

What is MQA (Master Quality Authenticated)?

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Music services are becoming the main vehicle, helping many of us to listen to music. Last year, fee-based music subscription services increased by 38% to a total of £ 829 million, accounting for 62% of total music revenue recorded in the UK.

Most music services, such as market-leading names like Spotify and Apple Music, offer music streams in standard compression format, with lossy compression, 256kbps or 320kbps, AAC, MP3 or Ogg Vorbis. Meanwhile, some services, such as Tidal and Qobuz, offer higher quality CD lossless streams.

But what about hi-res audio (sound quality like a CD)? The first service provides hi-res stream of Qobuz, via Android application and Tidal becomes hi-res audio streaming service on the desktop. At the same time, Tidal launched the Tidal Masters service at CES 2017. Tidal uses MQA technology to do this.

So what is the sound of MQA? And how does it help make the hi-res stream a reality?

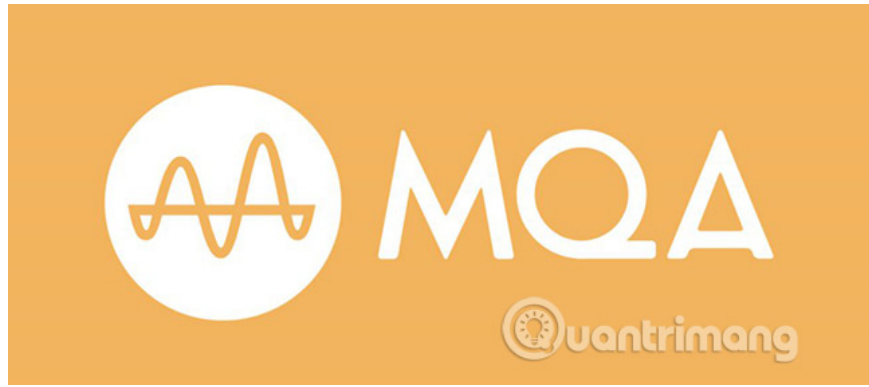
Learn about MQA (Master Quality Authenticated)

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What is MQA?

MQA aims to 'fundamentally change the way people enjoy music'. MQA is a method of storing digitally recorded music in the form of a small file and is convenient enough to download, or even stream, without sacrificing the same sound quality as compressed files. system.

MQA claims its tracks use the same bandwidth required for CD quality streams. So if you can stream Tidal's hi-fi sound easily, there's no problem with the new Tidal Masters using MQA.



How can you listen to MQA?

Instead of a new file type that appears next to familiar formats like FLAC, WAV, etc., MQA files can be packaged inside any lossless container like FLAC, WAV or Apple Lossless. You will need compatible hardware, such as music streamer (a device capable of playing audio stored in another location, such as via the Internet, as an online streaming service like Spotify or Tidal, or external hard drive), music player or software such as Tidal desktop application, to decode MQA files.

And this is not something too far away. There has been a lot of hardware that supports MQA available.

The Pioneer XDP-100R and Onkyo DP-X1 are one of the first MQA-compatible portable music players, and have since expanded to include products such as the Pioneer XDP-30R, Onkyo DP-S1, flagship NW-ZX300 and WM. Sony's -A40. Sony will continue to support MQA with its £ 8000 DMP-Z1 digital music player (launched at IFA 2018) and its Walkman NW-A50 line.

At IFA 2017, LG V30 was officially announced as the first global smartphone available with MQA and this format was found on LG G7 ThinQ and the all-new LG G8 ThinQ.

The products of the SU-G30 network streamer and SL-G700 SACD player and network streamer (first appeared as IFA 2018 prototype) of Technics can also be added to the list of devices supporting MQA.

This list includes award-winning Bluesound multiroom Generation 2 products and hi-fi components of NAD, dCS, Moon by Simaudio, Mark Levinson and Audiolab. Astell & Kern music player will also be integrated with MQA.

The full list of partners and products supporting MQA is still growing. iFi is about to announce that it supports MQA on certain areas and so does TEAC.

Thanks to firmware updates, AudioQuest's DACFly Black DAC and DragonFly Red devices are also activated MQA.

Meridian products, including Explorer 2 USB DAC, Prime Headphone Amplifier, 808v6 Reference CD Player, 818v3 Reference Audio Core, Special Edition Loudspeakers and launch systems in Meridian's 40th anniversary, can also be played This format, through software updates. If you own any of these devices, you can find the firmware updates [here](#).

Where can you find MQA music files?



If you don't have any of the above hardware, you can still access more than one million Tidal Master files through the Tidal desktop application. The Tidal desktop application has the ability to decode and play Tidal Masters files in MQA format.

Since the beginning of this year, Tidal apps on Android and iOS now support Masters, allowing most smartphone users to stream hi-res streams directly to listen to them from their phones.

Just as desktop apps, Android and iOS apps can complete the first MQA file decoding step, output streams up to 24 bits / 96kHz. However, the only way to completely extract the MQA file is by pairing your smartphone with an MQA-compatible DAC device (as mentioned above), separating the decoding process from the software. .

Deezer is the latest music streaming service involved in supporting MQA.

Big names in the music market like Universal, Warner Bros and Sony Music are also partners and provide music for MQA. It should come as no surprise that more music streaming services do the same thing.

The actual MQA music files are available from Highresaudio, Onkyo Music, 2L, as well as e-onkyo music and Groovers in Japan.

If you are trying to play such purchased files via a PC or laptop, a dedicated desktop music player, such as Audirvana and Roon, also supports MQA.

What about MQA Live?



MQA also promises to stream original quality real-time concerts through Live technology, which MQA performed at the Munich High End Show.

Live's view is to create a virtual performance experience, allowing people to listen to live performances of their favorite bands in their original quality, if they cannot attend the event in person.

To do this, MQA created an encryption box directly connected to the main site's audio system and could send what is being broadcast to the selected distribution platform of that location. MQA claims that the encryption process will preserve sound quality and solve bandwidth problems.

MQA music can be played on any device, although only products that support MQA (some of the products mentioned above) and the software will be able to decompress original quality. top of MQA stream.

Whether or not MQA eventually appears in Tidal or Deezer is not yet announced. Currently, the experience is limited to demos at many technology exhibitions, such as CES, IFA and High End Munich.

Will Apple support MQA?

Although users have been able to get original hi-res audio support on Android devices from Samsung, Sony and LG, but Apple's iPhone can still only play hi-res music properly through party apps. third and DAC decoder.

It has long been rumored that Apple is planning to offer hi-res audio files via Apple Music, but unfortunately this has yet to materialize. Instead, there was another effective solution that appeared.

Can Apple someday use MQA and provide hi-res music? It seems that this is not likely to happen in the near future, but nothing is impossible.

One thing is for sure, for anyone who is interested in sound quality, MQA is a technology that requires serious consideration. If you want to know more about Master Quality Authenticated, please refer to the MQA website at:

<https://www.mqa.co.uk/>

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