

Audioengine N22 Desktop Amplifier & P4 Passive Bookshelf Speaker Review (update) | GadgetReview

<http://www.gadgetreview.com/2011/01/audioengine-n22-desktop-amplifier-p4-passive-bookshelf-speaker-review.html>

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Pros:



- Crisp, vibrant audio throughout range
- Easy install with components included in box



- Sturdy, well-designed

Cons:



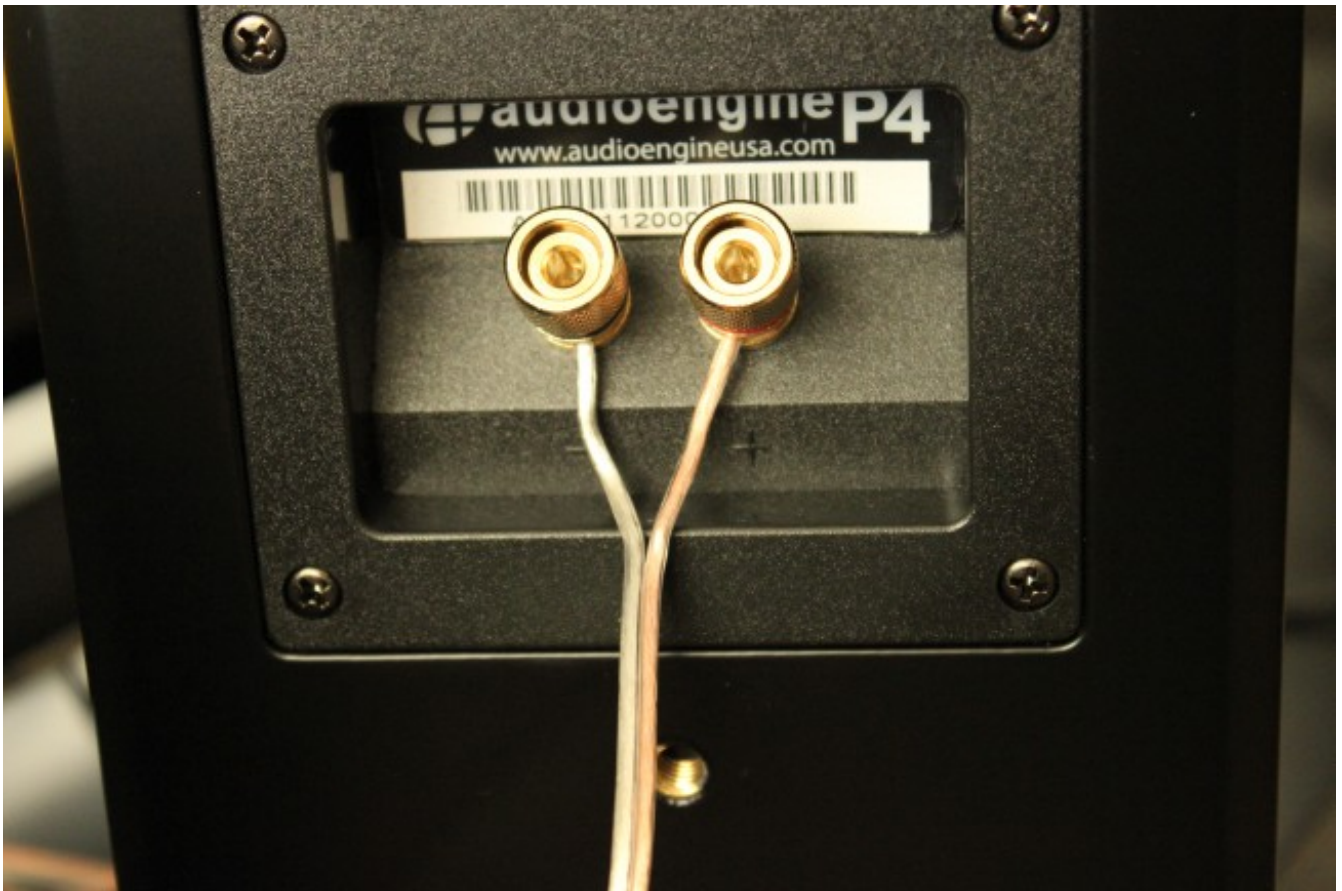
UPDATE – SEE BELOW. There was once a time when an entire household's entertainment options were primarily clustered in a statically central location. Perhaps there could have been an auxiliary setup for those searching a bit of solitude, but, undoubtedly, the bread won was invested in a singular unit. These days the landscape is a bit different as the nuclear family exists more like orbiting electrons, in homes where every room might house a powerful satellite to an even more massive, albeit underused, headquartered setup. For these purists, securing high-definition video is no longer the end-all quest. A complete package insists on supplementing the underwhelming aural fidelity of native monitor speakers.



Perfect for the office, den, bedroom, dorm, or apartment, Audioengine's N22 Premium Desktop Audio Amplifier is built and preforms just as it's described. Coupled with the Hong Kong-based manufacturer's P4 passive bookshelf speakers, the N22 proves an effective device in need of little real estate.

Carefully shipped in boxes packed with bracing foam padding, unsheathing both the N22 and P4s

from their drawstring cloth bags reveals quality hand-built equipment. Though the N22 amplifier only comes in a single medium-density fiberboard design with an integrated stand and clean, matte black aesthetic (\$199), buyers have stylized options if they're looking to integrate a pair of the P4s into existing setups: matte black or hi-gloss white (\$249); or eco-friendly, caramel-colored, carbonized bamboo (\$325). No matter your decision, the specifications and pack-ins remain the same and come ready to mount with threaded inserts on the back and bottom of the speakers.



If purchased together, only the most introductory knowledge of hardware installation is required to set up the stereo amplifier, as it doesn't require any kind of driver or software to work. Meant for desktop use, the N22 amp is without the slew of connection options home theater receivers accommodate. Instead, Audioengine simplifies setup to RCA (3.28-foot cable included) and 1/8-inch mini-jack (6.5-foot cable included) inputs and outputs. To send audio singles to each of the speaker channels two 5.75-foot lengths of 16 AWG speaker wire are easily connected to the P4s via 5-way gold-plated binding posts. Finally, a USB power port rounds out the N22's connection options.





With an 80W peak (22W RMS/40W peak per channel) the N22 provides enough punch for any close-range setup. The bookshelf speakers may take up more room on your desk than your computer, each measuring 9 inches high by 5.5 inches wide by 6.5 inches deep, but the trade-off couldn't be more in your favor. Perfectly balanced, the sound emitted from the P4s is clean without being sterile, allowing bright and audible dialogue cues to come through rumbles of artillery fire in "Band of Brothers." That doesn't mean the P4s aren't capable of carrying bass tones, however. Where some sets of speakers rely on optional subwoofers (the N22 allows for subwoofer integration) to carry percussive beats, the P4's 4-inch, magnetically shielded and Kevlar-coned woofers supply satisfying, meaty rhythms for your favorite house, hip-hop, or heavy metal group.



Without a doubt, the N22 amp is a smart choice for anyone looking to augment their current audio situation—though, some sort of digital option would only make it better. Not only does it work for speaker amplification, but headsets as well. Any set of non-powered buds or phones receive a boost in output. The amp even functions independently of your computer or TV. It's a bit of a bulky solution if you're looking for kitchen audio, but the amp charges your device via that USB port while streaming through the mini-jack connection.

A capable and easy-to-operate desktop amplifier, Audioengine's N22 takes up no more space than an external hard drive and delivers vibrant audio throughout its volume settings. It doesn't replace a full-on receiver for home theater situations, but it's more than powerful enough for secondary viewing areas or smaller apartments—and, of course, desktops. Audioengine unsurprisingly suggests pairing the amp with their P4 passive speakers, but given their ability to produce rich, supportive bass tones that don't overpower clean mids and highs, the endorsement isn't grossly self-serving.

Update: Audioengine and GadgetReview are giving away both of these to one lucky winner. Checkout our [Audioengine N22 Amp and P4 Speaker contest](#).

You can buy both the [Audioengine N22 amp](#) for \$199 and the [P4 speakers](#) for \$249 from Amazon.

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