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Stellar Sound: Audioengine B2 Bluetooth Speaker

Cut most small speakers in half, and you'll find what you would probably expect- plenty of plastic surrounding the electronic guts, and pretty small little drivers. What you want to see: a wooden cabinet, sizable speakers, and decent porting to allow bass to properly vent. Bluetooth speakers have come a long way in the past couple of years, and now even audiophiles can find models to satisfy- like today's model!

[Audioengine's B2 Bluetooth Speaker](#) is a cute little guy, a wireless stereo sound system meant to look good in your kitchen, office, or bedroom. We've seen plenty of other Audioengine gear in the past, [including their A2+ powered monitors](#), which offer similar specs to the B2 and one of our favorite sonic signatures of any speaker pair in it's class. And Audioengine has a knack for wireless too, [as their B1 receiver](#) converts a sound system into a wireless one in a pinch. Available in three colors and styles of wood, ours was black but walnut and zebra wood look swanky (and the perfect companion for your modernist furniture). Note that it's not meant to be portable, despite the fairly compact size, as it isn't battery powered. Weighing in at 10 pounds and about 12 x 10 inches, the B2 is definitely for at-home use, and it's not waterproof or weather-resistant.

Let's run down the features: hand-built enclosure feels solid and weighty, 2.75-inch kevlar drivers, 60 watts of power, and the expected auxiliary input (mini-jack/headphone 3.5mm). Our favorite part was the removable magnetic grill, along with the optional antenna (included and helps greatly with range, but isn't necessary). Connecting to the B2 is simple and easy, and Audioengine included full apt-X support, the codec that improves audio fidelity. We didn't hear a major



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difference when plugged in versus using Bluetooth, which is a good sign. You can certainly use an external DAC, but a nice 24-bit digital-to-analog convertor is built in. Now, you might miss a remote control, and some folks may have wanted a dock, a clock, or AirPlay capabilities for multi-room use. But simple can be better, and aside from the wireless, much about the B2 is old school, especially the sound.

We'd describe it as throaty- a fuller sound than most electronics provide, and among the best Bluetooth speakers we've heard this size. In fact, we'd challenge anyone to identify them as being wireless, and they have a classically neutral tone, almost monitor-like, just slightly warm. Off-axis listening does suffer, so if you're looking to listen in a bigger room or for larger groups, then it's hard to go wrong having separate satellites. But set the B2 up correctly, and lean back for a treat- only at the very highest end of volume could we find distortion and there was never any hissing, buzzing, or fatigue. The audioengine B2 is [priced a bit higher than most Bluetooth systems](#), but comes in slightly under a couple of competitors- at \$300, it's not an impulse buy, but a great holiday splurge. For authentic sound, with fewer cables and lovely craftsmanship, your eyes (and ears) will appreciate the B2.



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