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# THE HYPE REVIEW

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by Jason Tsay



Typically, when it comes to audio equipment, size does matter. Finding an attractive and decent sounding pair of speakers that will also fit nicely into your workspace is not always an easy task. I've been auditioning the Audioengine A2+ for a while now, and I'm ready to tell you if it ticks the right checkmarks. Read on for my full take on Audioengine's latest desktop speakers!



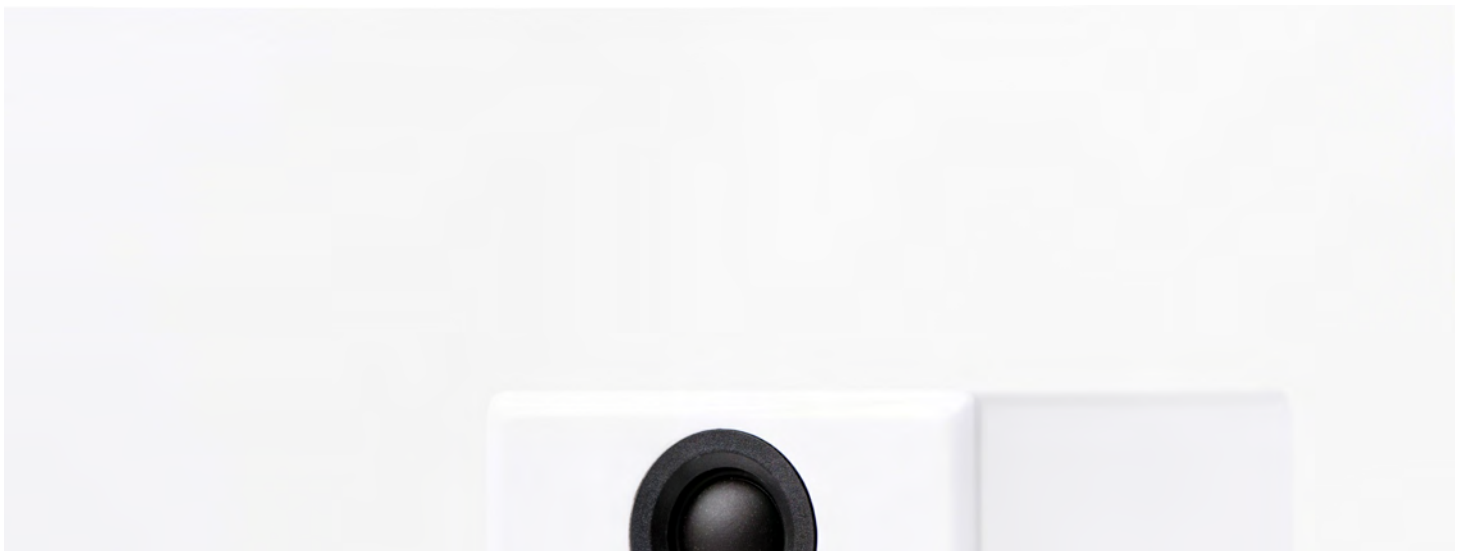
Inside the packaging, you'll find the speakers (wrapped in microfiber cloth pouches), a power supply (also wrapped in a microfiber pouch), a 3.5mm audio cable, USB cable, speaker wire (all wrapped in another microfiber pouch), and some manuals.



The A2+ speakers follow Audioengine's iconic studio monitor-esque design with hard finished wood cabinets. The white version looks absolutely stunning with the glossy high resin MDF exterior, a material picked to reduce rattling and any other "high frequency diffraction effects."



On the rear of the left speaker you'll find a nice metal volume knob (which doubles as a power switch); 3.5mm, USB, and RCA inputs (the A2+ feature an integrated DAC, so you can use USB to bypass your computer's weaker DAC); RCA outputs (which you can use to add a subwoofer); outputs to the right speaker, and a port for the AC adapter (yes, there's an external power brick). The underside of the speakers are lined with foam padding, with 1/4" threaded inserts in the middle for wall mounts.





Build quality and attention to detail here are absolutely stunning. Everything from the finishing on the cabinets to the finely machined volume knob screams quality.



Speaking of the volume knob, some may criticize Audioengine for positioning something so frequently used on the rear of the speakers, but I am actually quite glad they didn't obstruct the clean lines of the A2+ to add a volume knob to the front.

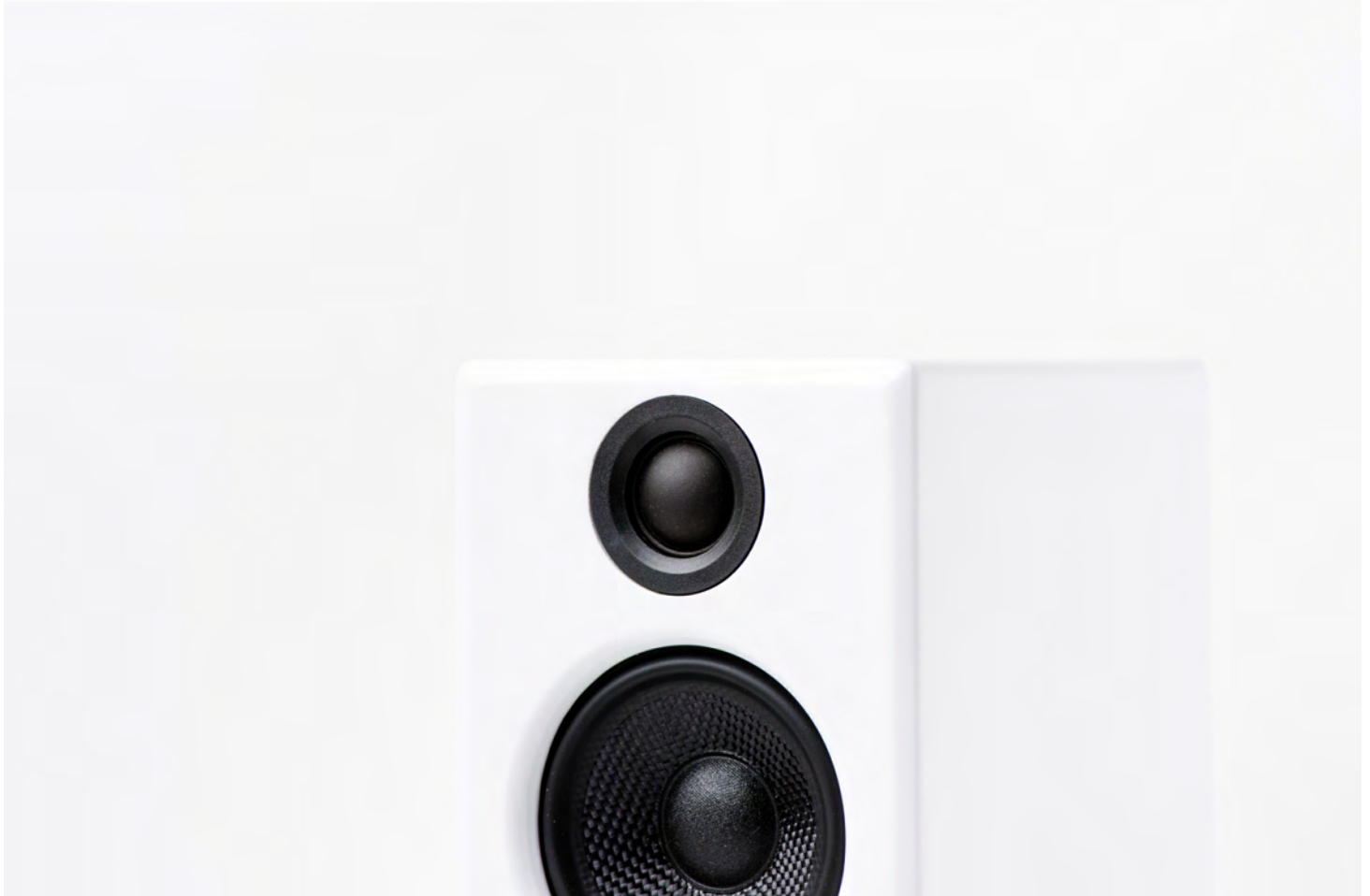


In the looks department, these speakers are a clear win. The size is pretty terrific no matter what size of desk you're working with and the Audioengine's nondescript looks are minimal enough to blend right into your workspace (especially if it consists of Apple products, which these speakers complement well).





First of all, let's address the "size" of the sound. These speakers are perfectly adequate for close range listening or a small room, but ultimately, they just don't get that loud. It feels like about the right amount of sound for speakers this size and shouldn't pose a problem for desk use, but you might hit a limit if you try to fill a larger room.



Now, the main course - let's talk sound quality. If there's one thing I have to say about the A2+ speakers, it's that they really excel in clarity. Vocals really come forward and the amount of resolution you get with the 2.75" Kevlar woofers and 3/4" silk tweeters is nothing short of incredible. However, it feels like the speakers are slightly biased toward the mid/high end of the frequency spectrum. The mid bass is very forward, but not exactly punchy in the way you'd expect it to. It sounds a bit shallow, as if it's throwing punches but it's not quite landing them. Sub bass is much more subdued - you won't find any resonating or rumbling here - although this is certainly more a limitation on the size of the drivers than anything.



It may sound like I'm not enjoying the A2+, but the truth is that they're really quite impressive for the diminutive package they come in. This pair of speakers was designed as a 2.0 system, and what I'm seeing here is an excellent implementation of that. However, there's no denying that they could use a little oomph at times for genres of music that are heavy in the low end of the spectrum. For this, there's a simple solution - add a sub! Without a subwoofer, the A2+ can feel overly clinical and "in your face" at times.



Ultimately, I have to say the A2+ deliver a very nice, flat response that feels more focused on accuracy than anything else. Many speakers these days are tuned beyond their limits for emphasis on the low end for a more fun sound. Audioengine has done something right here by figuring out what the hardware is capable of and tuning it to make the most of it - I get the sense that this more neutral sound signature is something purists will enjoy.

Oh, and I have to add one more thing - if you have these speakers on your desk, you'll find that sound improves significantly if you tilt the front of the speakers up to angle at your ears. For this reason, Audioengine sells a paid pair of stands to do just that. These are going to run you