



By The Computer Audiophile
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Aurender S5W True Wireless Speaker Review

Aurender is widely known for pioneering high end music servers and continuing to launch industry leading audiophile products. The company also offers a category of products under the heading Premium Audio. These premium products are a bit less known by audiophiles, but not for lack of quality or innovation. The Aurender Flow DAC & Headphone amplifier (discontinued) was so far ahead of its time that many people still don't comprehend its features. As a company Aurender is lead by doers. People who dream up ideas and bring them to fruition.

Aurender's newest premium audio product is the brainchild of company founder Harry Lee. For several years the concept of truly wireless loudspeakers has been floating around in Harry's mind as he thought about the best way with which to implement his idea. When we talked at audio shows around the world Harry frequently brought up the idea, then mentioned a prototype, then showed a working version, and finally displayed Aurender's first truly wireless production loudspeaker this year.

The S5W is Truly Wireless

We've all seen loudspeaker advertisements in magazines where the speakers are placed in an immaculate room and look like a perfect addition to anyone's home. Upon closer inspection we realize there are no cables attached to the speakers. That's scenario one. We've also seen loudspeakers sold as "wireless" and just assumed that a power cable was required. When it comes to audio, we've been conditioned to view "wireless" to mean wires are required. That's just not acceptable anymore in the days of wireless everything else.

Sure there are JBL, Beats, and Brand X wireless mono speakers that fit in a purse or a golf bag, but none of the options in that category are even close to the S5W. The days of settling for a single mass market wireless speaker are over. The Aurender S5W is a truly wireless pair of premium loudspeakers capable of delivering high quality sound without a single wire and with excellent build quality.

The S5W speakers are completely wireless because they're powered by rechargeable batteries. If rechargeable batteries are good enough for the highest rated car ever reviewed in Consumer Reports (Tesla Model S), then they're good enough for premium loudspeakers. Given the relatively low volume and high build quality of most high end products, it often makes sense to use existing technology to solve specific problems. Rather than invent the \$20,000 tablet for controlling music servers, high end audio companies recommend using iPads. In a similar fashion Aurender built the S5W speakers so they can be powered by the nearly ubiquitous Bosch lithium-ion batteries available all over the world for reasonable prices.

People uninterested in using batteries can power the speakers with the included DC24V/2A adaptor, but that's like going to a Mexican restaurant and ordering sushi. In other words, wireless is right in the wheelhouse of the S5W speakers. It's their raison d'être.

The S5W speakers are compatible with three Bosch batteries, the 6A(BAT622), 5A(BAT621), and 4A(BAT620). Aurender recommends the Bosch 6Ah, 18V BAT622 because it'll last 50 Hours during normal use and greater than 30 days in standby. Throughout my testing over the last 2 months the batteries lasted as long as expected and were recharged in about three



hours each. Note: I recommend picking up a couple chargers to enable charging both batteries simultaneously. When talking to the Aurender team, they suggested a single charger and three batteries, given the battery drain isn't always equal between both speakers. This is stereo after all. This three battery method enabled the listening to continue indefinitely. Choices and options are always good in my book.

That's enough about power, let's move on to wireless audio. The Aurender S5W speakers receive wireless audio from the included USB wireless adapter. This adapter is the only way to send audio to the speakers. I admit to being a little spoiled in that I can send audio in so many different ways to so many devices, and was a little disappointed to have this limitation. However, it's understandable given the need to reduce battery consumption. Given the option of more inputs versus more battery life, those who use the S5W speakers wirelessly will likely select more battery life.

The USB wireless adapter works just like a USB DAC in the sense that it connects to a source via USB and is seen by the source as a USB audio output device. The adapter doesn't convert the signal from digital to analog rather it passes the signal along to the loudspeakers. When viewed similarly to a USB DAC it's simple to envision how many use cases are possible for transmitting wireless audio to the S5W speakers.

In my testing I used my iMac, MacBook Pro, iPad Pro, iPhone 8, Google Pixel phone, microRendu, and an Aurender W20. All of these devices support USB audio output, so they work with the Aurender wireless USB adapter. Geeks reading this will be interested to know the wireless adapter doesn't connect to one's home wireless network. It connects directly to the S5W speakers without any configuration. There is no wireless password required and nothing like the annoying Bluetooth pairing required for many other wireless devices.

The S5W is not Bluetooth, AirPlay, UPnP/DLNA, or Roon compatible in and of itself, but via the USB adapter it can work with nearly any of these scenarios. A common use case is with an iPhone and an app like Tidal or Qobuz. I used my iPhone 8, the Apple Lightning to USB adapter, and the included Aurender USB adapter. There was absolutely zero setup required between connecting the adapter, launching Qobuz, and listening to music via the S5W speakers. This is the beauty of a system that was designed to work together (USB adapter and S5W speaker).

A much more fun configuration I used was as follows - iPad Pro > Lightning adapter with power, USB, Ethernet > Network. I setup my iPad to use Ethernet (not required but I like the certainty of something that always works), receive power input, and output to the Aurender USB adapter with a single nameless device about which I wrote previously ([link](#)). The audio was pulled down from Qobuz via Ethernet and sent out to the S5W speakers via the USB adapter. Worked perfectly and didn't use

the batter of my iPad. Note: Using a Lightning cable extension, also in the aforementioned article, enabled me to place the adapters and cables about six feet away from my iPad.

Readers familiar with the Aurender Conductor iOS app will be pleased to learn this USB adapter works great when connected to an Aurender music server. The Conductor app functions identically whether audio is output to a USB DAC, AES DAC, or the wireless USB adapter. This is a great way to centralize one's content on an Aurender music server / Aurender Content Server and send audio to a local connected HiFi system one day and a wireless S5W "system" the next day. It's also possible to control the volume of the S5W speakers via the Conductor app.

Sending audio from any source via the wireless USB adapter will ensure that lossless 16 bit / 44.1 music remains lossless. This is the other big feature of the S5W speakers. As long as the audio starts as lossless CD quality, it will remain in lossless CD quality. I streamed several high resolution albums via Qobuz during my testing. The music was downsampled but sent to the speakers flawlessly. Other systems, namely Sonos, won't even play high resolution content by downsampling it before transmission. Downsampling is great because it enables use of mixed playlists without user intervention or without thinking about which music is on which playlist. It all just plays.

Readers should also note, lossless audio isn't a requirement. If people like Spotify, Pandora, or even some podcasts they'll all work great through the wireless USB adapter.

Aurender sourced the S5W tweeter from ScanSpeak in Denmark and the mid-bas driver from SEAS in Norway. The entire enclosure is made of solid aluminum and contributes greatly to the 11 pound weight of each speaker. These things are appropriately substantial and have a high quality look and feel. With built-in amplifiers and power, there is nothing one can add to the system to make it better or worse. It just works.

All this technical talk is great but the speakers better sound good or else they'll be paperweights. Fortunately all is well in the sound department. Aurender's premium audio product delivers a very premium sound. When I listened the S5W speakers at AXPONA I was really impressed with the speakers' ability to fill a room with sound and provide more punch than I expected. After AXPONA I drove the exact same pair of speakers back to my house in Minneapolis to begin the review process. The great sound carried over to my listening environment just as I thought it would.

In Chicago the speakers were placed on stands and setup like more traditional two channel system. In my house I tried them on desks and tables, in a more "natural" environment for truly wireless loudspeakers. I even tried them at my brother Dave's house flanking the sides of his fireplace. If anyone has tried to run speaker or power cable through a fireplace, they'll understand quickly how a truly wireless systems is very beneficial. At home I most often placed the speakers on small stands from IsoAcoustics. The raised the speakers a bit off the table or desk, improving the sound quality greatly.

Like all products about which I write, I used all types of music to get a feel for the S5W speakers. The overall sound quality is really good for a speaker of its size. The heft of the metal cabinet likely plays a very large role separating the S5W from speakers made of lesser materials. The bass is deep and punchy and will surprise all but the most jaded audiophile. The top end is very relaxed and never bright. The S5W is a speaker that one can listen to all day without fatigue or charging. Those seeking the ultimate in detail and refinement should continue their journeys with speakers from companies such as Focal, TAD, Rockport, and Magico. Audiophiles will likely get the hidden beryllium message in that previous sentence.

Because I like to push equipment to its limits and find weaknesses, I put the S5W through my Marcus Miller test. Playing his track titled Intro Duction from the Silver Rain album I was able to humble the S5W at its loudest volume levels. The bass in this track is crisp, clean, and powerful. It isn't bass like we hear from the car next to us at the stop light, rather it's a real guy playing the real instrument called the bass. Great stuff. Readers may say that I'm the master of the obvious with this information, but I like to let everyone know the speaker isn't invincible and I don't pretend that the products I review are all fairytale-esque. Nothing is perfect, but the Aurender S5W is a terrific truly wireless loudspeaker that many people would be very happy to own.

I had a most enjoyable experience this afternoon when conducting some final listening tests of the S5W. In fact I hate to use the word "tests" because there is a clinical or too serious connotation associated with the word. I put on Sara Bareilles' album Brave Enough: Live at the Variety Playhouse. I had my digital notepad ready to capture some final thoughts on my iPad Pro. I listened to the first track Love On The Rocks / Bennie and the Jets, and I was hooked. I never wrote a single word until after I finished listening to the entire album. This has never happened to me when listening to a speaker placed on my

desktop for a final run-through. This is the type of thing that happens when I put a dCS DAC in my system. I enjoyed the sound, but most of all I enjoyed the music without thinking about the S5W reproducing the sound. All the way until the last note of track 13 Goodbye Yellow Brick Road, I had an image of the 1,000 seat Variety Playhouse in Atlanta, GA. I guess I can say I was a willing participant in this 90 minute break from reality.

Wrap-up

The Aurender S5W is the first truly wireless premium stereo loudspeaker about which I know. It's an innovative product from an innovative company. The 11 pound anodized aluminum enclosure feels substantial and gives one a good feeling about spending a fair amount of money on the loudspeakers. The ease of use is unsurpassed by any wireless technology or connection method currently available. Connecting the wireless USB adapter to an iPhone is all that's required. Open any music app, press play, and lossless music will stream from the phone to the S5W speakers. This point can't be underestimate. Anyone who has used Bluetooth will understand how great it is that no device pairing is required and no home wifi network is required.

The fact that these speakers are battery powered is great on many levels. It's the only way to achieve a truly wireless design and it's a pretty audiophile thing to have in a product. A battery enables off-the-grid audio in true audiophile fashion. After using the S5W speakers for a couple months I'm very satisfied with the sound quality. All my favorite music was very enjoyable via the S5W. I wasn't limited to one or two types of music, like some loudspeakers, and I wasn't limited by the longevity of listening time. The batteries are industrial strength. The proof in the pudding for me was listening to the entire 90 minute Sara Bareilles performance without so much as checking an email, switching tracks, or writing a critical note. The Aurender S5W enabled me to sit back, see absolutely zero wires and enjoy a great live performance. Great stuff.

