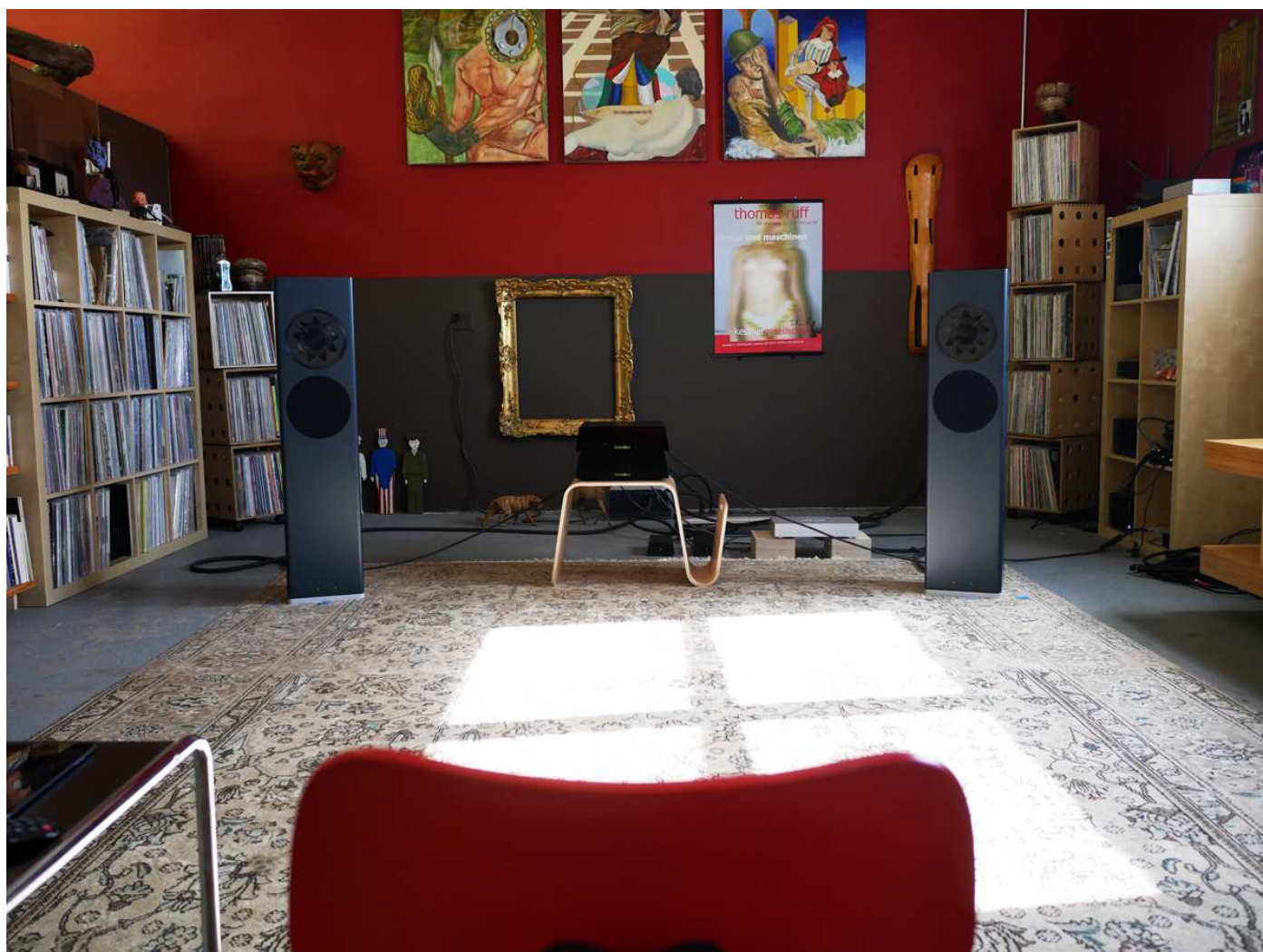
By comparison, the DeVore / Leben CS600 combination offers more fully fleshing out *tone*. While the S1s handle tone very well, they are not as richly saturated as the DeVore / Leben combo. That said, I have to wonder if its even possible to marry a fatter sound with the Manger's speed and suppleness. If it is possible, I haven't heard it. In terms of crazy sound imaging, where the speakers feel locked into the Barn like they are breathing together, I'd call the Manger vs. my system pretty much a draw although the DeVore / Leben combo can play louder.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN





The main difference with the Manger S1s is their ability to be shockingly present because they offer so much musical information in such a musical way—from every recording. They also throw out a concrete sound image so this unraveling of musical information takes place in a very specific place/space. I've joked, but it's really not a joke, you can gauge how far a performer was from the microphone. Again, please don't think I'm describing things that don't matter to the music—this super nuance, delicacy, and speed serve the music because they reveal more of it, and about it, than a lesser speaker. There was continued excitement over the month+ I spent listening to the S1s where queuing up a familiar album was all about looking forward to hearing new things on old, familiar recordings. Think addictive.



Bass is also tight and full, and if you're wondering if there are any driver integration problems, what with that magical Manger up top, my answer is no, not that I could hear. Music, and I played all kinds, sounded rich, full, and extraordinarily fleet-of-foot. As you can see from the photos, I have the S1s toed in so that the driver's path cross about 1.5ft. in front of the listening position. This was done at the direction of Daniela Manger and compared to no toe-in, the sound image was more dense, more corporeal, and more detached from the speakers. In other words, better in every way. Even with this toe in, the S1s sounded good, really (really) good, off axis. Even way off axis, like from the other side of the barn where Herb's quote comes to mind again—things [still] sound like they're supposed to sound. Nice.

While I spoke about tone saturation in a comparative way, I doubt anyone listening to the S1s will find a shortcoming. Besides, they do so many things so exceedingly well, and some exceptionally well, I would say the Manger S1s, all things considered, are *your last pair of speakers* kind of speakers. This also means they are your last amplifier(s). Yea, I'm talking about jumping off the endless upgrade merry-go-round and landing in the sweet spot with dizzying delight and less *stuff*.



The Manger S1 are, in a word, uniquely stunning. Of course all of this goodness comes at a price. That's where you come in. If you are looking for speakers + amp in the Manger S1's price neighborhood, you owe it to yourself to hear them. More so than most speakers, if you haven't heard them, you haven't heard them.

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Manger S1

Price:

\$24,995/satin finish

\$28,995/wood veneer
\$31,995/high gloss finish

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