

Lindich: Aon 3 speakers will make you want to stand up and cheer

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Q: I am shopping for speakers. The ones I like get good reviews, but it seems that all the models I am considering get good reviews. It is like reading advertisements. It also seems common for reviews to say "these \$250 speakers sound like \$500 speakers" which begs the question what do \$500 speakers sound like; should they sound like \$1,000 speakers if they are any good? Can you help me understand all this?

-- R.S., Charleston, S.C.

A: Anyone reviewing and recommending electronics, especially audio, is very likely to be passionate about it. This can lead to exuberance to the point where you may feel like you are reading an ad or being sold something. It isn't intentional (at least for me when I write) but no matter the reviewer, you can usually sense the enthusiasm when you read about a good product.

Regarding \$250 speakers sounding like \$500 speakers, etc. -- when you have been an audiophile for a while and are exposed to enough gear you start to know what sound quality to expect at a price point. Once in a while you find something that sounds like it belongs in a higher price bracket, and some products are just in a class of their own. Of course, others disappoint and the review will show it. As for me, I only get 550 words per week to answer questions and recommend products. I test a lot of stuff that gets sent back to the PR firm without ever getting mentioned in print. I could write about the mediocre gear, but where is the fun and usefulness in that? I'd rather use my weekly space for something that gets me excited.

Here is a good example, and it even uses speakers. Recently I was at the Consumer Electronics Show's high-end audio exhibits at the Venetian in Las Vegas. I had just left a room displaying tower speakers selling for \$28,000 a pair. They sounded fine, but I was not impressed. Shortly thereafter I heard wonderful, beautiful music calling me like a siren. I followed the music to a room, saw an array of speakers from GoldenEar Technology (goldenear.com) and was told the Aon 3 bookshelf speakers on stands were playing. The deep bass belied their size and the sound was beautiful, sweet, detailed, mesmerizing.

I asked how much and was told \$998. "Each?" I asked, expecting to be answered in the affirmative given the sound quality, technology and design. "No, per pair" came the reply. I was speechless, and asked again because I did not believe it. Here was what I thought was the best sound I had heard in the building and definitely better than the \$28,000 speakers, which are in fact critically acclaimed.

I introduced myself, congratulated them on their accomplishment and told them I wanted a pair ASAP. The day I got home I wrote the check and preordered, and when the product starts shipping at the end of January the Aon 3 speakers will grace my home office. I am not saying they are better than every expensive speaker out there but wowee, do they sound good! That is what I like to write about, stuff that makes me want to stand up and cheer, stuff I know will make my readers happy too.