



REVIEW • ISSUE #3 • 1409616000

# AUDIOENGINE A5+ AND B1

# REVIEW

THIS SPEAKER SET UP COSTS NEARLY \$700, SO THE QUESTION IS, IS IT WORTH IT?

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The audio sector of the technology industry is a risky business. Speakers especially can be very expensive to produce and unless the sound is perfect, consumers will not bite. Audioengine is a pretty well established audio company, and they are hoping that they have hit a homerun with their new A5+ speakers that start at \$399.

## BUILD

For starters, the speakers are available in satin black or hi-gloss white for \$399/pair and in solid bamboo for \$469/pair. I received the solid bamboo versions of the speakers, and I can honestly say that they are some of the best-built speakers I have tested. I got a shipping notification before they were delivered and I saw that the package was 31 pounds and spoiler alert, that wasn't a typo. These speakers weigh an absolute ton (seriously, try carrying them in a box with no handles up several flights of stairs).

The lines are sleek and the bamboo finish on our review unit gives the speakers a polished, yet natural look to them. On the back of the primary speaker, you will find: 2 analog audio inputs, a USB port to charge your mobile device when it is connected to these speakers, a variable output, connections for secondary speaker, the power switch, the voltage selection switch, and the AC power input. You will also find a fan on the back of the primary speaker. On the front of the primary, you will find the power indicator light, the receiver for the included remote, and a knob to control the volume.

You also get a right front (passive) speaker. On the back of it, you will only find the input for the speaker cable from the powered speaker. On the bottom of both speakers, you will find a ¼" threaded insert in case you want to attach the A5+ speakers to a speaker stand. On the front of both speakers, you will find custom Kevlar woofers & silk tweeters for the higher pitched notes.

The way that Audioengine has designed these speakers makes them compatible with almost anyone. You can use them if you are running a Mac, PC, any iDevice, an Audioengine wireless audio adapter (including the B1 Bluetooth receiver you'll read about in a minute), an Audioengine DAC, Apple Airport Express, Apple AirPlay, an any other product that uses a 3.5mm mini-jack or RCA audio connection.

# SOUND QUALITY

I have been able to test out these speakers with several devices including an iPad, an Android smartphone, an iPod touch, and an iMac. The sound out of any device has been crystal clear & extremely loud. By loud, I mean LOUD. Volume is one thing that these speakers do not have a problem with. The A5+ speakers can get loud enough to hold a concert in your room or be quiet enough to listen to music discreetly late at night. I normally keep them attached to my iMac with the volume all the way up on the speakers themselves & on only 1 notch on the Mac. The sound it produces is extremely loud, crisp, clear and *extremely* bass-heavy (like, Partition by Beyonce will shake paintings off your wall, heavy).

Most speakers focus on getting the sound through to you at a loud volume, but not focusing on all the complex elements of sound clip. These speakers produce sound that is dimensional and immerses you in the sound. The bass is punchy and prominent, but the tweeters help higher pitches. The way that voices come through is fantastic and it sounds like the artist is standing right next to you while you are listening.

Another thing I found is that the included cables are fantastic. Usually, cables that come with a product tend to be on the cheap side and can produce a bit of muffled sound. The cables included with the A5+s, however, are the exception. They are

great cables in terms of sound and build quality.

# B1 BLUETOOTH RECEIVER

The A5+ speakers are absolutely incredible, but the thing I don't like is that they have to be wired into whatever you're listening to. So that means that if you're sitting in your comfy chair and want to listen to music, you have to move closer to your speakers or buy a much longer cable and run it across the room. The B1 receiver is a little pricy at \$190, however the quality is amazing. It will wire directly into the A5+ (or any sound system that has audio inputs) and the Bluetooth is very easy to connect to.

A downfall that I normally see with Bluetooth receivers is that they degrade sound quality as they move sound from the source to the speakers but this is not a problem that the B1 receiver has. The sound that comes out is crystal clear and the range is pretty crazy. I was able to walk down two flights of stairs and around several corners and the sound was still crisp and clear. Walking further the sound began to degrade a little bit, but chances are you will never be listening to your speakers from hundreds of feet away.

# OVERALL

When I review a product, I always try to find and mark off some points here and there where the company could improve upon the product. I planned on doing the same with the A5+ speakers and the B1, especially with their \$469 and \$190 price tags respectively. I searched & searched for something to take off points for, but I could only find 1 thing: the weight of the speakers. The speakers are heavy, but once you take them out of the box, they should be sitting somewhere fairly stationary. Because of this, the weight really has no direct correlation with the functionality of the speakers. These speakers are fantastic, and I really can't fault Audioengine anywhere.

Overall, I would highly recommend purchasing this combination of products (the \$660 and is WELL worth it).



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