



Is this more brilliance from Q Acoustics?

by [Ed Selley](#) Nov 18, 2016 at 7:44 AM



What is the M7 2.1 System?

The Q Acoustics M7 2.1 System is the latest offering from the company and is intended to bridge the gap between the company's conventional stereo and multichannel offerings and the more lifestyle end of the market where customers might be more likely to choose something like a soundbar. Some of the system should be familiar to longer term visitors to the forum but they have been tied together by a new arrival to the range.

Whether this is a plan by the good folks at Q Acoustics to create another category that they can seek to dominate or a logical bit of adaptation is something we shall have to try and work out. The logic of creating such a system is clear enough to see though. With the ongoing interest in augmenting the sound of somewhat lacklustre flat TVs, there is also a widening of the categories of product that can do this, all the way from full home cinema systems down to compact soundbars. Q Acoustics believes

perfectly logically that the interest in a self contained system that offers decoding, amplification and the option of genuine stereo is going to be a desirable one.

There is no shortage of competition though and while the speakers and subwoofer that make up a significant part of this system are known quantities, the amplification and decoding – something that Q Acoustics has been required to dabble in to make other products – this is the first time they can be judged at least partially in isolation. Is this another shoo-in for the Q Acoustics trophy cabinet or a piece of opportunism?

Specifications



As noted, not all of this collection of equipment is brand new. The speakers in the M7 2.1 System, as the name does rather suggest, have been lifted wholesale from the 7000 series sub-sat package. This is pretty logical thinking – if you already have speakers that work well as a 2.1 system, it would be pretty foolish to design more of them. Additionally, when I reviewed the [7000i 5.1 system](#) nearly three years ago, I noted that it demonstrated genuinely excellent performance in 2.1. In using them, Q Acoustics is hardly starting out at a disadvantage.

The 7000i satellite is fairly unusual judged by the standards of the breed as it's built around three drivers rather than the more usual two. The larger drivers ('large; being a relative observation here) are 75mm dynamic units that sit above and below a 25mm ring radiator type tweeter. This trio gives the satellite a narrow frontal area which makes for a reasonably easy speaker to place in a domestic environment.

The matching 7070si subwoofer is at first glance, a fairly conventional looking device. Closer inspection reveals it to be slightly more unusual. A development of the rather radical 7070 subwoofer – a design which used novel concepts like a buried driver and voided chassis to produce a device that was compact and aesthetically elegant but still packed a significant punch. This model does take some of the radical

elements out of the design – which while possibly detrimental to the absolute performance, do make it an order of magnitude easier to get set up and running. An eight inch dynamic driver and a 150 watt internal amplifier provide the go and you get adjustable level and crossover controls with a stereo RCA input.



The new component that ties the system together is an amplifier and DAC unit that is called the Q-AVA. This is a half width box that contains an amplifier rated at 50 watts into 4 ohms (which the 7000 satellites are also rated into) and a selection of inputs. The inputs themselves are fairly conventional. There are two optical digital connections rated to 24/192kHz (supporting equipment permitting) and a single analogue connection. Finally, the Q-AVA supports Apt-X Bluetooth for wireless connection to a suitably equipped device.

This is a reasonable selection of inputs but there are some minor frustrations. I freely concede that two optical inputs is useful but I do miss the fitment of a coaxial digital connection. I also find the decision to use a 3.5mm jack connection for the analogue input to be a wholly confusing one too. The rear panel is not so crowded as to preclude the fitment of a twin RCA connection and this is the more common connection that people are likely to use. I've no complaints with the Bluetooth fitment though as the format is rapidly becoming a very useful means of accessing multiple services via a single phone or tablet.

The Q-AVA connects to the satellites via conventional speaker terminals (although if you are ordering speaker cable for it specially, you will need to remember that while the Q-AVA terminals will accept banana plugs, the terminals on the satellites won't) and the subwoofer by a single RCA output. The crossover is fixed at 125Hz which is higher than I ran it when I had the choice of adjusting it but not unduly so. The Q-AVA also comes with a cinema EQ button that is designed to optimise the system for

movie playback. Exactly what it does to achieve this is unspecified but output does definitely increase when you push it.

Design



Given that critical components of this system have been on sale for quite a while, the overall appearance of the system isn't going to be seen as too radical. Having the sub and satellites come back after a few years is good however because it confirms that these are excellent bits of industrial design. The Satellites have the ability to be wall mounted and offer flexible placement due to their sealed design and compact dimensions. The subwoofer is equally room friendly and easy to accommodate and design touches like the concealed input panel (although nowhere as concealed as the original 7070 had them) keep the lines clean.

The Q-AVA doesn't do anything to mess the effect up. It is compact, innocuous and easy to find room for. Like the supporting speakers, the build quality is good and the general aesthetic is something that should work in a variety of locations. I do miss the fitment of a volume control knob instead of the buttons that the unit actually has but otherwise it is hard to fault the general design of the Q-AVA. As a package, the M7 2.1 System does face a variety of rivals both in single chassis soundbar form, more conventional stereo all in one systems with and without speakers included and indeed from full size separate systems. Where the Q Acoustics has the advantage is that it manages to offer the possibility of proper stereo without taking up excessive amounts of space. The connectivity does without any form of video switching but should be able to work with a variety of equipment and form the basis for a variety of setups.

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How was the M7000 2.1 System tested?

The M7 2.1 System has been setup with the satellites tested on both Soundstyle Z60 stands and bookending a Quadraspire QAVX rack. The sub has mostly been tested at the front of the room on axis with the satellites. A [Panasonic GT60 Plasma](#) connected to Sky HD and a Cambridge Audio 752BD player has been connected to one optical connection while a [Naim ND5XS streamer](#) with XP5 XS PSU has been connected to the 3.5mm input. Bluetooth testing has been via a Motorola Moto X 2014. Material used has included Blu Ray, Netflix, Sky, lossless and high res FLAC and AIFF, [Tidal](#) Spotify and the [AVForums podcast](#).

Performance with Film and TV

The M7 2.1 System does not accept any digital formats beyond 2.0 PCM and SP/Dif and neither does it carry out any form of virtual surround processing on the incoming signal. As such, what you will hear from the Q Acoustics is straight stereo. This might sound underwhelming in a category of product where various impressive decoding options are available from rivals but after a little listening, I'm not sure many listeners will care. Enjoying a spot of *Wreck it Ralph* (the choices of film for review work is unavoidably shaped by the presence of the three year old in the house), the Q Acoustics is a very capable partner indeed. The 7000 satellite is an interesting speaker in that if used in certain contexts, it can almost come across as a little soft. Q Acoustics has carefully ensured that when used with the sort of amplification that most customers are likely to use with it, there is no chance at all that it will ever become harsh or fatiguing. As they have been able to design the Q-AVA with a view to partnering the

satellites, this combination delivers a performance that shows off the speakers to best advantage.



This means that you get plenty of punch and drive to the presentation but even under severe provocation it stays smooth and refined. The tonality is good and the speakers have no difficulty differentiating between different sounds and keeping everything sounding cohesive and controlled. Perhaps most importantly in the context of film viewing, the effect is pleasingly immersive. The M7 2.1 System isn't creating any sense of rear channels but it constructs a soundstage that doesn't leave you pining for more energy from the back.



When you switch to broadcast TV, the Q Acoustics is no less capable. It copes admirably with an episode of *Westworld*, dealing with the varying volume levels and very fine details without any issue and without losing anything. Compared to a larger pair of speakers, the 7000 satellite can be felt to 'beam' information very slightly and depending on the toe in and distance from them, you might end up with a clear sweet spot but any attention paid to setup will largely nullify it. It is also worth noting that the system delivers much of its capabilities without driving the bolts out of it.

Performance with Music



Back in the heady days of 2013 when the 7000i system was released, I noted in my review of it that; *I honestly feel that it breaks new ground for sub-sat systems running in two channel.* Mercifully, these comments have not been rendered wildly inaccurate by the passing years but there are some caveats about the M7 2.1 System that are worth noting.

The good news is that this is still a genuinely good listen in stereo. With Tidal played via the Naim ND5 XS connected to the analogue input, the Q Acoustics does a good job with the splendidly random *Loves Voodoo* by MY BABY, the Q Acoustics takes its impressive tonality and sense of control and uses it to deliver the bluesy guitars and snap of percussion very effectively. With material like this, the Q Acoustics demonstrates that the handover between the satellites and sub is really very good indeed. Provided that the sub is on axis with the satellites, the effect is very convincing indeed, helped in no small part by the sub having very similar tonality to the satellites. The caveat about the sub being on axis is important though. Judged by the standards of an affordable 2.1 system, the Q Acoustics is really very good indeed but based on some tests in the room with the speakers connected to a Cambridge Audio 851A which allows for the crossover to be set on the sub, does suggest that the extra 25Hz that the M7 2.1 System

demands over the crossover I set on the 5.1 system when it was here does make it a little more directional.

If you can put the sub at the front, the system will be the better for it. The extra part of the frequency response the sub is being asked to reproduce means it can sound just fractionally congested when driven hard. This is not a problem judged against most 2.1 rivals but might need to be taken into account against a conventional stereo system.



Where the M7 2.1 System pulls some points back is the performance over Bluetooth. If you have a remotely capable device connected to it, the performance of the system with lossless files is really excellent. Because the Q Acoustics will simply play what the device sends, the flexibility the connection offers is considerable. To add to the appeal, the range is very good and has proved to be utterly stable in use.



Q Acoustics M7 2.1 System : A 2.1-channel All-in-One system.

[View the Q Acoustics M7 2.1 System full product page](#)

Suggested Retail Price at Launch: £800.00

Released: October 2016

Q Acoustics M7 2.1 System Type

Channels	2.1
Q Acoustics M7 2.1 System Features	
Bluetooth	Yes
Q Acoustics M7 2.1 System Sound	
Processing	Advanced DSP Modes
Amplifier Type	Class D
Amplifier Power	50 watts
Q Acoustics M7 2.1 System Product Properties	
Warranty	1 Year
Release Year	2016
Colour	Black and White
Q Acoustics M7 2.1 System Connections	
Digital Audio Inputs Optical	2
Speaker Terminals	Bare Wire Banana Spade