



## MBL 101 E MKII

Welcome to MBL Akustikgeräte. The Berlin-based company manufactures loudspeakers and electronics that are instantly recognizable. In the 70s, Wolfgang Meletsky was an engineer and a great admirer of Mahler. A regular visitor to concert halls, he came up against the question that every music lover asks himself one day: "why can't we experience the same sensations as we do at the Berlin Philharmonic with our hi-fi systems?" This is because good old stereo systems are guilty of spatial limitations - not to mention those in terms of resolution, timbre and dynamics - which Meletsky hoped one day to overcome.

### The Radial Radiator is Born

How did he do it? By doing away with directivity, thanks to a 360° radiating loudspeaker. The MBL 100 Radialstrahler was introduced in 1979 at the IFA trade fair in Berlin. Over time, MBL created exclusive systems such as the four-way, two-part MBL 101 X-Treme MKII, with a 3-way radial low-mid-high section in d'Appolito on one side, and a column of three active subwoofers enclosures on the other, for each channel, all weighing in at 984kg.

Less elitist, the system presented by Eratone and MBL at the event in Mougins features the 101 E MKII. 153 cm high, 45 cm wide, 54 cm deep and weighing 67 kg each. These four-way floor-standing speakers position their three-way radial section on top of a passive band-pass subwoofer. This subwoofer, whose load is tuned by two vents, features a 30 cm aluminum cone bass driver that diffuses downwards through the vents and covers the first two octaves between 29 Hz and 105 Hz. Protected by a canvas and aluminum canopy, the Radialstrahler is in three parts. What MBL calls a melon - more the size of a watermelon - is the woofer, formed from twelve curved blades of aluminum-magnesium alloy with copper wires. This woofer handles two and a half octaves from 105 Hz to 600 Hz. It is relayed by a midrange-tweeter unit, also diffusing at 360°, with the midrange delivering 600 Hz to 3500 Hz, and the tweeter reaching up to 40 kHz. The principle is identical to that of the "melon", but the twelve bands, in due proportion to the frequencies to be reproduced, are made of carbon fiber. The weak point of this principle is its very low efficiency, 81 dB/W/m. The counterpart of 360° diffusion.

### Listening Test

*MBL's N11 preamp / N21 amplifier pairing from the Noble Line series is the perfect solution for powering these speakers. The 101 E MKII has an impedance of 4 Ohm, and a nominal power rating of 500W. The 2 x 210W 8 Ohm N21 stereo amp is capable of 2 x 620W at 2 Ohm. The LASA 2.0 amplifier architecture combines the low distortion of Class A, the stability of Class AB, and the efficiency of Class D. The N11 "unity gain" preamp is based on the observation that adding gain to a digital source delivering 2V simply raises the noise level at the amp input. The N11 adapts to the source; almost nil with a digital source, the gain is 8 to 12 dB for a phono stage (phono module is optional). The circuits are symmetrical (to reduce noise).*

*Anticipating a wide potential range of acoustic environments, the manufacturer has made provision for acting on the speaker's dynamic and spectral behavior by means of jumpers modifying the bass, midrange and treble registers. The right choice in our case: Attack vs Smooth for the bass, Rich vs Natural for the midrange, Natural vs Smooth or Fast for the tweeter. To achieve this, MBL plays with the crossover components and their constituents: a plus or minus capacitor in the bass, an air-core or core coil in the midrange, braided wire, thick single-strand or silver-plated wire to modify the response of the tweeter.*

*The result is an extremely fine reproduction and the immersive dimension promised by MBL. Not without a downside: the 81 dB output requires the use of really muscular amplification, and the system is not exempt from a slight dynamic compression of the loudspeakers as soon as the volume is turned up to sound like a concert, even though the immersive effect and resolution are the main attraction of this system.*

*Other amplifiers may be suitable, but MBL's intimate knowledge of its product means that it has designed its electronics accordingly, and the result is there. Their marriage delivers refined sonorities, bordering on a certain mannerism sometimes aimed at exalting an embellished representation of voices and instruments in the midrange. Thanks to the electronics, these speakers are perfectly suited to classical instrumental and vocal music, and by extension to all acoustic music (jazz, folk, traditional). On the other hand, it's hard to imagine them sounding like a nightclub, although once in the Attack position, the cabinet did surprise us. The territory of the 101 E MKII is a blend of sensuality, spatialization and refinement all their own. Recreating presence, emotion and context, rather than deconstructing and flattening. Such is their promise, such is their noble mission. With distinction*

**PPI : MBL 101 E MKII : 75 400€.**  
**MBL N11 : 14 600€.** **MBL N21 : 16 500€.**  
 Many thanks to the Eratone team for their enthusiasm and availability.

[delta-audio.fr](http://delta-audio.fr)    [eratone.fr](http://eratone.fr)

Le Radialstrahler ou radiateur radial en trois parties – boomer, médium, tweeter – déploie le son de manière omnidirectionnelle.

