

# Audioengine A5 Review

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For the past few weeks I've been upsetting the Neighbors with a pair of Audioengine A5 speakers. Audioengine is quickly becoming the manufacturer of choice for high end self-powered computer and shelf speakers.

When you open the A5 box, you have have a near-Apple experience. Each speaker is in its own cloth sack with a third sack holding a variety of connectors and wires insuring you will get it connected to something soon. The next thing you will notice after you open the box is that these speakers are heavy. The left speaker (with the built in amp) is 14 lbs and the right is 9. The materials in the speakers is 1" thick medium density fiberboard and they have a high gloss piano finish that is very attractive. For guts, the A5's have Kevlar woofers and the silk dome tweeters. Because they are magnetically shielded, you can use them next to your monitor but an iPhone will cause interference unless you put it into "Airplane Mode".

On the left A5 there are a variety of inputs including AC power, perfect for your airport express, two stereo inputs, and a USB port. The result of all of this is you can charge your iPod while putting audio into the A5's or you can use Audioengine's wireless transmitter, the AW1 to beam music into the A5's from any source. One of the inputs and the USB port is actually on top of the speaker making it very easy to access with your iPod.

In order put them to the test, I plugged in my iPod and listened to a track from Chick Corea's latest album, New Crystal Silence. It sounded fantastic but as I started to ramp up the volume, I began to hear some compression distortion. The speakers were so good that I could hear some of the compression mushiness. I bought that album from the Amazon service so I hooked up my computer and ran the 256 kb version and it sounded spectacular. Playing music that loud through a MacBook Air felt like delicious overkill. Of course this means I'm going to have to rethink my encoding presets but I can think of worse problems.

There are some very detailed specifications on the A5s at Audioengine's website. I didn't have the

ability or knowledge to confirm those specifications but I can say that it did a remarkable job of reproducing the music at louder levels than I could ever get away with at the same time my wife is in the house. The highs were clear, the mids were full, and the bass was tight without a lot of that mushy thumping I've heard on virtually every other speaker in this price range. I played a variety of music styles through it and they all sounded very good. These speakers are good enough to get a visit from the police at any hour. I can think of no better compliment.

With onboard USB and AC power there are a lot of possibilities. In addition to using them from my computer and iPod, I also put them in the backyard one afternoon while we were barbecuing and streamed wirelessly with the AW1. I also took them with me when I gave a presentation that included some audio and music. They did an excellent job filling the room.

My favorite use for these speakers however is for my music studio. Well, I call it a music studio. Actually, it is a keyboard in my living room with a small table next to it for my Mac. But in my mind it is a music studio. Anyway, up until the A5s, the speaker system in the "studio" was a pair of \$50 computer speakers with a small plastic subwoofer. All I can say is not .. any ... more. These A5s are such a huge upgrade. It makes playing the piano so much more enjoyable. Also, when I play back with 15 tracks, the A5's handle everything from the rolling kettle drum to the tinkling triangle.

I wouldn't call the A5s an impulse buy at \$349 but at that price they still are an excellent value. If you are looking for top quality self powered speakers, I wouldn't think twice about it. They include a three year warranty. Audioengine knows how good their product is because they give a 30-day audition. That means if you don't like them, you can send them back for a full refund. Once you try them out, however, I can't really imagine sending them back. You can order them directly and get more information at [audioengineusa.com](http://audioengineusa.com).

### 3 Responses to "Audioengine A5 Review"

1 **James Katt**

Mar 23rd, 2008 at 8:57 am

M-Audio's speakers are just as good if not better. And they cost less!

2 **MacSparky**

Mar 23rd, 2008 at 10:11 pm

I've never used the M-Audio product but I stand behind my review. These speakers get a huge sound out of a shelftop box.

3 **Brady B**

Mar 24th, 2008 at 12:12 pm

The only M-Audio speakers that sound close to the A5's from my side-by-side listening experiences are the BX5's, which are around the same price as the Audioengine 5's but aren't really in the same category (studio monitor vs. powered bookshelf). The main inconvenience with the M-Audio speakers is that the power amps are in each speaker so in my living room setup I had to plug each speaker into the wall and then split the audio cable between the left and right speaker. But I do work for Audioengine, so what do I know....