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GADGETS WE LOVE

# Audioengine B2 a serious speaker, for serious listeners (Review)

Here's a serious Bluetooth speaker that doesn't skimp on specs. Featuring 60W power output, Kevlar woofers and silk dome tweeters, the Audioengine B2 earns our highest praise.

MIKE CARRALL

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03.03.2015 | Comments

## Audioengine B2 Premium Bluetooth Speaker



★★★★★

5 out of 5 stars - 'Outstanding - Starkie!'

Price: \$299



Quality build, sterling audio quality several cuts above lesser Bluetooth speakers, removable and magnetized cloth grill cover, gorgeous wood finishes (Black ash, Walnut or Zebrawood), aptX profile for high performance streaming. Weighs 10 pounds and feels solid.



Weighs 10 pounds. No battery option (but that's partly the point). Same price as Sonos Play:3 which could make a tough decision depending on your intended use.

**VERDICT:**

**"Outstanding - Starkie!"**

A serious Bluetooth speaker for discerning listeners. Looks the part. Gorgeous, simple design should enrich decor of any office, dorm room, or living room.

5

OUT OF 5



Bluetooth speakers are seemingly everywhere these days. So much so that they've become almost as ubiquitous as USB keys were back in the day, circa 2010. Available in all shapes in sizes, most to date have competed heavily on price, and

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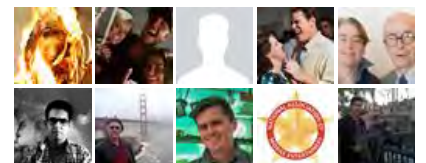
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mostly trumped up portability as a key feature. But what about the serious listener? There's Sonos, of course. It's brilliant. And with a refined app, the Sonos experience is pretty hard to beat. Yet, for many a Bluetooth-based system offers greater simplicity and flexibility when it comes to pairing and ease of streaming.

That's where Audioengine comes in.

Dubbed the "B2" I was able to get some in-depth listening time **with the company's \$299 premium Bluetooth speaker**. Still portable enough to bring over to a friend's place, or tuck away in a bookshelf, but powerful enough to pack some serious amplification and quality performance.

## UNBOXING

The first thing to know about the B2 is it—like Sonos—needs to be plugged in. No battery option. And that, thankfully, is likely why this relatively small speaker (4"H x 12"W x 5.25"D) can pack such a punch. Pulling the speaker out of the box I was immediately taken aback by its heft. This is no puny, plastic Bluetooth soda can. A quick scan of the specs indicates the B2 weighs 10 pounds. So it may not be the best option to fling into a carry-on for your next Vegas jaunt.

### AUDIOENGINE B2 Premium Bluetooth Speaker

**Type:** 2.0 powered Bluetooth speaker

**Amplifier type:** Dual class AB monolithic

**Power output:** 60W peak total (15W RMS/30W peak per channel)

**Drivers:** 2.75" Kevlar woofers, 3/4" Silk dome tweeters

**Inputs:** Bluetooth (supports aptX, A2DP and AVRCP profiles), 3.5mm mini-jack

**XNR:** >90dB

**THD:** <0.05%

**Crosstalk:** -50dB

**Frequency response:** 65Hz-22kHz (+/- 2.0dB)

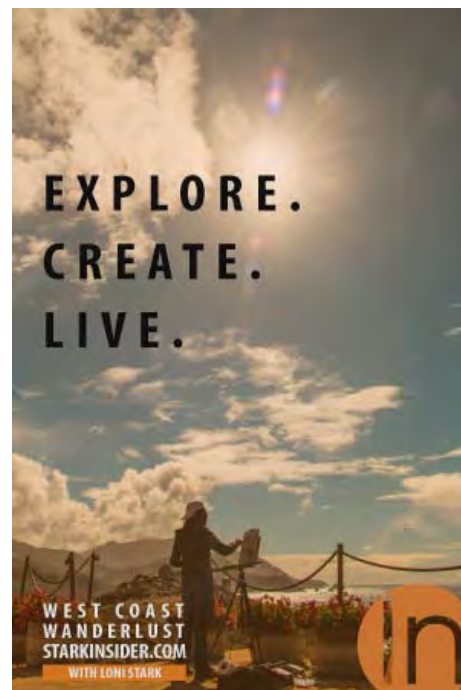
**Dimensions:** 4"H x 12"W x 5.25"D, 10lbs

*Source: Audioengine USA*



## DESIGN

Removing the cleverly magnetized cloth grill cover reveals a pair of 2.75" kevlar woofers and a pair of 3/4" tweeters (silk dome). Power output is rated at 60W — much higher than your traditional \$99 bluetooth speaker. Along the back you'll find a volume knob (with wonderful, smooth, old school action), a Power/Pair indicator light, a rotatable antenna, 3.5mm input jack, power switch and power cord connection.



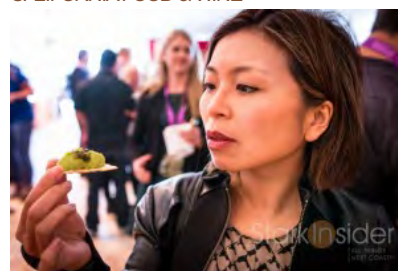
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### SILICON VALLEY SPORTS



Our demo came in a classy black ash finish. Other available wood finishes include Walnut and Zebrawood. Yes, this is a speaker that will likely enrich your decor. Overall, the B2 evokes quality construction. It's a solid bit of kit that will likely appeal to those who value aesthetics, and modern, clean designs.

We managed to pair the Audioengine speaker with a variety of Android and iOS-powered devices including a Nexus 6, iPhone 6, and several iPads. Unlike other Bluetooth devices, the B2 appeared almost instantly. Pairing was a snap, and we experienced no hiccups. A nice bonus that audiophiles will appreciate: the B2 supports the high quality aptX Bluetooth profile (in addition to A2DP and AVRCP). This should result in higher quality streams.

## PERFORMANCE

And the sound?

Gorgeous, rich, full bodied.

The B2 easily lives up to its name, and will blow away lower priced Bluetooth speakers out of the water. Increasing volume did surprisingly little to distort the output, save for the most bass intense rave tracks. Nice! Running the test gamut, from Imagine Dragons ("Smoke + Mirrors"), and Drake ("Energy") to AC/DC ("Hells Bells") and even some classical (Mozart's Symphony No. 40 in G Minor), to really test the details in the mids and the highs. Performance was sublime.



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## Bluetooth Audio Receiver

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At \$299, the B2 competes with the likes of the Sonos Play:3 which retails for the same price. In our lab we only had available a Play:5, the step-up, larger model (\$399), making a direct comparison a little unfair. Still I was curious to hear them head-to-head. Here, it's clear, the Play:5 does add slightly more oomph on the bottom end, and can crank it just a bit more in terms of output (but not by much).

Sonos doesn't publish its frequency response specs, but to my ear at least I feel the Play:5 does reach down a little lower than the B2's 65Hz bottom end. Again, don't give this too much weight in your decision — if you're cross shopping you'd likely be comparing the B2 to the Play:3, a model with much smaller tweeters and woofers.

In the end the B2 is a championship calibre speaker for its price and size. It will look right at home in an office, a dormroom, or a family room. And, despite its (glorious) aforementioned heft, you can easily toss this speaker into the car, and bring it over to your friend's place, or to a special event.

### THE COMPETITION

For something more portable with solid sound I'd look at the Boss SoundLink Mini Bluetooth Speaker (\$199). And for a system that you might want to expand, and run throughout the home, the Sonos would be my first pick.

However, if I was looking at a standalone speaker approaching audiophile performance, and valued design, and simplicity (Bluetooth over proprietary mesh network, for example), the Audioengine B2 would be right at the top of my list. At \$299 you won't break the bank, but you'll get exponentially better performance than you would from something like, say, the Jawbone Jambox (though, decent).

The B2 really hits the sweet spot when it comes to price-performance. With quality Bluetooth performance thanks to the aptX profile and 60W of output you won't be lacking in distortion-free power. Nice touches such as the gorgeous

wood finishes and solid engineering touches (that volume knob!) are icing on the cake on a package that truly impresses.

### ***Audioengine B2 Premium Bluetooth Speaker***

*5 out of 5 stars. Highly Recommended.*

Research: [\\$299 on Amazon](#).

## **IN PHOTOS: Audioengine B2 Premium Bluetooth Speaker**

