



DETAILS

PRODUCT
WiiM Sound
ORIGIN
China
TYPE
Plug-and-play streaming and Bluetooth speaker
WEIGHT
2.5kg
DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
146 x 194 x 146mm
FEATURES
● 2x 25mm silk dome tweeters
● 102mm paper mid/bass driver
● 100W amplifier
● Supports sample rates up to: 24-bit/192kHz
DISTRIBUTOR
Henley Audio
WEBSITE
wiihome.com
henleyaudio.co.uk

Sound practice

It's the turn of wireless speakers to get the WiiM treatment. **Ed Selley** discovers if the Sound is able to hold its own

There are few categories as widely contested as the wireless smart speaker. It's possible to find offerings from tech giants, Japanese house brands and smaller hi-fi companies at very similar prices, and they are all fascinating embodiments of what each company considers important. WiiM has been tremendously successful with its streamers and streaming amps, and the Sound embodies a lot of the same thinking.

The layout takes the 'mono HF, stereo treble' approach that provides a cost-effective way of creating a spacious sound without the end result being too large and cumbersome. A single 102mm paper cone is used for bass and midrange. Two 25mm silk dome tweeters then hand over and work in stereo, which gives the Sound a presentation that conveys enough

elements of stereo (from 2.4kHz and up) to be convincing. Total power is quoted as 100W, with 50W allocated to the 102mm mid/bass driver and 25W to each tweeter.

The cabinet is sealed, which means the Sound is largely immune to its surroundings. It has a quoted lower frequency response of 50Hz, which is pretty significant for a compact device. This is fronted by the WiiM streaming interface, which we've seen in the other brand offerings. From the moment you complete the incredibly simple first setup, it's an impressive user experience. Streaming service support is broad, access to a local library is straightforward and the stability is almost total. The Sound gives away nothing to anything else I've ever tested save for the complete absence of AirPlay; which has been the case on a few WiiM products.

Here, its absence is more keenly felt as it's a more commonly used connection that is not completely compensated for by good Chromecast implementation and Bluetooth.

Where the app retrieves many points is the inclusion of WiiM's RoomFit EQ system. There is very little that gets close to combining its ease of use and immediate effects. As soon as the Sound joins a wireless network, it will prompt you to run RoomFit and the process is sufficiently intuitive that most users won't be discouraged to do so. It's likely that Sounds will end up in places that Amps and Ultras won't that will benefit from what it can do.

I particularly like the combination of touch panel controls on the top and the small touchscreen. I initially find it too small to be useful, but quickly change my mind. It's enough to give the user more info on what the speaker is up to and livens up the

The performance is big, confident, hard hitting and – above all – enormous fun

design considerably. The combination of the touch panel and the inclusion of a remote control means there are plenty of ways to get the Sound making noise without having to get a device running the app out.

The speaker cabinet is solidly made and well finished, but a trifle dull. Black and White finishes are available and I am sure that they'll both do very well, but it would have been nice to see a third, slightly bolder finish. The



standard of build is excellent and even though the Sound doesn't exhibit the same cost savings over some key rivals that WiiM's streamers and amps do, it gives away nothing to the competition in build or finish.

You can add a second Sound and use them as a stereo pair or run them as a group in the same room (the difference being in one case, one is running the left channel and one the right and in the other both play the same signal). In the future, it will be possible to use them as centre and rear speakers with WiiM electronics.

Sound quality

To begin with, I make do with a single Sound speaker and the results are impressive. The Sound manages to do two things that are vital for the performance of any small wireless speaker. The first is that the drivers don't over power the enclosure even when you are pushing it hard with the punchy rock of *The End* by Mammoth. You never hear the cabinet impart anything to the performance and it's usefully inert too.

It then proceeds to make excellent use of the three drivers. No single-chassis speaker of this size is ever going to sound like a true stereo device, but the WiiM moves enough

The Sound's small touchscreen panel livens up the overall design considerably

of the high-frequency information of *The Mountain Goats'* charming *Fishing Boat* around to make the experience feel more than flat mono. John Darnielle sounds lifelike and wholly believable in a way that isn't always the case listening from a device this size.

Breaking out the second speaker and linking them up as a stereo pair – a painless process, although there is a tendency for the two speakers to ungroup at points – unlocks an impressive level of performance. Allocating both tweeters to one channel boosts the top end without losing the consistent and unflappable sense of refinement. What results is a presentation that does a fine job with Fink's *Wheels Turn Beneath My Feet Vol II*. The sound that results is big, confident, hard hitting and – above all these things – enormous fun.

What I find most impressive is that the Sound balances the ability to produce genuinely good results when fed with lossless and hi-res content



The Sound neatly slots between Sonos' two principle offerings; doing more than the cheaper Era 100, but less than the more expensive Era 300. It is £20 more than Bluesound's Pulse Flex (HFC 433), but is bigger and more sonically confident. Against offerings from Denon, Yamaha and the like, it delivers a slicker control interface and better room optimisation. All aforementioned devices support AirPlay, which makes its absence in the Sound more noticeable. By the same token, none of them have anything as easy to use and capable as the RoomFit software that WiiM supplies. You can argue the scope of devices that support BluOS still gives it an edge, but this advantage won't last forever.



with the ability to keep rather less audiophile material sounding decent too. Quite a few popular UK radio stations still have internet radio bitrates that are on the miserable side, but I'm unable to provoke the Sound at any stage even with unpleasantly compressed material. I think that the RoomFit software plays a significant role in how you perceive the Sound too. The fundamentally composed presentation is undoubtedly helped by the WiiM responding to its surroundings and it will keep performing well when some rivals start to struggle. Running as a stereo pair, the performance is competitive with more traditional £600 stereo setups although the

restricted additional connectivity – just one 3.5mm socket – will limit system building somewhat.

Conclusion

I suspect that many users won't be in any way bothered by this and I'm inclined to agree with them. The Sound takes WiiM's excellent interface and mates it to a very capable wireless speaker platform that delivers a level of all-round performance hard not to find impressive. It isn't quite the same untouchable value as the amps and streamers can be because of the greater physical limitations of what a wireless speaker should be, but the user friendliness and decent musicality it offers means it more than holds its own. This might be a new category for WiiM, but it's hard to argue with the levels of performance on offer here ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Sounds good; a pleasure to use; spec
VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** No AirPlay; looks are a bit plain
BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★ **WE SAY:** A fine new arrival in the streaming speaker category that is likely to appeal to many people
FEATURES ★★★★★

OVERALL

★★★★★