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# HIFI-STARS

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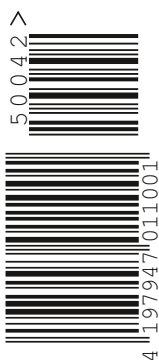
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HIFI-STARS



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Loudspeakers:  
Master One by AudioData Salzburg

## Emotions and accuracy perfectly united

The brand name AudioData might be known to many of our readers. Since 1982 this name is existing and the founder Peter Schippers always aimed to build the perfectly sounding loudspeaker. Since 2014 this company has been owned by Hannes Palfinger who was a former customer of Peter Schippers and valued the quality of his speakers. Hannes Palfinger is not just music enthusiast but also an engineer and perfectionist. He comes up with the same approach, namely building the “perfect loudspeaker”, continuously developing it further in order to reach out for the optimum.

Hannes Palfinger receives support by Franz Stöger. He is also someone who has been in the business for decades and his brand TONeART stands for high class HiFi. Well informed readers of our magazine will probably know his products well.

Last December I received an invitation by Hannes Palfinger to experience and test his latest flagship Master One in its passive version. AudioData headquarters located in Neumarkt close to Salzburg and the lake Wallersee offer an inspiring surrounding, so I went there for an entire day to listen to a selection of vinyls and CDs including some of my own music productions. I was really looking forward to this experience, since AudioData claims a very high-level approach, namely building the “perfect loudspeaker”. The Master One is the top model by AudioData therefore my expectations were quite high.



## First impressions

The Master One is really an impressive element in the room. Our version consisted out of a white shiny main body combined with a black shiny top element. The colours of the body elements can be selected individually only the top elements need to be out of a polished surface due to sound properties. The main body can also consist out of a wooden surface. Since the whole design and haptic feels very sophisticated and precious, a high “wife-acceptance-factor” might be guaranteed, just in case the speaker is supposed to be used in a loving room. Customers who own a separate music room might not have this issue but nice-looking elements in a room can never be wrong. The overall processing seems very high level and it might exceed the regular market expectations.

One aspect which must not be forgotten is the way how the product is shipped to customers. Therefore, tailormade flight cases, wooden boxes which are also used for stage equipment, are utilized. If customers do not want to keep these boxes, they can send them back to AudioData and will receive a refund. Doing this, packaging material is saved what is a contribution for protection of the environment

## How we listened

In the acoustically adjusted listening room of AudioData beside the Master One was a sophisticated set of amplification and sound sources. The Master One was amplified by a Symphonic Line power amplifier. As turntable we used a TONeART by Franz Stöger equipped with a Linn tone arm and a Benz Micro “SLR

Gullwing“-System while the CD player came from Symphonic Line. As speaker cables we applied the AudioData inhouse cable, while NF cables and power supply were provided by TONeART.

## Vinylmania

The largest share of our session had vinyl mainly caused by my very strong connection to this good old kind of media. This could be induced by the characteristics of vinyl as there are no DA-converters possibly covering some lacks of sound.

We started with a record by the former Nirvana drummer Dave Grohl named “Real To Reel“ (published 2013). Grohl bought the old but great sounding equipment from the SoundCity studio A in LA, after it went bankrupt, and integrated it into his “Studio 606“. On this album Dave Grohl played with great musicians such as Stevie Nicks (Fleetwood Mac), Rick Springfield and Paul McCartney. The whole recording was done on analogue devices and media. It was recorded and mastered by the legendary Neve 8087 console on tape machines. The first impression: Amazing! “You Can’t Fix This“, a song interpreted by Stevie Nicks brought her deep and strong voice into the room like I have never heard before. The calm song “If I Were Me“, which is driven by an acoustic nylon string guitar and cello, showed impressively how mechanics is involved in that song. The scratching of the bow across the cello strings and the sliding across the guitar strings were authentically recognizable but never intrusive. In more powerful songs, such as “A Trick With No Sleeve“, it was intriguing, how precise the location in terms of the radius of hitting the ride could be located. Even

though much more powerful songs, like in “Cut Me Some Slack“, interpreted by Paul McCartney also sounded impressive and stood right in the middle of the room. It seemed that the Master One could use some more amplification. Maybe a bi-amping setup might get even more accuracy and liveness out of the Master One. This impression was confirmed also by other songs of the same kind, such as “Killing In The Name Of“ or “Settle For Nothing“ by Rage Against The Machine. The last-mentioned song contains a very dominant



slapped bass. This kind of bass sound is quite challenging since it contains beside a significant low frequency also a fast-occurring high frequency range. Here it turned out that the Master One has everything under control.

Just about bass sounds: One song must not be missed in my tests is the track “Growing Up” by Peter Gabriel released on his album “Up” (2002). This song is very challenging when it comes to bass sounds, since it contains some different layers of bass tracks where electric and electronic bass sounds are combined. It is still not entirely clear to me how they recorded this track so that the amplitude always stays under control while having so many powerful tracks within lower frequencies. Listening to this song with the Master One made some aspects of this production clear to me. Obviously, resolution is one of the major strengths of the Master One. Just the HiHat sounds very harsh which is a known weakness of this recording.

### Percussion rocks

Now let’s come to songs with more complex rhythm sections. The album “Wolflight” by Steve Hackett contains a song named “Dust And Dreams”. In this song there is a dedicated percussion section. The playing technique and special resolution was shown precisely and clearly. In case you are a percussion player, the Master One might be a big favourite since it is easy recognizable how a percussion player played the instruments. The change of the different spaces let the listener drift through room and space, the Hackett-typical guitar sound included.

Coming back to percussions. The Eagles album “Hell Freezes Over” (1994) contains a very impressive live version of “Hotel California”. One special thing with this version is a very present and dominant percussion section. The congas go very deep and stand impressively within the entire room. The challenge for speakers within this song is to control these low frequencies in a way that they do appear too dominant. If this happens, listening to the recording can be exhausting after some time. The performance of the Master One exceeded also here my expectations. I know the whole record quiet well from listening it on my HiFi system, but I have to admit that the Master One played on a much higher level.



## Music is emotion

So far, we have been dealing with accuracy and resolution of sound. Even though this is an important point, we must not forget that music is also dealing with emotions. The above-mentioned song “Hotel California” is one of the live recordings of this album and the atmosphere of this concert room is brought to the listener in a very authentic and unique way.

Another very impressive example for transporting great emotions is the record “Ella & Louis Together“ by Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong. The voices of these two singers are prompting the listener’s feelings in a very deep way. In rooms with dimmed light and a

little bit of phantasy one can imagine Ella and Louis standing in the room. I got a similar impression with the song “No Sanctuary Here“ which I have found on a sampler by Stockfish Records. Especially the vocals convey feelings in very deep and intriguing way.

One remark concerning resolution must not be forgotten here. While listening to the record by Ella Fitzgerald and Lois Armstrong I forgot to put the puck on the turntable. After doing this, it turned out that especially the vocals sound more spacious and more touchable. The fact that the presence of the puck is obviously hearable shows the extraordinary abilities of the Master One.

But coming back to musical emotions, I do not want to leave the impression that only vocal tunes can contain musical emotions. Music can trigger emotions to people in many different ways. Since I could describe my entire life by a soundtrack, some dedicated songs cause connection to some specific epochs of my life. One of these albums is "Oxygène" by Jean Michel Jarre, which reminds me of the time I started to produce my own music. Jarre created spacious sound which take the listeners to other musical dimensions. The Master One provided this dedicated sound in a way that the time I felt like going through this period of my life again. I have to state that the Mater One is an impressive symbiosis between accuracy, resolution and emotions which I have never experienced before.

## Ones and Zeros

Finally, some examples of the digital world must not be ignored. The headline must not be seen just in connection to the kind of media but also in terms of the media's quality. A loudspeaker like the Master One shows clearly, which recording was done in a good quality and which must be improved. I experienced this with my album "Emotional Distances" (2015). There are some song which I would do the same again, such as "Treachery" or "Örnsköldsvik". The song "Far From Home" shows the opposite. It sounds flat and I would do some improvements here next time. Thanks to the Master One I can get some learnings for my own musical work in the studio.





Other CDs, which I have considered as a good recording, appeared to be a disappointing experience. One of these examples is “Live From Madison Square Garden“ by Steve Winwood and Eric Clapton. This album sounded flat and somehow boring. Hence, as an owner of a loudspeaker of a kind of the Master One you should be aware of the quality of recordings and to make sure that you own a One instead of a Zero. “Shit in, Shit out” is an old and established wisdom from the work in studios, which will be shown directly with no excuses.

The improvements in higher price ranges are getting smaller and smaller. The Master One has its eligible place in these high-end spheres. Precision and emotions go together combined with a high level of esthetical appeal, which will not only have a positive impression to people with affinity to great sound but also to those who have an emphasis on design. The Master One is obviously a great mile stone when it comes to loudspeakers.

## To the point

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If there is a perfect loudspeaker, the Master One is already quite close to it. AudioData created a speaker which is able to erase the apparent contradictions between precision and emotions. AudioData’s Master One is obviously a reference when it comes to unite precision, resolution and emotions. Furthermore, these loudspeakers combine a great sound with a high level of esthetical design.

Mario Buchinger

### INFORMATION

Stereo passive loudspeakers  
AudioData Master One  
Price: 80.000 Euro  
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