

## Genesis G7.1f Loudspeakers

August 15, 2009



“...a **complete package**...”

I was attracted by several things about the Genesis G7.1f loudspeaker, which I first heard, however briefly, at the 2009 Consumer Electronics Show — things that would seem to make it attractive to a large segment of today's audiophile marketplace.

First is the price: \$7999 USD per pair. Yes, it's higher than entry level for a high-end floorstander, and still expensive for most people — more than triple the price of the EgglestonWorks Dianne (\$2500/pair), which I wrote about back in May. But eight grand is accessible to many in an audiophile marketplace that routinely sees überspeakers costing six figures, and a midpoint that seems to hover somewhere between \$10,000 and \$15,000 per pair.

Second, the G7.1f, at least on paper, has the makings of a good value for its configuration alone: it's a five-driver, three-way loudspeaker with an active bass section. The active (*i.e.*, powered) bass section at least implies that it will have good low-frequency extension and therefore might not need such reinforcement from a subwoofer. Not to mention that it shouldn't need as much power from a partnering power amplifier to reproduce energy-sapping bass frequencies. The EgglestonWorks Dianne is a two-way, all-passive loudspeaker, and thus has limitations in absolute output capability and deep-bass extension. The Genesis G7.1f proposes to address these areas; as such, its price seems more reasonable.

Third, the G7.1f has a rather small footprint (48"H x 12"W x 14"D) and a manageable weight (82 pounds), all wrapped up in an attractively finished package sure to be welcome in many living rooms.

On paper, therefore, the G7.1f *could* be a winning formula: decent price, reasonable size, three-way configuration, and powered bass. Sign me up for a review pair.

### Details

The basic specs of the G7.1f are impressive. Genesis claims a frequency response of a low 22Hz way out to 36kHz, +/-3dB — a very wide bandwidth. Sensitivity is pegged at 89dB/W/m, with a nominal impedance of 8 ohms, indicating that it should be appropriate to pair the G7.1f with a modest power amp.

Starting at the bottom of its driver complement is a side-firing 8" aluminum-cone woofer powered by its own internal 180W class-D amplifier. A servo system, rarely seen in today's active subwoofers, is used to ensure that the driver operates in a linear fashion with low distortion. Essentially, the servo continuously monitors the woofer's movement and compares it to the input signal. When the woofer is "off track" — *i.e.*, its output doesn't match the signal input — a corrective signal is applied to the woofer to maintain linear motion. Examples of times when the woofer might not operate linearly, according to Genesis, are when the woofer is not moving fast enough to track the music, or not stopping at precisely the appropriate moment. A servo system corrects for these conditions. Genesis claims that nonlinear distortions in the bass section are reduced dramatically over active systems that don't employ a servo system.

In regard to setup, the G7.1f is unusually flexible. The powered bass section includes a Bass Gain control — a continuously variable knob that lets the user dial in the desired amount of low-frequency grunt. At the other end of the frequency spectrum, a Tweeter control tailors the high-frequency output of the proprietary, circular, forward-firing ribbon tweeter. These are potentially valuable controls: Do you have a large room that needs a bit more bass, or a smaller room that requires you to place the speakers close to the front wall? No problem — just turn the G7.1f's Bass Gain control up or down to achieve the level of bass appropriate for your room, speaker placements, and taste. Same goes for the highs: If you're in a highly absorptive environment and need a little extra HF *zing*, the Tweeter adjustment is there for just that reason.

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As for the rest of the drivers: A 6" titanium-cone mid-woofer is placed above, and another below, the ribbon tweeter, which itself is offset to one side of the cabinet. (Genesis recommends you place the speakers so that the sidepanels closer to the tweeters are facing each other.) With the offset tweeter, this wouldn't be classified as a strict D'Appolito array, in which the woofers are mounted directly over and under a centrally mounted tweeter, though the G7.1f benefits from some of the advantages of that type of configuration. For instance, with two mid-woofers you should expect lower distortion in the midband; each driver is being stressed less to produce a desired output than it would be if it were acting alone.

Although the G7.1f is considered a three-way loudspeaker, it does have one more driver to consider: a second circular ribbon tweeter that fires to the rear, its output out of phase with the output of the front tweeter. This phase relationship of the G7.1f's tweeters makes the loudspeaker a dipole in the highs. The goal of this arrangement, according to Genesis, is twofold: First, the rear-firing tweeter adds some extra energy in the uppermost treble, which could theoretically make for an airier, more spacious sound. Second, since the rear tweeter operates out of phase with the front tweeter, there is some acoustic cancellation where the tweeters' soundwaves meet, at the sides of the cabinets. This means that less energy is radiated off axis, and therefore there are fewer sidewall reflections to contend with. The upshot is that you'll hear more direct sound than you would without that rear tweeter. Off is an option for the rear tweeter as well. This would come in handy if, for instance, the speakers were placed really close to the front wall.

Last, it appears that some effort was expended to make the G7.1f a visually attractive speaker that will be acceptable in a variety of listening environments. It has a slim profile and an excellent two-tone finish of automotive-grade, high-gloss paint. The build quality appears to be what you would expect from a speaker at its price point — which is to say, very good: the paint was free from defects, the driver openings were precisely cut, and the speakers produced no untoward noises while I was listening to them. The G7.1f is a feature- and technology-packed loudspeaker that aims to be suitable for a large number of sonic tastes and interior décors.

### Setup

I set up the G7.1fs about 10' apart and 7' from the front wall of my Music Vault listening room, firing straight ahead as recommended by Genesis. After some experimentation, I left the rear tweeter on — it produced an airier sound in my room. I began with the Bass Gain control at 12 o'clock, and fine-tuned it from there throughout the review period. Partnering components included a Behold APU768 preamplifier-DAC driving a pair of Classé Omega Omicron Mono amplifiers. The digital source was an Apple MacBook. Also used were Shunyata Research Hydra V-Ray II and Guardian Pro Model-2 power conditioners; Shunyata Research King Cobra and Anaconda power cords; and Shunyata Research Aurora-IC interconnects and Aurora-SP speaker cables.

### Sound

I enjoy reviewing loudspeakers so much because I hear more profound sonic differences among various models of loudspeaker than I ever have among components of any other product category. The G7.1f convinced me of this once again — as its performance was a stark contrast from that of several other speakers I've recently had in the Vault, and identifying its sonic signature was relatively easy. But that's not to say that the G7.1f's complex design didn't present a few wrinkles of its own.

When reviewing the EgglestonWorks Dianne loudspeakers last May, I said, "The Dianne wasn't the most neutral speaker I've ever heard — it seemed 'voiced' to remain listenable with recordings both good and bad. Its top end softened bright recordings ever so slightly

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while warming up the lower midrange, to make voices sound full and dense.” The Genesis G7.1f proved, in some ways, the antithesis to the Dianne. Specifically, from the midrange up through the highs, the Genesis was ultradetailed and sharply focused — just the opposite of the Dianne. This made the G7.1f more critical of bad recordings, but it also revealed more inner detail from good recordings, allowing me to hear far deeper into the texture of music. The G7.1f was a very *honest*-sounding speaker, seeming to reproduce what I fed it while adding little editorializing of its own. The word *neutrality* kept showing up in my listening notes, whether I was listening to jazz, pop, folk, or classical. I found myself admiring the G7.1f for its ability to draw out details previously hidden in my music. I could listen to it for long periods without fatigue.

For instance, voices, both men’s and women’s, were reproduced with a crystalline clarity and strict definition that encouraged me to explore all types of music. Pulling out some old standbys, such as “Gravity” and “Restless,” from Alison Krauss’s *Lonely Runs Both Ways* (CD, Rounder 610525), was instructive and enjoyable. Krauss’s voice never sounded syrupy, bogged down, or veiled. The sound of the G7.1fs is best described with that old cliché: a clear window on the recording. The bluegrass strumming was clear and peppy, with sharp leading edges that made the sound quick and articulate. The G7.1f never gave me the sense that it was romanticizing the sound in any way; instead, it presented music with little coloration.

Imaging and soundstaging were definite strengths of the G7.1fs. The depth of stage on “Tall Trees in Georgia,” from Eva Cassidy’s *Live at Blues Alley* (CD, Blix Street 10046), was deep and well defined, just as it should be. Cassidy’s voice was a touch forward of where I’m used to hearing her, however. This didn’t strike me as particularly bothersome or incorrect — the image of her voice was still well back from the plane described by the speakers’ front baffles, and quite detached from their cabinets. But this different perspective took some getting used to. The club patrons’ glasses tinkling in the background on this track were about as well rendered as I can remember hearing them, proving to me that the G7.1f’s reproduction of high frequencies was clean and precise.

The Bass Gain control proved to be a boon for, well, doing exactly what it’s claimed to: give the owner the ability to dial in more or less bass. I prefer a slightly upward-tilting (in terms of in-room frequency response) bass range for fuller lows and strong punch in the upper bass. The G7.1f was able to provide just that. At the 12 o’clock setting the bass reproduced by the G7.1fs was just a touch light in my room, but when inched up around the 2 o’clock mark, things became far more suitable for the types of music I listen to. The Fairfield Four’s “These Bones,” from *I Couldn’t Hear Nobody Pray* (CD, Warner Bros. 46698), was reproduced with remarkable transparency and admirable fullness. I could hear well into each singer’s voice, such as the singer’s physical separation from the others within the well-defined soundstage thrown by the Genesis speakers. The lower registers were full-bodied and chock-full of energy, which is a must for making this track sound realistic. With the Bass Gain setting at the 2 o’clock mark, there was a dramatic improvement — more meat on the bones, so to speak — vs. what I heard with the control just two clicks lower.

The G7.1fs weren’t as efficient as I’d originally thought they might be. They actually liked a bit of power. They didn’t push back *that* hard against my Classé amps, but I did use a higher volume setting on my preamp than I’m accustomed to. I advise a high-current, at least moderately powered amp for the G7.1fs (at least 150Wpc, I think). With a good dose of juice, these speakers should reward you with excellent dynamic range and the ability to produce healthy output levels. I don’t think I ever really stressed the G7.1fs *too* much, though I did detect a slight hardening of the upper frequencies, and reached the limits of the powered woofers, when I pushed them really hard with such complex tracks as “Max-O-Man,” from Fourplay’s *The Best of Fourplay* (Warner Bros. 46661-2). The woofers

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### **Genesis**

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**Price:** \$7990 USD per pair.

**Warranty:** Five years parts and labor.

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did bottom-out on this track, making a sharp crackling sound. But with 99% of my listening sessions, this was not an issue.

#### **Conclusion**

I give Genesis a lot of credit for aiming high with a product whose price doesn't break six or even five figures. There's a lot of substance in the G7.1f that gives it the performance potential and flexibility to acquit itself well in a variety of rooms and systems. That it succeeds on almost all counts, and truly excels in a few, is good news indeed for audiophiles shopping for a pair of speakers for around \$8000. That it has good looks and excellent build quality are expectations met — ones that make it a complete package, with no striking flaws that would preclude a recommendation. I give the G7.1f a thumbs-up, and suggest you audition it yourself to see if it offers your ideal combination of sonic and aesthetic attributes.

*...Jeff Fritz*

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