



Mission 700

Hi-Fi's retro revival is now in full effect and the process of revisiting your back catalogue, selecting something that looks suitably iconic and bringing it back to life with a smattering of modern technology is the current thing. Mission has already brought the revitalised 770 to market, a process that has also seen it relocate production back to the UK. Similarly, it has now resurrected the 700 as a more affordable and slightly more room-friendly option.

In one crucial regard, the 700 is even more iconic than its big brother. The original was the first Mission speaker to invert the driver arrangement, with the mid/bass unit over the tweeter. In what would become a company trademark, the intention was to aid time alignment. The drivers now are in keeping with the originals, but suitably updated to reflect technical developments. The 28mm soft dome tweeter is shared with the 770 and reflects the changes in voicing over

the original, which used a rather smaller 19mm unit.

This hands over to a 165mm mid/bass driver that is specific to the 700. Like the original, it is made from polypropylene but it is now stiffened via mineral loading and placed in a die-cast basket that has very large cutouts to minimise the amount of energy being radiated back through the driver array. The motor is also considerably beefed up to reflect the rather higher power outputs that represent normal these days.

The two drivers are managed by a crossover that reflects modern design practise. The network was extensively computer mapped before a listening process began to fix the details and perfect the sound. Like the drivers it controls, the crossover is enhanced to handle modern amplifiers and makes use of extremely short signal paths to minimise losses. Unspoken but apparent in the material Mission supplies with the review samples is the suggestion that the original 700 –

like most speakers of its generation – mapped its crossover as a 'best case' to handle the two drivers leaving their performance envelope. The wider operating margin of these newer drivers means that a much more optimised process can be followed. Connection is via a single set of sturdy speaker terminals.

The cabinet that houses this is dimensionally identical to the original. This means that, while the 700 is more compact than the 770, it's still reasonably hefty compared with some key rivals. The same process of modern improvements under the skin are applied here too. This is rather stiffer and more inert than the original and the large front port also benefits from modelling to make it quieter in operation. The measurements that the 700 presents are fairly benign too. The 86dB/W sensitivity is a little on the low side, but that impedance means that it doesn't need vast amounts of power to sound good.

The really clever part of all of this beavering away under the skin is that the aesthetic of the revised 700 is still reflective of the original. This won't be to everyone's taste obviously, but if it does appeal to you it makes most other speakers at the price feel bland and

What this means is that *New Era* by Black Lilies is urgent and attention grabbing. The 700 isn't an aggressive speaker; connected to a Naim Supernait 3 (HFC 456) and Zidoo Neo Alpha (HFC 492) it is almost impossible to provoke into sounding forward or harsh, but there is a speed and willingness to really attack the title track that feels very much part of the Mission 'house sound.' There is a speed and fluency here that feels quite different to the bigger and more relaxed 770.

What's useful about this is that it doesn't translate to making slower and more considered material sound relentless or unnaturally forced in any way. *In the Morning (Grandmother's Song)* by Eliza Shaddad loses nothing of its emotion and sadness. This is helped by impressive tonal accuracy. Mission is keen to stress that there is less midrange emphasis with the reimagined model than there was with the original, but this is as much to do with the fact that the frequency extremes have been beefed up as anything else. Shaddad's vocals are gloriously rich and tangible in the performance and across a wide selection of instruments, the 700 delivers the goods.

That relatively large cabinet helps too. Mission's claim of 45Hz at +/-3dB is effortlessly bettered in room under test and, more than out-and-out depth, there is an

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sanitised. So long as you accept the Mission won't blend in when sat in most rooms, particularly with the grilles off, you can use it as a feature in that space. The good news doesn't end there either. The smaller speaker is every bit as well made as the 770 and the use of real-wood veneers and the option of a sturdy and well-finished stand (£200) mean that the 700 has to be seen as extremely good value for something built in the UK.

Sound quality

I have the good fortune to spend a fair bit of time with the larger 770 before the 700 arrives and this highlights some intriguing differences between the two. The 700 is not a shrunken 770, however much the two designs might share. Why this might be the case is open to debate, but I think that the most significant reason is the 700's driver layout. Listening to the 770 is a deeply pleasurable experience; a big, wide baffle speaker giving a classic presentation. It is more definably 'Mission' in how it sounds,



The Mission passes through the test lab straight after the Neat Petite Classic (HFC 495), which is another piece of reconstructed nostalgia, but one that feels a little different in use. The Neat takes themes from the original which was younger than the Mission and makes more changes on the new model meaning that the Petite Classic looks and feels like a modern design. The 700 is bigger and more unashamedly retro and, while I like this very much, there is no arguing that the smaller and more subtle Neat will work in spaces that the Mission won't. Both speakers are joyous to listen to, though.

The sturdy, well-finished stand will set you back an additional £200



authority to the 700 that feels in keeping with comparatively priced floorstanders. Some elements of the performance are to do with the shape and design of the cabinet too. That relatively wide baffle helps give the 700 a fairly open and spacious presentation although one that lacks a little of the airiness of the bigger 770. Trying it with different pieces of source equipment and amps shows that the basic behaviour doesn't change significantly. If you are being critical, you could say this points to a

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slight lack of transparency, but you could just as easily say it will do what it does largely independent of partnering equipment.

The combination of speed and space puts the Mission in a slightly different place to most rivals; where one or the other virtue is prioritised. At some points under test, it delivers a performance that is a little different to anything I can recall passing through the same space. *Assimilate* by Skinny Puppy is the sort of thing that benefits from this useful urgency, but what really helps is the spaciousness that

crowbars open this dense and angry record and gives it a little space to breathe. There's not much else anywhere near this price point that is as well suited to this sort of music.

Conclusion

What results is a singular speaker that looks and sounds much more in line with Mission's core principles and, while I feel that the result might not be as much of a formidable all-rounder as the 770, if you like what the 700 does very little else will do. While it might be at least partly fuelled by nostalgia, the speaker that results feels effortlessly up to date. This is a fascinating arrival at the price point and one that deserves to win many new admirers. **ES**

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Fast, spacious, truly believable well made and attractive

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Not completely sonically transparent, large

BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★ **WE SAY:** A different take on the two-way standmount, but a rewarding one nonetheless

EASE OF DRIVE ★★★★★

OVERALL

★★★★★