

The Audioengine HD3 Wireless Music System Is Only Small in Size

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As I've previously noted, I'm a huge fan of Audioengine products. The [HD6 are among my favorite speakers](#) and [the B2 resides in our bedroom](#). So color me surprised that I think the HD3 Wireless Music System is AudioEngine's best offering yet. These may look like simple desktop speakers, but they're a complete music system packing Audioengine's best audio tech.



Back when I owned the website What'sOniPhone, my partner in the site reviewed [Audioengine's A2 powered desktop speakers](#). ([Here's my Gear Diary review](#).) After his review was done he gave the speakers to me and, for many years, they were my favorite small speakers. Well, the HD3 may look similar to the A2 and the A2+ that replaced the A2 but these are an entirely different animal. That's not to say the A2+ aren't great speakers. They are. But the HD3 are more like a small version of the HD6 than an update to the A2+. And that's a good thing.



The HD3 are a truly refined pair of small speakers. The review sample I was sent has the Satin Black Paint and they look fantastic. (The HD3 are also available in Cherry Wood Veneer and Walnut Wood Veneer.) Audioengine describes them as having a “Retro-forward design” noting, “HD3 was designed for audio performance, but speakers obviously also need to look good so we’ve included furniture-grade wood veneers, aluminum trim accents, and detachable magnetic grills that blend with any decor.” A small silver band sits on the lower portion of each speaker and has the Audioengine name embossed in it. The logo is subtle and doesn’t detract from the good looks of the speakers in the least. In fact, if you aren’t looking closely you just might think it’s a design etched into the metal. One speaker is the “powered speaker” and the other a “passive speaker” that simply receives the signal from the former speaker.



On the “powered speaker” (for discussion purposes we will simply refer to it as the “left speaker”) there is a physical volume control, a 3.5mm headphone port and a power indicator that also doubles as the pairing button when using the speakers via a Bluetooth connection. It is worth noting that the first time you power on the speakers they immediately go into pairing mode, so there is no need to do anything but locate the HD3s in the Bluetooth menu of your audio source.



Inside the box you will find:

- HD3 powered (left) speaker
- HD3 passive (right) speaker
- Antenna
- Speaker wire (16AWG), 2 meters (~6.5 feet)
- Power supply
- AC power cable
- Mini-jack audio cable, 1.5 meters (~5 feet)
- USB cable, 1.5 meters (~5 feet)
- Microfiber speaker bags
- Microfiber cable bag
- Microfiber power supply bag
- Quickstart guide
- Product line brochure

The only thing missing is the remote that came with the HD6. It isn't a huge loss since I rarely use the remote, but it is worth noting that only the larger, higher-priced speakers come with one. Still, it is a complete package that will have you up and running in a matter of minutes.



All the connections are on the back of the left speaker. There is a connection for the included antenna. As with the other Audioengine speakers I have reviewed over the past two years, this antenna allows the HD3 speakers to get amazing Bluetooth range. In fact, the HD3 get up to three times the normal range of Bluetooth speakers. As Audioengine explains,

Most Bluetooth implementations have very limited range, typically within just one room. But with careful signal management circuitry and antenna tuning, we offer a superior solution that has up to 3 times the range of standard Bluetooth for multi-room use, with no degradation in audio quality.

This is because Audioengine basically packed the B1 Bluetooth Receiver into the HD3. ([Read our review.](#)) As the company explains,

The B1 is a high-fidelity audio component that easily integrates into your music system and plays music directly from your library or streams from any app. The B1 streams high-quality audio from your Bluetooth-enabled smartphone, computer, or tablet to any music system or powered speakers.

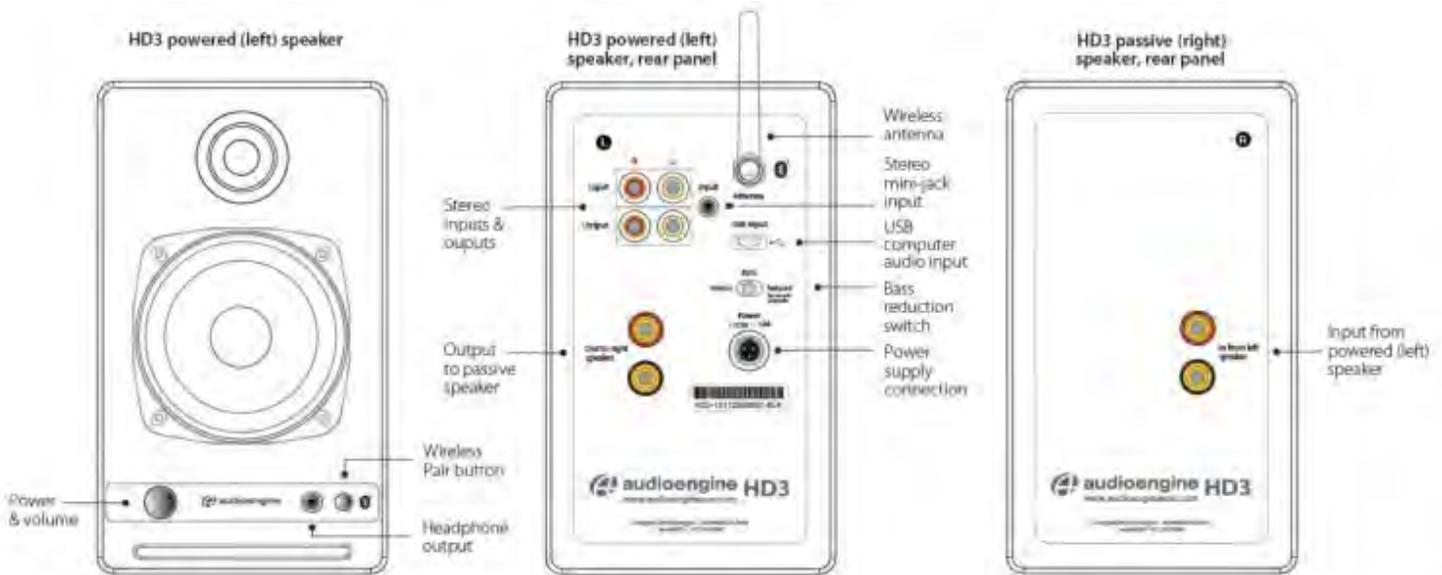
It is really striking the first time you forget you are using a Bluetooth connection and leave the room with the audio source only to find that the music continues with no drops and zero degradation in the sound. It makes it really hard to go back to speakers with standard range and mediocre sound quality.



AudioEngine also built in components from the D1 24-BIT DAC/Headphone amp. The DAC means that, when using the speakers with a computer, you are able to bypass the computer's (crappy) soundcard or means the headphone output on the front of the speaker is a high-performance headphone output that will do justice to your expensive headphones. (The headphone output has an output impedance of 2 ohms and Audioengine recommends using

headphones with an impedance range of 10 ohms to 10K ohms.)

A Brief Aside for those using an iPhone or iPad: While devices running MacOS (the MacBook, the iMac, and the Mac mini) include Bluetooth aptX, the iPad and the iPhone don't. It turns out Apple uses the AAC codec and it doesn't support aptX. The good news is that AAC sounds quite good and while you won't get the benefit of the aptX you will be able to benefit from the upsampling 24-bit DAC.



The back of the left speaker also features the input for the included power source, stereo inputs and outputs, left and right outputs to connect to the right speaker (AudioEngine include speaker cable with fixed pins so there no need to deal with stripping speaker wire and wrapping it around the outputs), a 3.5mm stereo mini-jack input, a USB computer audio input (these are desktop speakers after all) and a toggle to reduce the bass if that is your preferred listening style. In other words, between the various physical connection options and the Bluetooth connectivity, there is pretty much nothing you can't connect to these speakers.



Since the right speaker is passive it only has inputs for the left and right channel compiling from the left powered speaker.



I should note that I would have loved to see an optical input like the one on the HD6 since these would make an awesome way to add some kick ass sound to a large 4K TV! Sadly, like the remote, to get the optical connection you will need to purchase the larger HD6. Mind you... Other than the fact that they are pricey that's not a hardship!



The black grills are held in place by magnets that keep a tight grip but can easily be removed if you like a more industrial look. Hidden behind the grills are a 2.75" Kevlar woofer and a 3/4" silk dome tweeter. This may sound underwhelming but the HD3s prove that size isn't everything when it comes to speakers. In fact, the HD3 offer 60W peak power total (15W RMS / 30W peak per channel) and sound fantastic. (As I'm writing this review they are sitting to my left and my right and streaming music from my iPhone 7. The speaker volume is turned all the way up but the iPhone output is at about 1/4 the maximum the volume and it is almost too loud for me.)

Features:

- Built-in power amplifiers

- High-fidelity Bluetooth® with aptX®, extended range and simplified setup
- USB audio input
- Dual analog audio inputs and a full-range variable output
- Custom Kevlar woofers and silk tweeters
- Hand-built cabinets with furniture-grade finishes
- Detachable magnetic speaker grills
- Threaded brass inserts to secure speakers to floor stands

At 7”(H) x 4.25”(W) x 5.5”(D), the speakers are small. The left speaker is 4 lbs and the right speaker is a bit less at 3.4lbs. And while they may be small, these speakers pack a punch. More importantly, however, they pack a fantastic-sounding punch. Having reviewed the HD6 I really didn’t know what to expect. These are tiny compared to their impressive larger cousins. Well, this is one time my expectations were beyond exceeded. These speakers may be small but they are amazing. They sound great, they get super loud and they’re small enough that they can go just about anywhere in your home or office. Add in the wide range of connectivity options and you have my new favorite pair of speakers. At \$399 these aren’t inexpensive but, had I not gotten them for review, I am pretty sure I would be ordering a pair. They are that impressive.



Dave Evans, Audioengine co-founder notes, “We designed the award-winning HD Series for the way people listen to music these days and HD3 is another game-changer for home, office, and personal audio.”

He couldn’t be more right. These speakers are a game changer. And they would make a great gift for your audio-loving family member if you are ready to splurge. And... Before Cyber Monday comes to an end, you can save 20% and have the speakers ship for free with no tax! [Check them out here.](#)

Source: Manufacturer supplied review sample

What I Like: Small in size but huge in sound; Offer a huge range of connectivity options; Look fantastic; Available in three finishes; DAC serves up great sound; Bluetooth technology inside has amazing range and offers great sound

What Needs Improvement: Not a thing, these speakers are remarkable