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Audioengine N22 Amplifier and P4 Speakers - Reviewed

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WRITTEN BY RONALD | 14 MARCH 2011

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p1.jpg

Audioengine is a unique company that brings premium sound to the home and the office. Their products are primarily bookshelf speakers, but they also have a portfolio of complementary audio products such as a wireless audio adapter or a subwoofer. Today we will be taking a look at some of Audioengine's latest offerings: the P4 Speakers as well as the N22 amplifier. While these are two separate products that stand on their own, you will notice that they complement each other quite well.

Audioengine N22



p4.jpg

The Audioengine N22 is a desktop amplifier in a fairly portable package. The unit stands upright, therefore it has a small footprint when placed on your desk. The front looks very simplistic with a large volume knob, a single LED, and a 3.5mm port to plug in your headphones.



p5.jpg

Once you look at the back of the device, you will begin to understand what it offers. There are 2 pairs of gold plated connectors intended to connect 2 speakers. There are also two RCA type ports and a 3.5mm port for inputs. There is a left and right port for line out, a connector for the AC adapter, and there is also a USB port. The USB port is intended to be used with Audioengine's Wireless Audio Adapter if you want to stream audio wirelessly to the amplifier. This amplifier supports up to 80 Watts peak total, 40W peak per channel.



p2.jpg

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p3.jpg

Also included is a setup guide, an AC adapter, and various cables.

The accessories included are speaker wire (one for each speaker), 3.5mm line in/out cable, and a RCA audio cable.

Audioengine P4



p6.jpg



p8.jpg

The Audioengine P4 are passive bookshelf speakers. Unlike computer desktop speakers which typically have an amplifier built in, these speakers do not have an amplifier. The main reason some people use passive speakers is because they may want to use an existing receiver they have. In this case, we can also use these speakers with the Audioengine N22.



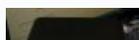
p7.jpg

The speakers came packaged in a large box. Inside the box, the speakers were in a microfiber-like bag to protect them.

These passive speakers come in three different finishes: glossy white, black, or caramel. The ones we have here today have a black finish. Design-wise, these speakers have a classic look that will blend in easily to any environment. These are front ported speakers, with the ported hole right at the bottom in the front. The tweeter sits towards the top and the midrange/bass sits underneath. Behind each speaker are gold plated connectors where you would connect the wires. Lastly, you will notice that there are 2 small mounting holes on the back if you intend to mount the speakers to a wall. Or you can use the mounting whole at the bottom of the speaker if you intend on placing the speaker on a stand. You can really tell of the attention to detail and the overall quality of these speakers. The weight of the speakers feel substantial in the sense that it feels built well. The finish is consistent and seems of high quality as well.



p9.jpg



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p10.jpg

Installation was very simple. Each individual speaker wire has two ends. I just hand unscrewed the connector on the back of one of the P4's and then screwed it back it. Determining which speaker belongs on the left or right is dependent on whether you connect the speaker to the left or right connectors on the back of the N22 amplifier. Then I plugged in the AC adapter to the N22. Turning on the amplifier was as simple as turning the volume knob clockwise. The blue LED will light up telling you that it is powered and active. I chose to connect my computer to the amplifier so that I could hear some music from my computer. I used the provided 3.5mm line in cable to connect the cable from the sound card of my computer to the N22 amplifier. Turning on the amplifier for the first time, I could feel how smooth the volume knob was when turning it. I first tried listening to some various music ranging from classical to pop/rock. The sounds were very clean and crisp. The voices sounded lively and it almost sounded like they were here in the room with me. Out of curiosity, I tried watching some online TV and videos. I immediately noticed that when people were talking, voices sounded fuller compared with my desktop speakers which made voices sound like they were coming from a small box. Also, when watching movies using my desktop speakers, I typically have to turn up the sound considerably higher. When that happens, I usually hear an ambient hissing sound. With the use of the Audioengine N22 and P4 set, that sound was filtered to near silence. Turning up the volume knob some more, I didn't hear any crackling or static noises which is something I would hear in my older desktop speakers. The P4's really shine when you turn the volume up a bit, the sounds didn't distort and the speakers provided room filling sound. If you are used to having a subwoofer on the floor, you may have to get used to the bass coming from a 'higher' level. With the P4's going as low as 58Hz, they generally provide a good bass. If you are expecting even lower bass, you might want to consider attaching a subwoofer. Otherwise, the P4's cover the majority of the sound range and more.



p11.jpg



p12.jpg

Conclusion

The Audioengine P4 can be bought at Audioengine's website for \$249 and the N22 for \$199. You don't have to buy them together, but you will notice that Audioengine's products complement each other well if you do choose to buy multiple Audioengine's products. I experienced a consistent level of quality across both the P4 and N22. If you are looking for a fairly portable amplifier for your speakers, go for the N22. And if you are looking for passive speakers, the P4 does a nice job. Once you have one of Audioengine's products, you will realize how well another Audioengine product will complement it. For example, the N22 and P4 already work well together. And if you need wireless capability, just attach the Audioengine W2 wireless adapter. And finally, if you need both front and rear speakers, you can use the bigger brother Audioengine 5 speakers as the front speakers, and use the P4 as rear speakers.

