

Audioengine A5+ Premium bookshelf speakers review

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It's been about a year or so since we last took a look at [Audioengine's A2 desktop speakers](#), and just by a mere glance at these A5+'s there are a number of definite improvements. But before I go into what makes these speakers great or not you may be asking, "why would anyone shell out nearly \$500 for a pair of speakers?" Well, we all love to listen to music, watch movies, or even play games. Sound is a must for just about anyone who owns a computer. Getting the best sounding speakers, undistorted, with enough volume are a pain, if not sheerly impossible to find in department stores. Not to mention some one of you have already paid over a grand buying a nifty looking Mac. So why not go the extra mile and buy a pair of premium speakers that will survive the test of time, and also give you better audio quality than anything a small-time consumer set of speakers would ever offer? And so here I introduce to you, Audioengine's A5+ premium speakers.

Features

- Power Output: 150W peak power total (50W RMS / 75W peak per channel), AES
- Inputs: 1/8" (3.5mm) stereo mini-jack, RCA L/R
- Outputs: RCA L/R audio (full-range, adjustable), USB Type A (power/charging)
- Drivers: 5" Kevlar woofers, 20mm silk dome tweeters
- Frequency response: 50Hz-22kHz +/-1.5dB
- Protection: Protection: Output current limiting, thermal over-temperature, power on/off transient protection, replaceable external main fuse
- Dimensions (each speaker HWD): 10.75" (27cm) x 7" (18cm) x 7.75" (20cm)

- Weight (LEFT speaker): 15.4 lbs (7 kg) - Weight (RIGHT speaker): 9.6 lbs (4.4 kg)
- Hosts USB port for charging devices; such as iDevices,
- Packaged with all necessary audio and power cables, as well as a cloth carrying bag: (6.5 ft.) speaker wire, (6.5 ft.) 3.5" audio cable, RCA cables)
- Available in three colors: high gloss white, satin black, and carbonized bamboo

Our Impressions



Packaging — Simple, without the need for a ton of plastic. Upon opening the box there are two large speakers concealed under fitted cushioning, as well as hidden inside two cloth carrying bags. A few plastic bags house the speaker wire and provided cables (RCA to RCA, power cable, and 3.5" audio cable), as well as the set-up guide, and a remote control for wireless control over the set's volume. All in all, very minimal and takes little effort to get things all out and unboxed, ready for use.

Features — Looking back on the A2's from last year's line, there were a ton of things that we wish the next set of speakers Audioengine came up with would host. And man, did they deliver! Aside from moving the volume knob from the rear of the main speaker to its front side, they also added a number of new features that take it to the next level.

First, a new USB port is situated at the top on the rear of the main speaker. What this does is let you plug in any USB powered device and charge it while in use, or not in use, with the A5's; such as an iPhone or iPod. This doesn't substitute for an audio jack however, since you'll still need to plug it in via the audio cable provided to get sound — but it does solve the issue of a low battery without having to get your iDevice's wall-plug adapter.

And as for the aforementioned volume knob, yeah, it's great to see that it moved to the front. For being used as desktop speakers this is a definite must — heck, for use on anything it's a must! Who reaches to the back of their speakers to change up the volume? Also, instead of a smooth turn that slowly

increases the speaker's volume, you get increments that raise the volume only slightly with each click. Both methods give you precise control over the volume, but something about doing it this way makes it feel a little cheaper, though it definitely doesn't anger us — it's just an observation. Our only real complaint with the knob this time around is that it was made out of plastic, instead of that fine shiny metal last seen on the A2's rear volume control.

Aside from the new ports and knobs, there's a new white, LED light that remains on when the speakers are in use, and pulsate when they are put into Sleep mode. Sleep mode can be activated by pressing the volume knob in or pressing the Moon button on the included remote control. This mode sorta turns the speakers off without actually pressing the on / off switch located on the back. It simply cuts the audio. The white light also will blink when the speakers have been put under Mute, which can be switched on through the remote.



Build quality — You'll notice immediately that these dudes are almost two times as taller than their previous A2 incarnation; growing from 6 inches to nearly 11 inches! That said, they are monstrous when it comes to playing clear, crisp, and vibrant sound without becoming distorted in the least. Watching a movie on an iMac, or even hookinh them up on a PC gaming setup you could say is overkill, but we mean that in the best way possible. But to be frank, for a minimalist or anyone with a small desk, the A5's look pretty huge, not to mention sorta outta place no matter how you slice it.

Their look is quite simple, but since they're so large it's hard to find the proper placement. However, there's no denying that Hans Zimmer's *Inception* score will have nothing on you when that "dunnnnn dunnnnnnnnnnn" plays over these, more than capable, A5+'s... even if they look sorta ugly while doing it, (but then again, maybe it was just our black speakers that got in the way. Perhaps the bamboo or

glossy white may have persuaded us otherwise.)

In terms of build you'd be hardpressed to find a substitute for quality and durability. Most speakers nowadays are easy to break, flimsy plastic creations meant to rip off those trying to save a few pennies. But if you truly care about your sound and audio experience however, then investing a little coin will take you a long, long way. For instance, the woofers are lined with strong kevlar (yeah, the same stuff that bulletproof vests are made from), and the tweeters are made from silk. And on the backside of the main speaker, you'll notice a heatsink meant to cool down the system after prolonged use. The drivers are video shielded, which means that if placed close to a monitor or video source you won't notice that magnetic purple creeping onto your screen. The shielding also works against interference for hard drive-based music players (iPods and such). Oh, and there's also a 3-year warranty that comes with the purchase of your A5+'s



Sound — The moment of truth, if you will. Speakers that can endure a nuclear winter, and that look stylish and heavy duty aren't enough to warrant a purchase. Nope, in the end it's all about how they sound — hence, speakers of audio must provide an excellent experience for those listening to them. Well, let's just say that the A5+'s do more than just that.

When we first hooked them up we really got a taste of their volume by turning up them up on Daft Punk's *Around The World* and Madeon's *Shuriken* mix— always our first go-to artists to check out bass, low's, and overall clarity. If speakers can perform well under these tracks right off the bat then we have a good start. The A5+'s during this test offer a crystal clear sound that make you want to bob your head with each beat. The music took over our room with bass and low's reverberating with the help of the clear stereo sound when both speakers are placed at least 6ft. apart from each other, as per the instructions packaged with the speakers. We had them a good 5ft. away from each other and the stereo sound was de, which the instructions say 6ft., but who's counting?

Yael Naim's *New Soul* provided a good listen for a test in mid's and heavy use of vocals with music playing more of a background job. The speakers provided a smooth and intimate party vibe, one that could not easily be replicated on cheaper speakers. Distortion was non-existent. The Bird and Bee's

rendition of *Rich Girl* was a pleasant mix of vocals in the mid-range and a great use of bass. And The Decemberists' *Down By The Water* guitar strums and harmonica again excellently displayed how the A5+'s could handle multiple layers of music all on different levels.

And when it came to the high's, we tried out some random, high quality classical music that hosted lots of stringed instruments; like violins and a choir. But for the ultimate test we tried something a little different; during our time with the A5+'s it just so happened a wedding was taking place at our house... my wedding. We were doing the traditional backyard setup and my fiance and I thought it would be appropriate to give them a try for use when walking down the aisle, as well as when the wedding party would walk back down before dismissal. Well, it goes without saying that everything went perfectly and the A5+'s stood up to the challenge, otherwise I would not be here writing this right now, and I'd probably be looking for my bride instead.

That should be a clear indication of how much we love the A5+'s. We trusted them with a once in a lifetime experience: a wedding... MY wedding, at that! Volume was not a problem even when handling outdoor situations and heavy chatter amongst a group of 50 family and friends.

Overall



You get what you pay for here, and I mean that in the best way possible. Sometimes going the cheaper route sounds like the smartest, but if you're someone who truly cares about their audio experience, especially if you're a gamer, a big movie-watcher, or someone who enjoys more than their fair share of music, then sometimes it's better to put some money into your speaker system. We're not talking surround sound, basically we're just saying if you're looking for a solution to your desktop or gaming setup this is where it's at. Audioengine has perfected their design and have added a host of new features with a remote control, relocated volume control, and a heatsink to ensure they don't overheat after long usage. The A5+'s are a pretty penny at \$400, but if you have the cash and are looking for something in the audiophile market, then look no further than this premium speaker set.

Pro's

- New features; USB port and remote control give added convenience
- Sound is crystal clear, loud, rich, and vibrant
- Build quality is top notch, w/ added heatsink
- Worth its value of almost half a grand

Con's

- Would prefer metal volume knob instead of plastic
- Can look a little bulky in some set-up's

Where to buy

[Audioengine](#) — **MSRP: \$399**

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This review was done by Ricardo Trejo, who was given A5+ speakers by Audioengine.