

DESKTOP SPEAKER REVIEWS

Audioengine HD6 Premium Powered Speakers

By Michael Lavorgna • Posted: Nov 25, 2015



Device Type: Powered Speakers

Input: 3.5mm mini-jack, analog RCA L/R, Toslink, Bluetooth aptX

Output: analog RCA L/R

Dimensions: 11.75" (30cm) x 7.25" (18.5cm) x 10" (25cm)

Weight: 17.5 lbs (left speaker), 12.5 lbs

Availability: Direct Online and through Authorized Resellers

Price: \$749.00/pair

Website: audioengineusa.com



Just Ask Audioengine

If you look at the Audioengine website, you'll see something rarely seen; links to positive reviews of their products from non-audio press: PC Magazine, Macworld, Wired, PC World, and even Gizmodo, haters of all things with the word "Hi". Of course Audioengine also gets positive reviews from the audio press. How *do* they do it?

They do it by consistently building very good sounding and good looking stuff that doesn't cost a fortune. Crazy, right? I reviewed the Audioengine A5+ (see [review](#)), their B1 Bluetooth Receiver (see [review](#)), and the D2 Wireless 24-Bit DAC & USB-S/PDIF Converter (see [review](#)), and we bought our daughter's each a pair of the little A2 speakers for Christmas many years ago. The other part of the Audioengine secret sauce is they offer products that fill a need and they're not afraid to embrace things that tons of people want, like Bluetooth and Toslink (think Apple TV). Crazy, no?

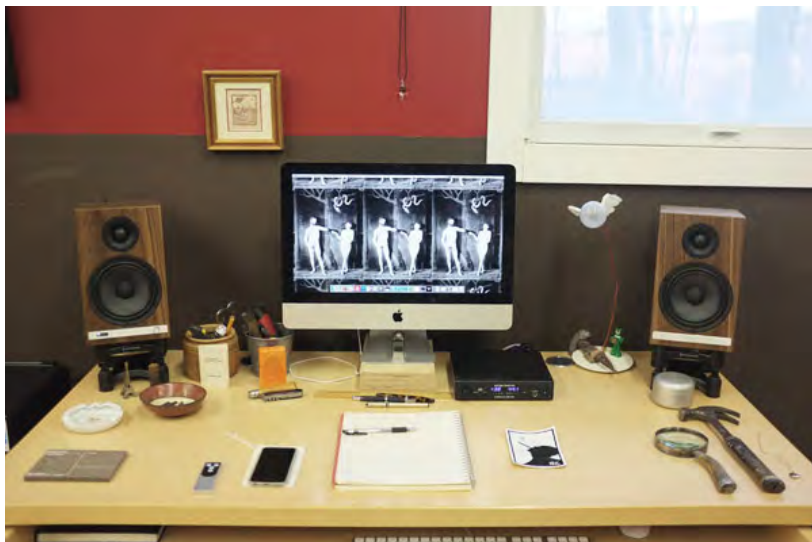


The Audioengine HD6 are the company's new flagship active speakers. The left speaker weighs more than the right because lefty houses all of the electronics, leaving righty passive. There's a 50WPC Class A/B amp (150W peak power total), a 24-bit DAC for the aptX Bluetooth and Toslink input (supports up to 24/192 via Toslink), and all of the ins and outs listed above. Righty is connected to lefty with an ordinary run of speaker cable (Audioengine includes a 6' run). The drivers consist of a 5.5" Kevlar woofer and a 1" silk dome tweeter, the woofers employ a diecast aluminum frame to better deliver the bottom end with rigid force. The HD6's come in your choice of Satin Black or furniture-grade Walnut or Cherry wood veneers.



I sat the HD6s on my desktop connected to the Mytek Stereo192-DSD DAC, which in turn is connected to my iMac via Firewire. Setup took all of a few minutes. The left speaker has a front-mounted volume control knob but Audioengine also includes a very nice little hefty-feeling aluminum remote for controlling volume, mute, and sleep mode (they must get people's hatred of cheap, plastic remotes with tons of useless buttons). As you can see, there's also a decorative aluminum horizontal strip on each speaker's face with the engraved Audioengine logo. A subtle white power LED sits behind a metal screen in the left speaker finishing off the visuals. There are also magnetic grills, which I preferred off, but some may find this look too naked (they must also get people's hatred of unused holes in an otherwise attractive speaker's face when the grills are not in use).

The review pair came in the Walnut finish, which is my favorite. My only complaint is due to the fact that I received a "test run" pair so the left speaker's front face had imperfections where it meets the top. I was assured by Audioengine that every pair going to customers are inspected and this pair never would have passed muster. Good to know. I sat the HD6's on my IsoAcoustic stands, a must-have accessory for any desktop speaker, imo.



The Audioengine Tradition

Easy to listen, easy to like. That's what I get from Audioengine but the HD6's add an adverb, namely "really", twice. The HD6's sound bigger and more coherent than my memories of the A5+ and they certainly have more grunt, drive, and punch as compared to my tinier ADAM A3X. The new Audioengine's also have a silky smooth sonic character, removing any hints of harshness attributable to the tweeter. As a matter of fact, the HD6's sing as one voice, with nary a hint of their two-way-ness.



Also unlike my A3Xs, do not think of the Audioengine HD6's as desktop speakers. These speakers really enjoy volume and I'd imagine they'd live very happily in a small room. I found myself toeing them out more and more and getting them as close to the edges of my desktop as possible so I could better fill my surrounding space with music. Big, loud music. Kamasi Washington's *The Epic* was a perfect partner with its horns, strings, prominently mixed drums, and voices. *The Epic* is, well, epic, and it really begs for big and loud and the HD6's were happy to accommodate. Nice.

Joe Benjamin, and Charlie Persip weave sheer beauty, especially on "Warm Canto", and the Audioengine's provide all the warmth necessary for a moving experience. If there's one aspect of the HD6's performance that I'd call attention to, it's that I did not find them as enjoyable at lower volumes as compared to my ADAM A3Xs. I'm talking about lower-your-voice levels so this may not be an issue for most listeners. The best desktop speakers I've heard in this regard, the ability to still sound amazing at whisper quiet levels, were the Fujitsu Ten Eclipse TD-M1 Wireless Speaker System (\$1,300.00/pair see [review](#)).

Of course the HD6's also love romp and roll and Jimi Hendrix playing "Red House" live at Clark University (1968) sounded smashing as did D'Angelo's entire *Black Messiah*. Again, the temptation for loud, and louder still prevailed. The HD6's are also kind to less kind recordings because of their relatively warm sound. While I'm really diggin' the new U.S. Girls *Half Free* (a lot), it is not what you'd call an audiophile recording. Listening through the HD6's, that stuff falls by the wayside leaving you and the U.S. Girls to get on with more important matters.



Since my listening stayed on my desktop in the barn, I did not do much listening via Bluetooth but I did do enough to be able to say with confidence that only the most persnickety will find fault and not fun. I streamed music from my iPhone via the very cool Bandcamp app which provides access to all of the music you've purchased from the site as well as other selections. The way I see it, with the HD6's set up in-room, Bluetooth becomes your ticket to inviting friends and family to play through your hi-fi with a few taps on their phone. Can you spell party?

Last but not least, I leashed my MacBook Pro directly to the HD6's with a length of optical cable, relying on the speaker's DAC. fka Twigs' latest, Duke Ellington *Afro Bossa*, Rokia Traori's lovely *Beautiful Africa* all sounded lovely. Granted on purely sonic terms Toslink to the HD6's did not sound as natural or musically engaging as going through the Mytek DAC, a combo I could live with, but for users with a Toslink-equipped computer, Toslink + HD6s offer a very simple solution. Just add your audio player of choice.



Really easy to listen to, really easy to like

I've been to people's homes where they have a computer and some desktop speakers setup in their living room as their only hi-fi. Typically the speakers are too small for the job of listening outside of the desk so when asked to fill a room they fail. Can you say crappy party? I found the Audioengine HD6's to beg to be played loud(er) as if they were born to fill a room.

While the Audioengine HD6's worked perfectly wonderfully on my desktop, if you're also going to ask your desktop speakers to do double-time in-room, the HD6's are bouncing out of their seat, waving their hand, and shouting "Pick me!, Pick me!".

Associated Equipment

Also in-use during the Audioengine HD6 review: ADAM A3X