

# Audioengine HD3 Wireless or Wired Speakers Pair – Review

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[Audioengine](#)

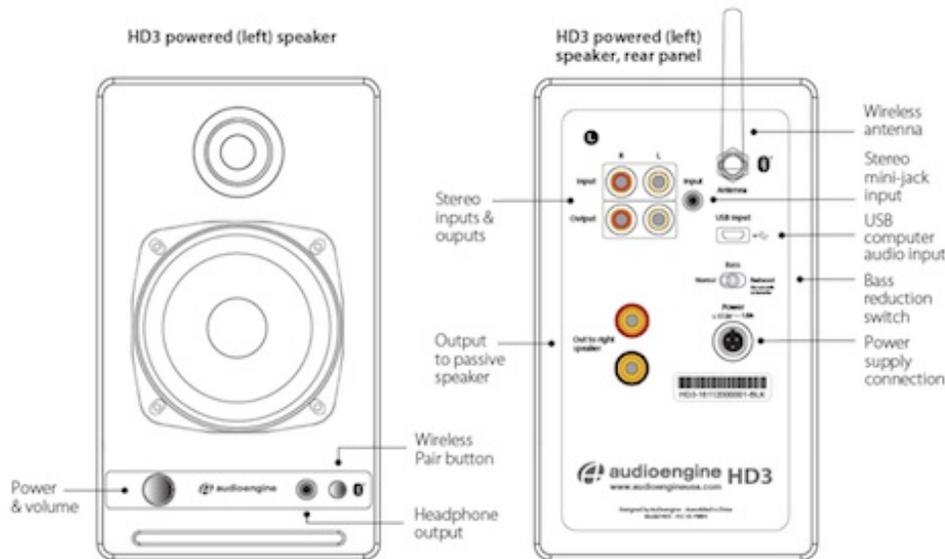
\$399 U.S. includes sales tax

*Available in satin black, walnut, or cherry wood finishes.*

*Free contiguous USA ground shipping.*

*30-day full refund audition*

Audioengine's new **HD3 powered speakers** make all other small speakers obsolete. HD3 speakers sound great, look attractive, are well built, and are engineered with multiple ports and connectors. Bluetooth wireless audio is superb. Headphone DAC (digital analog conversion) amplification produces excellent personal listening. Is all this worth \$400. Definitely, yes.



Useful cables are included for typical hardware interface situations. Power and volume are controlled from a single front knob. The headphone port and power/Bluetooth activity light are also on the front. You can use a floor stand or desk stand if you don't want to rest these speakers on a table or desk or shelf. A bass reduction switch is included. Great idea!



HD3 performs better than Audioengine's acclaimed A2+ powered bookshelf and desktop speakers. HD3's sound is smoother and richer at all volume levels. The additional ports and features justify HD3's higher price when the improved audio experience is factored into the buying decision for long term enjoyment. These are speakers you will keep and enjoy for a very long time.

The only thing missing from both models is a series of volume level indicators when turning the power+volume knob up and down. There is no HDMI or digital optical audio input into HD3, but that won't be a problem with the high quality USB, mini-jack, and Bluetooth sources provided.

A company representative tells MyMac that Audioengine's stellar Bluetooth signal clarity and strength are better than other companies' because: "We roll our own module and use a 24-bit upsampling DAC. Our HD3 Bluetooth receiver and USB input both utilize the PCM 5102 DAC, widely known for its low-noise and high-fidelity. The HD3 Bluetooth implementation presents impressive low noise and low distortion characteristics with a noticeable improvement over other Bluetooth devices."

*Translation: There is no loss in audio signal quality with Audioengine Bluetooth speakers and adapters. Who wants to connect with cables when it's not necessary?*

I tested HD3 with wired and wireless playback and I now routinely prefer streaming Bluetooth audio from my iPhone because it is so easy and works so well, particularly with HD tracks from Deezer, Spotify, and similar premium Internet music services. In my office the included banana plug cable is just the right length, but in my home I use a much longer cable for maximum separation and coverage.

When testing the speakers for this evaluation I decided there is a slight treble bias to sonic performance that can be enjoyed or altered using equalization or by flipping the bass level switch. This can be also be affected by room placement and height of HD3. Play around with these variables until you achieve a set-it-and-forget-it state of musical bliss.

Audioengine speakers have a sound characteristic that is not easy to define or explain, but it is there in all their listening equipment I have heard over many years. Brady, one of the owners, tells MyMac that: “When Dave and I tune speakers, we go for warm, natural, and interesting. We tried tuning for accuracy and perfection but it sounded too sterile and boring so we gave that up pretty fast. Analog amplifiers and passive crossovers help.”

My best test results were with HD3 speaker volume all the way up and iPhone volume in the 50 to 80 percent range. There is no distortion (hooray!) when peak volume is used, because Audioengine’s build quality is so robust and finely constructed. Bluetooth connecting was instantaneous each time, and the signal stayed stable. Wireless range is enormous when the included antenna is attached.



*HD3 right speaker in the middle, between A2+ on its side and photo of Mrs. Nemo. HD3 is slightly larger than A2+.*

Some of the tracks I used for extended listening tests are listed below, with brief comments on how they perform with HD3:

*Dance Me To The End of Love* by Nikos Aliagas and Adam Cohen — Voices span in stereo very well; breathy and intimate feel to the vocal delivery; rhythm section is both emphatic and delicate.

*Tsimtsum* by Mychael Danna — Lush integration of choir and strings; wooden flute floats into the room; full ensemble grips the listener at the end.

*Gotta Serve Somebody* by Shirley Caesar — Lead female vocal really bursts forth; it’s okay to boost bass in equalizer to add extra bottom; organ is lead instrument, dynamically louder and softer.

*Die Young* by Ke\$ha — Treble emphasis on pop style lead vocal; bright EQ rips out over pounding accompaniment; synth riff theme is piercing.

*Langtar till sommarn* by Riltens Vanner — Subtle blend of all voices; bass much smoother than heard in other speakers; percussion sounds best ever, and I never really noticed it before.

*Lonesome Night* by The Haden Triplets — Guitar in-room natural reverb feels like sitting in an old time hootenanny; solo vocal strong and vivid and ultra-clean; triplets' voices blend and still have individuality.

*In My Dreams* by Crosby, Stills, and Nash — Listeners can feel the fingers on the guitar strings; exceptional vocal and instrumental stereo mix; voices sound perfect, with Crosby in the middle, Nash a bit quieter on the left, and Stills also quiet on the right channel.

Note: Be careful when listening with headphones using the digital audio conversion port on the front of the left speaker. Start with both source device (iPhone streaming Bluetooth music) and HD3 at low levels, then slowly turn up the volume on one or the other until you like what you hear. This is a powerful headphone amplifier. Did I say be careful?

The immersion and immediacy of the clarity using good headphones for HD3 playback is much more intense than the in-room speaker experience. I tested Audioengine's headphone port with an [ultra-premium set of Audio-Technica headphones](#) that cost more than half again as much as these speakers. **Wow** is the technical term for how I was knocked across the room with the brilliant sound.

A mighty, muscular track to demonstrate the headphone effectiveness is *Mercury Blues* by Jackson Browne and David Lindley from their "Love Is Strange" album; especially the two sections of instrumental solos. Double wow.

You don't need \$400 speakers to provide a DAC for your upper-bracket or consumer headphones, but it's sure nice to have that handy digital audio port.

Bonus! Attach HD3 to your television or iMac to create a micro home theatre. These speakers are much more powerful and realistic than the inferior speakers built into your TV or computer.

**MyMac Review Rating is a strong 9 out of 10.**

[External review link](#)



*In real-world speaker placement, keep speakers apart from one another. Rear view of HD3 above A2+.*

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### About [John Nemerovski](#)

John "Nemo" Nemerovski is MyMac's Reviews Editor. He is a private and small group personal technology tutor in Tucson, Arizona, USA, with an emphasis on iPad and iPhone training, plus basic computing, digital photography, and Photoshop. Nemo is an accomplished music instructor on keyboard and guitar, and an expert artisan bread baker. If you are interested in writing reviews or requesting a product review on MyMac, contact him: nemo [ a t ] mymac [ d o t ] c o m.

