

New Year, New Sound: Audioengine's HD3 Speakers

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We've been listening to some of the best albums of the year, thanks to the many lists being published as we approach the close of 2016. And while a lot of listening inevitably gets done on the subway, train, bus, plane, or just walking around, the best way to really appreciate most music is probably comfortably at home with a great set of speakers. Whether your taste runs towards Beyonce's *Lemonade* or the stellar Frankie Cosmos, *A Tribe Called Quest's* latest or the lively *Parquet Courts*, it's important to have the right gear!

And perhaps you listen to music mostly from your computer- desktop or laptop- in which case, the [Audioengine HD3 Powered Bookshelf Speakers](#) might be just the way to treat yourself to a nice post-holiday gift. The company, now over a decade old, has become pretty well known in audiophile circles and they make a pretty wide range of speakers including the passive, bring-your-own-amp/DAC HDP6s [that we checked out late last month](#). Unlike that one, this model aims to be a bit smaller, near-field, with direct USB connectivity and even built-in Bluetooth. That meant we could connect directly from our smartphones and tablets, stream some songs or even play videos without straining to hear what's going on. Range was pretty good too; we could play music from a room or two away without dropping signal.

As with any decent Bluetooth system, this one supports high-quality aptX and AAC codecs, which means that even wireless use will sound practically as good as wired. There are dual analog ports (3.5mm minijack and RCA), along with an RCA output on the rear. No remote is included, but you shouldn't need one, and there is a front-panel volume control along with the pairing button and a headphone output as well. The volume knob felt a little less sturdy and precise than we like, but otherwise the build quality was quite solid- about ten pounds for the pair, with enough heft to provide some decent bass. Whether or not you ring in the New Year with *Auld Lang Syne*, you should definitely try the HD3s with some opera and classical tracks, anything where vocal range is key.

After burning them in for a couple of days, we spent some time testing these with a few different sources and varied genres. And they were, without a doubt, killer for their size and niche- not quite neutral monitors, and perhaps not as bass-focused as a serious gamer might want, but one of the better overall computer-ready 2.0 speaker systems on the market. Their sound stage, especially, is remarkable- transparent, detailed, and deep despite being so compact. Ours were a matte black, rather than the walnut finish pictured, and a cherry wood option is also available. Either way, we think these look better without the magnetic grilles that attach and detach easily, showing off the Kevlar woofer and silk tweeter. Sixty watts of power should be plenty, and you can [pick these up online and in stores for around \\$399](#).