

Review: Audioengine HD3 Premium Powered Desktop Speakers

 www.wired.com/2016/12/review-audioengine-hd3-premium-powered-desktop-speakers/

Michael McCole

Audioengine enjoys a strong reputation for high-quality speakers at prices that won't make you cry. The [HD3 desktop speakers](#) retail at \$400, which places them at the upper end of Audioengine's desktop line of powered boxes, but below the top-end HD5 speakers.

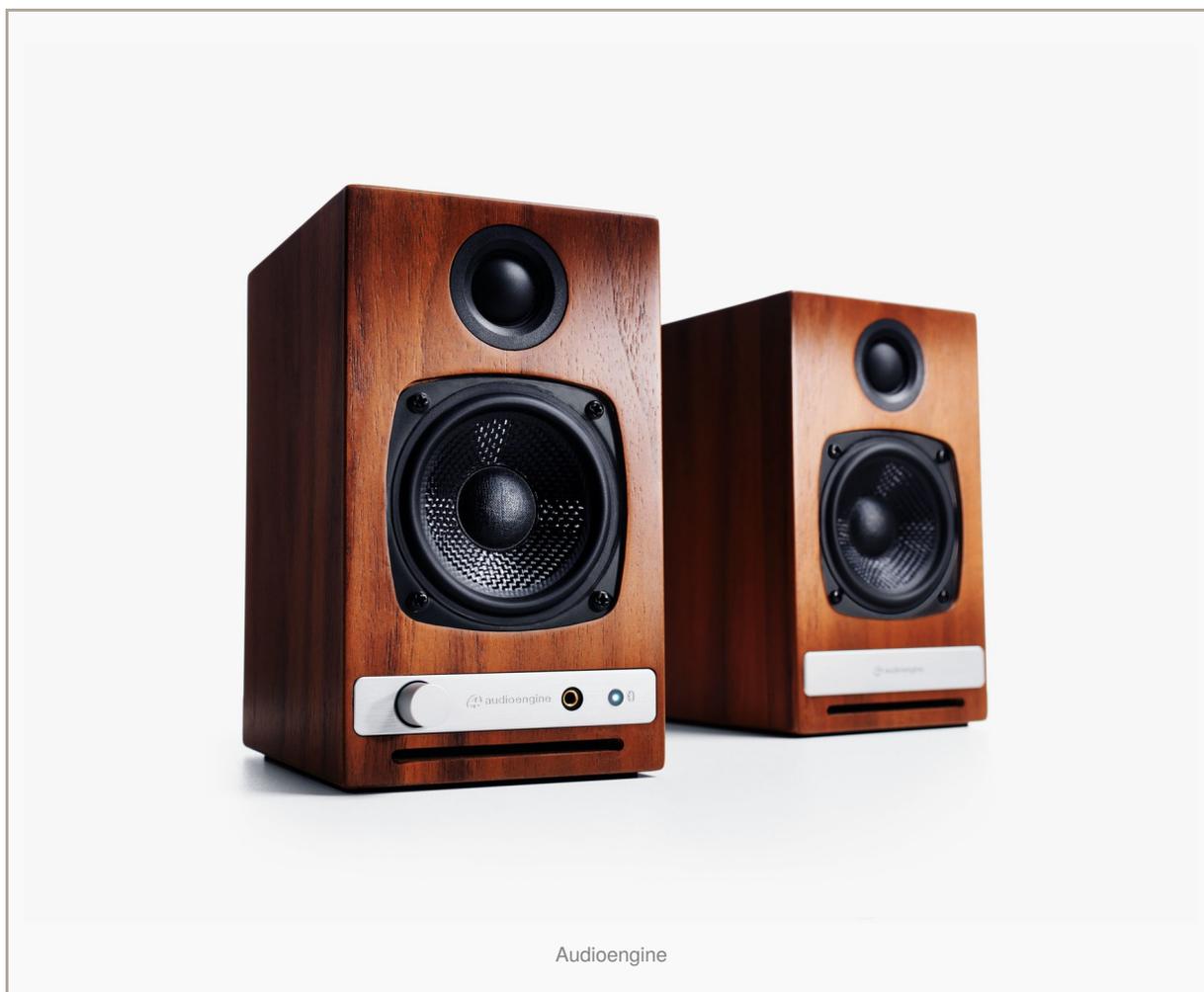
I held high expectations for the HD3s.

As I unpacked them, I felt pangs of nostalgia over the wires and cables. It's been awhile since I plugged a pair of nice speakers into my computer. So, while the HD3s are capable of streaming music over Bluetooth, I started my evaluation by plugging them in.

WIRED

After placing the speakers a foot from each other and about a foot behind my laptop, I hit play. The sound seemed to be coming from my computer, directly in front of me, not from the speakers. This confused me, and made me wonder if I'd properly plugged them in. I adjusted the volume, just to check. The music grew louder. This left me wondering if the soundstage is really that good. I leaned in and listened for a few moments longer. Yes, the soundstage was that good. The speakers had disappeared without properly setting them up. A great first impression.

I decided to put them to the test. I cued up some Hendrix and cranked it. The track sounded as good as I've ever heard on a PC system, with little (unintentional) distortion. The separation between instruments was clear, the bass



tight, and the treble snappy. I found details and nuances apparent but not distracting, and the mix clean from top to bottom.

But Hendrix is messy and hissy. I wondered how would the HD3s might fare with electronic music, dance music, or hip hop. I tried everything, including acoustic and classical. I found the same soundstage precision, lack of distortion, clear separation, clean detail and top-to-bottom smoothness in all of it. The only flaw I heard was the speakers getting a bit overwhelmed when several instruments swell to a crescendo. But this is a rare occurrence, and rectified by simply turning the volume down a bit.

OK, so they sound great plugged in. How about with Bluetooth?

Setup was easy—the speakers enter pairing mode as soon as you turn them on. After a painless pairing, I subjected them to the gauntlet again. I flipped between my plugged in PC and my streaming phone. I found the sound quality equally fantastic on every track, whether I was streaming or plugged in.

TIRED

Beyond occasionally being overwhelmed by a thunderous crescendo, I can't find much to nitpick here. The (optional) wireless antenna on the left speaker looks a bit goofy. That's about all I've got. These are the best desktop speakers I've heard, and it's not even close when you compare these to similarly priced wireless speakers.

RATING

9/10 – Nearly flawless, buy it now.