

Buying Speakers - Some Thoughts

Key Considerations

Large, floor standing, or "tower", speakers – typically, at least two feet high – reproduce a wide range of frequencies, including a deep bass response, and are often "two way", or "three way", meaning that the speaker cabinet incorporates a "woofer" and a "tweeter", or a woofer, tweeter and "midrange" driver, respectively. Larger, or additional, drivers may mean that the quality of the sound produced is higher than that of, for example, standard "one way" speakers, but this is highly subjective, and your purchasing decision is better based on the sound that you hear, rather than purely on specification alone.

On a slightly smaller scale – of size, performance and price – so-called, "bookshelf" speakers, which can be wall mounted, or, as the name suggests, arranged on shelving, or furniture, are an alternative. These are often, typically, less than 12 inches in height, and are of two way design. Examples include Rimex stereo wireless speakers, at a height of just over seven inches, and with a PMPO ("Peak Music Power Output") of 60 watts.

Smaller still – indeed, tiny in some cases, at only two, or three inches in height – are "cube", or "satellite" speakers, especially designed for situations where space is at a premium. These reproduce treble and midrange frequencies, and are often combined with a separate "sub-bass", or "sub-woofer", speaker, to allow for the desired level of bass to be delivered. The Creative TravelDock 900 package, for example, is a one-piece stereo speaker system, suitable for use with DVD, CD, MP3, and other portable audio devices.

The choice, and characteristics, of the material from which a speaker cabinet is constructed – MDF ("Medium Density Fibreboard"), wood, and metal, are common choices – can influence its performance. The rigidity of the cabinet, for example, along with any structural bracing, or wadding, can affect its resonance, and, therefore, the quality of the sound produced.

With regard to the precise positioning of speakers around your listening space, bear in mind that a certain amount of "trial and error" may be involved, before you find the optimum configuration. Many speakers operate best, for example, if there is a certain amount of empty space around them, and, if you need to place speakers close to walls, fairly obviously, avoid models with rear mounted ports.

Conclusion

Be aware that some manufacturers, despite being reputable, "household", names in other spheres, may lack the necessary expertise required for the design, and construction, of high quality audio speakers, so it does not follow, necessarily, that buying from such a manufacturer is a guarantee of quality. Indeed, it may well be that some lesser known manufacturers direct more of their budget into the research and development of quality products, than into extensive advertising campaigns.

About the Author

Patrick Sawyer is a freelance writer specialising in consumer electronics, financial and business subjects. e-tailers such as 3 Wisemonkeys now offer a [guide to buying speakers and surround sound systems](#). As well as producing quick guides such as the one above, 3 Wise Monkeys will respond to individual queries and offers detailed buying advice over the phone with no pressure to purchase.

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