Q Acoustics Media 4

High price – but high-quality as well

UNLIKE THE PANASONIC SC-HTB880 (see p63), design was clearly not near the top of the priority list when Q Acoustics set about imagining its new Media 4 soundbar. Put bluntly, it is as attractive as Boris Johnson in a leotard, and at over 10cm high (including the feet) and 14cm deep, there's no chance of simply sticking it in front of a contemporary screen slouching low on its stand.

But the Media 4 redeems itself with an impressive mid-range specification, including a rock-solid construction and 2.75in full-range BMR drivers, plus a built-in, downward-firing 150mm x 120mm elliptical-design subwoofer. The unit eschews both HDMI and Dolby Digital (set your outputs to PCM) but socketry includes an optical input, stereo phonos, 3.5mm line-in and apt-X-equipped Bluetooth.

Operation is more or less a case of scrolling through the inputs (indicated by a coloured LED) as there are no DSP modes to play around with – what you hear is what you get – but you can add an additional powered subwoofer. One setup niggle I found is that if the aux line-in is hooked up the stereo phonos are disabled.

Crash, bang, wallop

The joy of the Media 4 is not in its looks but in its performance. The classic train crash sequence in *Super 8* on Blu-ray is a cacophonous plethora of effects, including flying wreckage, the train whistle, wind howling, kids screaming, the camera winding through and the explosion on an almost nuclear scale. The Media 4 does a sterling job with the lot, generating a broad, powerful soundstage and delivering its sonic goods with refinement. Dialogue sounds rich, warm and is well-projected, but most impressive is the subwoofer array and the soundbar's handling of low frequencies, which is both potent and yet surprisingly nuanced.

Music is also a pleasure to listen to. Like the Samsung HW-H750, the Q Acoustics provides both real punch and strict control, and the unit's BMR drivers delivers a good sense of stereo imaging.

If you can find the space to accommodate it, this is a great one-box option.

HCC VERDICT

Q Acoustics Media 4 ➜ £400

Overall ★★★★⯨