

Focal Bird 2.1 system



- \$1,388
- 2x mid-range driver with aluminium dome tweeter
- Amplifier output: 2x 35watts, 1x 80watts
- 1x 6.5-inch woofer
- Integrated wireless transmitter

By Aaron Tan

French audiophile specialist Focal is dabbling in the lifestyle market with a set of loudspeakers that sound as good as they look.

The newly minted Bird 2.1 system is designed for music lovers who crave the high-quality audio of audiophile gear.

Setting up the system, which comprises a pair of satellite speakers and a stereo amplifier with a built-in subwoofer, is a cinch.

Hook up a CD player to the amp using digital and analogue inputs, connect the satellites with the bundled speaker cables and you are ready to crank up the music.

If you have an iPhone or iPod, plug the wireless transmitter into your Apple device to stream music over the air to the sound system.

Bird 2.1 delivered the goods in almost every tune I threw at it.

In an audiophile CD recording of Japanese drummers striking o-daiko drums, the vibration of the drum skin is clearly audible.

During the performance, there is distinct stereo separation of a drummer's call as it travels from the right channel to the left.

All the drummers' calls are very clear, riding just below the surface of the drum in the background.

Bird 2.1 also held its own in Clair Marlo's It's Just The Motion, a song I often use to assess an audio system's ability to handle vocals in the midst of accompanying music.

Marlo's ethereal vocals rise above the instruments with a full and warm rendition that does not sound too congested.

While her vocals and those of the accompanying male singer both occupy centrestage at one point, you can still sense a definite space around each vocalist.

Bird 2.1 does not falter even at the loudest volumes, thanks to 80 watts of power delivered to the subwoofer and 35 watts to each satellite.

But as with any loudspeaker set-up, speaker placement is critical to get the best out of your system.

Set the Bird's amplifier in a horizontal position with the subwoofer facing downwards for deeper bass or vertically if you wish to tone down the lows. Bass levels can be further adjusted using a knob at the amplifier's rear.

Ensure, too, that the satellites are well spaced out to accentuate stereo separation. These speakers deliver room-filling sound.

Strangely missing from this system is a power button on the amplifier's front panel. To switch off the system, you have to reach for the power switch at the back of the amplifier.

Aaron Tan is an infocomm professional

HOT ■ Excellent audio quality
■ Easy to set up

NOT ■ No power switch on front panel