

Peerless-AV

PeerAir Pro

BY DENNIS BURGER

A couple of years ago, stumped for ideas about how to fill out my Christmas list, I casually mentioned to my dad that I wouldn't mind a nice screwdriver bit set. I had in mind an assortment of flat and Phillips bits. Maybe a hex bit or two in the mix if he was feeling extra fancy. What I unwrapped on Christmas morning was what the TI-Nspire CX CAS graphing calculator is to those five-dollar solar-powered pocket units that you can snag in the checkout line of your local grocer. It has pentalobe bits and tri-wing bits. It has Pozidriv bits in five different sizes. It has a spudger and tamper-resistant hex bits, "and there's even bits you can use to take apart your Nintendo," Pop told me, although I haven't had a Nintendo console in decades.

The thing is, though, although most of those bits seemed like a waste of space at the time, the kit came to the rescue just a few months later when the battery in my Macbook Pro decided to start expanding dangerously, just two days before an important business trip, with the local Apple repair shop telling me it would take at least a week to get the parts and perform the repair. As luck would have it, though, that TEKTON Everybit set had exactly the bits I needed to take my Macbook apart, and Amazon had the replacement battery in my hands the next day.

The moral of that story? It's easy to look at a tool and think, "I'd never need that," until one day you find yourself in need of that exact tool.

And that's pretty much exactly how I feel about the Peerless-AV PeerAir Pro Wireless AV Multi-Display System. Is it something you likely need in your day-to-day installations? Nope. In fact, odds are you won't run across a job anytime soon that requires such a solution. Indeed, you may never. But it's nice to know that it's there, just in case.

In terms of its overall form factor, the Peerless-AV PeerAir Pro Wireless transmitter and receiver look virtually identical to the IOGEAR AVIOR Series Wireless HD Kit I reviewed back in 2010, with but a few exceptions. The biggest difference is that the Peerless-AV transmitter sports three HDMI inputs (versus two on the IOGEAR), as well as an

The Peerless-AV HDS300 PeerAir Pro Wireless AV Multi-Display System with accessories



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Kudos

It takes longer to type the words "plug and play" than it does to set up a two-zone wireless AV connection with the Peerless-AV PeerAir Pro. And as long as you're feeding it a good, clean video source, performance is impressive.

Concerns

Messy, soft, low-res sources do tend to show up on the other side of the wireless stream with a few more video artifacts, as well as occasional dropouts. And broadcast range is significantly reduced by the presence of walls.

Product Specs

- ▶ Video Input: 3x HDMI, 1x PC Video, 1x Component & Composite
- ▶ Audio Input: HDMI, 3.5mm Stereo Audio
- ▶ Video Output: 1x HDMI, 1x Component, 1x Composite, 1x HDMI Pass Thru (Tx)
- ▶ Audio Output: HDMI, 3.5mm Stereo Mini Jack, RCA Stereo Jack (Receiver)
- ▶ Video Streaming Latency: 40mS
- ▶ Video Resolution: 480i/p, 720p, 1080i/p (24/30 fps)
- ▶ Encoding: H.264 Baseline Profile
- ▶ Audio Capability: 2 CH PCM, 48kHz, 16 Bit
- ▶ Wireless Technology: WiFi IEEE 802.11n
- ▶ Wireless Frequency: 5.18 - 5.25 & 5.75 - 5.81GHz
- ▶ Security Type: WPA2 and AES
- ▶ Wireless Range: 210' (64m)
- ▶ Wired Connection: RJ45 LAN Port, 10/100/1000 Base

HDMI output used for local pass-through. Other than that, you'd be hard pressed to tell them apart.

The Peerless-AV system does boast new HD Flow 3 wireless technology that promises to extend its broadcast range "up to 210 feet," and also enables full 1080p streaming to as many as six wireless receivers. Setup, though, remains exactly as easy as I remember it being with the old IOGEAR kit. You simply make your AV connections to the boxes on the transmitting and receiving ends (your choice of HDMI or VGA on the input side, with a composite/component adapter for the VGA in; and HDMI, composite, or component on the output side, with a 3.5mm aux audio jack on both the Tx and Rx units), connect power, and plug in any necessary IR repeaters. Other than that, setup is automatic. There's no network configuration to be done. No buttons to press to pair the transmitter and receiver. No IP addresses to enter or what have you. The units find each other automatically.

There's no video scaling to worry about, either, as the PeerAir Pro Wireless doesn't do any scaling. It can handle video resolutions from 480i up to 1080p, but whatever you put into the input side is what comes out the output side. It's also worth noting that although the packaging hints at 3D support, the Peerless-AV system can't transmit active 3D. It's passive only. That's the first clue that you need to pay attention to the asterisks on the specs listing, because there are a few special considerations, but I won't dig deeply into those since they tend to be very application specific.

I did the bulk of my testing with the transmitter unit hooked to the HDMI output of my Emotiva XMC-1 AV processor in the home theater (with the pass-through output connected to my display in that room), and the receiver output routed into an input on the Anthem MRX 1120 AV receiver in my bedroom. The two ended up situated about 21 feet apart, with three walls between them, which did end up causing a few problems at first. I had to fiddle with the positioning of the transmitter to attain a stable connection between the two. The top of my gear rack ended up being the right spot. Before I found that spot, though, I found myself dealing with intermittent dropouts that lasted, on average, around 15 seconds before a connection was reestablished.

With the two communicating consistently after a bit of futzing, I found to my surprise that any latency created by the wireless transmission was undetectable. At least to me. I cranked up the sound in my home theater and kept a close eye on lips in the bedroom, and they seemed perfectly in sync. The other thing I noticed almost immediately is that the PeerAir Pro Wireless performed at its best when fed a pristine video signal, like from a

Blu-ray disc. When watching lower quality sources like WeatherNation (which comprises a good 80 percent of my TV viewing this time of year), I noticed a bit more blocking and other video artifacts on the receiving end that weren't present on the transmitting end. And quick scene changes led to a precipitous drop in video quality for a few seconds.

For what it's worth, the system did switch sources faster and overall operate better when I skipped the AV processor and receiver and connected sources and displays directly to the PeerAir Pro Wireless components. Either way, it's hardly the end of the world. It's pretty safe to assume that if you were broadcasting WeatherNation to two or four or

six TVs in and around the home (or commercial installation), pristine video fidelity and lightning-fast source switching would hardly be your first concern. And that downside is more than crossed out on the balance sheet by the fact that the PeerAir Pro Wireless receivers are small and light enough to be mounted to the back of a TV with a bit of double-sided Velcro tape.

Is this the ultimate multi-room AV solution? No, but neither does it pretend to be. For roughly \$550 retail, though, it's a pretty impressive wireless solution if you find yourself in a situation where, as Peerless-AV' marketing materials put it, "running cables is not an option."

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