



I N R T E L E A V R B N V O B I U S E T

Review – Audioengine B1 Bluetooth Music Receiver & B2 Bluetooth Speaker

Search



subscribe to

maceditionradio-news

O U R



Audioengine B1 Bluetooth Music Receiver:

Bluetooth audio has earned a well-deserved rap for a somewhat degraded audio experience. The core reason is that Bluetooth was originally designed for connecting peripherals like mice, keyboards, and as such early versions of Bluetooth audio left something to be desired. Over the years improvements to the Bluetooth protocol and higher performance components have improved the audio quality. Software has made a difference as well, and we have written in the past about aptX, an audio codec that dramatically improves the quality of Bluetooth audio.

Audioengine didn't think that we should settle for this, and recently introduced two products to provide a higher quality experience. The **B1 Bluetooth Music Receiver** adds Bluetooth capability to any audio device, and the B2 Bluetooth Speaker is Audioengine's take on a small compact audio system.

Audioengine has incorporated aptX into both the B1 and B2, so that anyone who uses an aptX-equipped device will instantly benefit, often even without their knowledge! You can Google aptX and your phone, OS, or computer and quickly learn if it's supported on your devices, but the chances are pretty good that it is.

The **B1 Bluetooth Music Receiver** is small, nicely finished aluminum box, with a little Bluetooth antenna at the front. To use the B1 it couldn't be simpler, plug it in, turn it on, check your Bluetooth settings on your phone or computer, mate, and voila... instant connection. We should add that we experienced the same ease of use with the B2 Bluetooth Speaker, plug and play that works on the first try.

There are other Bluetooth receivers on the market, but **the B1 is distinguished by its 24-bit DAC, aptX codec, first-rate engineering, build quality, and affordable price.** As a test we recently had a party and folks wanted to stream music from their phone to an older powered speaker system, so I plugged in the B1, and asked everyone to try connecting to the B1, and without fail, all the various devices connected perfectly the first-time. And high-quality music streamed forth. When I did A/B comparison tests between the system's built-in Bluetooth, and the B1 feeding the line-in jacks, the B1 was clearly superior. In fact, comparing the wired input, to the B1 via an aptX-enabled signal, **the B1's superior 24 Bit AKM AK4396 DAC** strutted its stuff, delivering a smoother, wider, and more musical soundstage. The B1 has **RCA stereo outputs, digital optical output, a 5-volt power brick with a USB port**, and virtue of the optical input, it can also be used as a wireless bridge. **One of the most novel uses** is to use with a USB power adapter **in your vehicle**, and using your audio system auxiliary input to stream high-quality audio to your audio system. **If you want to add high-quality wireless audio to your audio system, the Audioengine B1 Bluetooth Music Receiver comes highly recommended!**

The Audioengine B2 Bluetooth Speaker:

We have seen more Bluetooth speaker systems than we can count, in shapes from spheres to footballs to rugged models for partying by the pool or beach, and most of them tout how loud they are, or how much bass they can pump out, but few of them actually sound that great, with most of the expense seemingly lavished on celebrity endorsements, or flashy packaging. **The Audioengine B2 Bluetooth Speaker** is a lovely departure from that approach.

Housed in a small handmade real wood case, with your choice of **Black Ash, Zebrawood, or Walnut**, the B2 has a **quiet understated luxury.** With a **magnetically attached front grill**, using it was as easy as the B1, which meant, plug it in, turn it on, and mate it via Bluetooth. It also has the expected auxiliary input via a mini-jack. **It is loaded with audiophile grade components**, such as the well-regarded Texas Instruments **PCM5102A 24 Bit DAC**, and utilizing a similar Bluetooth antenna as the B1, the range was easily double our other Bluetooth devices, connecting on the same floor several rooms away, and even from outside. Audioengine uses audiophile-quality, **ferro fluid cooled, silk dome tweeters with neodymium magnets.** The custom woofers are **Kevlar woven glass aramid**



AdChoices

Integrated LCD Controller

Display rear camera video with graphic overlay in less than 500ms



composite with rubber surrounds. Both components are high quality, especially given the price point of the B2. Most importantly the system is capable of shaking a room, but not with heavy, thumping, non-discriminate bass, instead the bass is musical, believable, with a refined soundstage. We sampled a wide-range of music with the B2, from Jazz to Rock, Classical to Vocal, and it was at home no matter what we played. It could rock and roll when needed, and produce smooth vocals with our favorite jazz tracks.

There are limits to stereo separation in a unit where the tweeters are under a foot apart, but **the sound manages to fill even a large room**, and belies its small physical footprint. The unit packs some serious punch, powered by **dual class A/B amplifiers rated at 60W peak total** (15W RMS, 30W peak per channel), and the speaker enclosures are actually completely separate to reduce interference. Audioengine states that "The B2 cabinet is a unique design in that it has dual sub-enclosures to prevent cross-interference, while each side contains its own tuned, front-port bass slot" which are visible when one removes the speaker grill.

The Audioengine B2 is one of those products we love to see. Small, elegant, affordable, with first-rate audiophile quality sound, it would be a superb choice for the music lover who wants an affordable speaker system, capable of handling the nuances of music in a beautiful handcrafted package with a minimal footprint. **The Audioengine B2 Bluetooth Speaker comes highly recommended.**

Harris Fogel, posted 12/21/2014

For more information on the **Audioengine B1 Bluetooth Music Receiver** visit: www.audioengine.com

For more information on the **Audioengine B2 Bluetooth Speaker** visit: www.audioengine.com