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Review - Audioengine5 Desktop Speakers

by [Bryan Chaffin](#), 9:00 AM EDT, March 29th, 2007



We've already [reviewed the Audioengine5 speaker set at iPodObserver.com](#) as an [iPod](#) companion, but these speakers are so good, they also need to be reviewed as desktop

monitors. When it comes to listening to and recording music, there are no other speakers in this price range that come close to the clarity and balance offered by Audioengine5.

Listening to Music

These speakers make my tunes sound good. The highs are clear and crisp, and the mids and lows also have a clarity that no other desktop speaker I've listened to can match. In fact, it's the word "clarity" that I have found leaping to my mind again and again when listening to music coming through these speakers, and it's what makes me appreciate them so much.

Recording Music

Musicians with a desktop studio will perhaps appreciate the Audioengine5s the most. The engineers that developed these speakers come from a studio monitor background, and the end result of these speakers reflect that prior work.

Pro studio engineers may argue that the Audioengine5s aren't completely flat, but then those engineers aren't recording with a desktop studio. I think that desktop musicians will be able to record a better sound and engineer a better mix through these [speakers](#).

Anecdotally speaking: I found this out the hard way when I proudly showed off a recording of one of my own tunes that I had mixed in GarageBand through a different set of speakers and headphones. As I heard the song coming through the Audioengine5s, I realized how flat and muddy -- how bad -- my mix was. Greatly embarrassed, I went back to the virtual drawing board, and remixing the tune through the 5s resulted in a better recording.

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Audioengine5 speakers by Audioengine.

Games

As mentioned above, the Audioengine5 produces sound that is crisp, clear, and balanced. It's that last feature that makes them less than perfect as [gaming speakers](#), because they can't produce the bone rattling thump from in-game explosions that even a cheap pair of gaming speakers with a crappy sub-woofer can.

The Audioengine5s were made for listening to music, and while everything *but* the low end thump in a game will sound better coming through them, there are better solutions if all you care about is gaming.

The Shower Test

There's one thing that's always bugged me about playing music through my computer, and that's what I've come to call the Shower Test. Crank your music up, it sounds great, get in the shower, and it's all muffled bass *sans* vocals.

Audioengine5 is the first pair of speakers I've ever listened to that pass the Shower Test. Music sounds good, even through all the acoustic noise of passing through a hallway into the echo chamber of a bathroom.

There's nothing scientific about either my description or the experience, but I can tell you that it means a lot to me.

Look and Feel

The speakers are both large and heavy (14 lbs. for left, which has the power supply, and 9 lbs. for the right), and feel solid and well-made. The accents around the drivers are attractive, and will no doubt resonate with Mac (and iPod) owner aesthetics.

And let me emphasize the "big" part. I have a large desk, a very large desk, and even with three displays, these speakers fit just fine for me. (Note that the included pics were taken on a stand, as opposed to a desk.) If

you're working on a small, or even medium-sized desk, you'll need to make or find room for these speakers.

Boring Tech Specs

Audioengine5s are made from 1" thick MDF painted with a high-gloss white or smooth matte-black finish that will look good on any Mac user's desk. The woofer is a 5" Kevlar-domed driver, and the tweeter is a 20mm silk-domed driver with neodymium magnets. The speakers are open-air, without a grill.

It includes an internal power supply in the left speaker, which means no power brick. It sports 2 x 1/8" stereo mini-jacks (one on top), and has a USB 1.1 port on the top you can use to power an iPod (no audio-out or in with the USB port).

On the back you'll find naked-wire jacks for connecting the left speaker to the right, one of the 1/8" audio inputs, a power switch, and a voltage selector for 115 and 230 volts.

You'll also find an auxiliary power supply that's designed for an AirPort Express unit and AirTunes. This last feature doesn't have as much relevance to those looking for desktop speakers, but it's a cool feature nonetheless.



The back plate of the left A5, which has the power supply and ports.

Bottom Line

These are the best desktop speakers in their price range, hands down, and nothing else comes close (three TMO staff members own a pair, and all three agree). If you want your music to sound good, get a pair. If you record your own music and want to be able to hear what you're working on reproduced with clarity and balance, get a pair.



Product: [Audioengine5](#)

Company: [Audioengine](#)

List Price: \$349

Amazon.com Price: [\\$325](#)

5 out of 5 stars

Pros: The best sounding speakers we have ever tested at TMO Labs. Great looks & quality construction.

Cons: Very large for desktop speakers. Some Mac users might wish for an iPod dock, instead of an extra line in.

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Thu Mar 29, 2007 11:13 am

I also have a set of Audioengine5 speakers on my desk and they are truly the finest computer speakers I've had the pleasure of using. I've got a set of excellent Tapco studio reference monitors on my desk also and an A/B switch for going back and forth. I prefer the sound of the Audioengine5s. The Tapco's are probably more accurate but the Audioengine5s are more pleasant-sounding to my ears.

When I mix tracks I flip back and forth between the two speaker systems but when I listen to music at my desk I always use the Audioengine5s. They aren't cheap but they are awesome.

Bob "Dr. Mac" LeVitus

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To the previous guest: I use these speakers on top of a large desk, as noted in the review, and I've had two different sets of them for about 12 months, maybe longer.

My desk is, however, a catastrophe, and isn't...suitable...for photogrpahy. 😊

So, when the Audioengine folks had the press come to their suite at Macworld, I took the opportunity to shoot the speakers there. I felt that would better show the speakers themselves, at the possible expense of not showing them in their native habitat (i.e. my desk).

Oh, and the speakers themselves are about 5 feet apart (maybe a bit more), and are each more than two feet from the wall.

Please let me know if you have any more questions!

Bryan
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You know, I didn't. I will, and will report back.

Bryan
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