

Sonodyne Sama 7000 and Malhar G2: Fixing the sound in the Indian living room

Sonodyne's Sama 7000 brings Dolby Atmos and powerful cinematic sound to the living room, while the Malhar G2 focuses on rich, detailed music playback.



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The Sonodyne Malhar G2 combines a wooden cabinet with a powerful, detailed sound signature designed for music and television. (Image: Nandagopal Rajan/The Indian Express)

I always felt that as televisions improved their picture quality, audio quality would also improve. I was right. But there was a problem I had not envisioned. As most of our content consumption on television moved to streaming, each streaming app offered a different audio experience. To put it plainly, some apps are really bad when it comes to audio quality. This is the pain point that soundbars like the Sonodyne Sama 7000 can address in the living room.

The new soundbar is longer than the earlier Sama 5000, with visible top-firing speakers and a larger wireless subwoofer. The 5.1.2 channel soundbar system uses high-definition full-range drivers for the left, centre, right and side-firing surround speakers, yoked to 2 x 2-way height channels to bring the Dolby Atmos to life in your living room. While the system has a frequency response of 28Hz to 20kHz (-10dB), the subwoofer has a single high-excursion 10" driver. Setup is easy, and the subwoofer seamlessly connects to the soundbar. The remote is simple but effective, letting you skip sources as well as change volume and modes.



Sonodyne Sama 7000 soundbar with its top-firing Dolby Atmos speakers in the living room.
(Image: Nandagopal Rajan/The Indian Express)

While the numbers are impressive, what really matters with any gadget is the performance. The moment you switch on the Sama 7000, this is what you will start appreciating. I wanted to feel the Dolby Atmos performance of this soundbar, especially since it has height channels, and was really impressed with how the speakers can play around with sound objects both on screen and off it. From rain falling on the floor of the living room to thunder moving around the ceiling and a falcon that flew across it, the speakers managed to take my movie experience to a whole new level. And this was without even switching on the movie mode. The soundbar made me come back to it whenever I had time to live a new cinematic experience.



The Sama 7000's wireless subwoofer delivers the deep bass that adds impact to movies and music.
(Image: Nandagopal Rajan/The Indian Express)

Even with music, whether streamed from the phone via Bluetooth or an app on the TV, the experience was fabulous. Listening to some cortisol-lowering raagas in the morning became a habit when the Sama 7000 was around. The surround sound is so natural that you feel the music hang in the air and not emanate from near the TV as such. Gradually, the music takes over, and the technology slips into the background.

The speaker offers two HDMI (eARC with 4K Dolby Vision passthrough and audio return) channels as well as optical, AUX and Bluetooth inputs. Moving between sources on the soundbar can confuse your TV at times, but this is something you will rarely encounter. I thought an app would have been a great addition to this rig, as that would have given a bit more options to the really invested users.

Buy the Sama 7000 at Rs 74,999 if you are looking for a single audio hub that mellows down for early morning ragas and fires up for a Jurassic Park screening with the kids.



The Sonodyne Malhar G2 brings a classic wooden finish and a warm, room-filling sound to the living space.
(Image: Nandagopal Rajan/The Indian Express)

But not all music in the house is built around the television. And you keep asking, ‘What is the perfect home music system for an Indian household?’ That is the question Sonodyne’s Malhar G2 wants to answer, tapping into its legacy understanding of the Indian music lover’s requirements and bringing its acclaimed sound signature to literally every aspect of audio in the household.

The Sonodyne Malhar G2 has a stylish look thanks to its rigid wooden enclosures that also minimise cabinet resonance but comfortably blend into the living room style. The premium style hides the practicality of having a wooden cabinet with a fabric mesh on the front.



The Malhar G2’s wooden cabinet and fabric grille give the speaker a distinctive, understated look. (Image: Nandagopal Rajan/The Indian Express)

The Malhar G2 is big enough to produce enough sound for a large living space like mine with an open kitchen, and gives the real estate on the back an HDMI ARC and optical port along with USB and other ports. There is even a physical power button here.

On the top is the control panel with touch buttons that, in a way, replicate the full control remote that comes in the box. I have to confess, I was sitting far away from the Malhar G2 all the time and hardly used the control panel. Instead, I would reach for the remote to tweak the bass or treble, or just use the phone to adjust the volume of the song it was streaming. The control panel has a tiny LED that shows you the Bluetooth is connected, and a strip of LEDs shows any level changes you are making. It also has LEDs that show which source is being used now.



The Malhar G2's top-mounted controls sit alongside the bundled remote for easy access to volume, bass, treble and source selection. (Image: Nandagopal Rajan/The Indian Express)

My love for classical music of all kinds found a perfect companion in this wooden speaker sitting on my kitchen island, connected to my iPhone. However, it might be best placed on your entertainment console, as it connects to your television also. The Malhar G2 is all about sound that has been tuned to perfection, and you feel that from the first song.

In my case, it was Dekho Sakhi from Sabr, which filled my room with a virtual mehfil that was both rich and vibrant. The bass is punchy and can go up if that's what gets you kicked. Listening to Bihag from the Anirudh Varma collective, I could not help but marvel at how well the Ghatam was shining through in the composition. Most speakers might even miss it.

The experience was one notch above what I was expecting given my experience so far with Sonodyne. The pan flute in Kazu Matsui's Small Monk, Opening The Gate, cut through the humid August air in my living room like a katana even as the percussion and piano towered behind like a samurai. I was convinced this was an audiophile's perfect companion when the speaker took my Balan experience to another level, even though the streaming platform peppered the movie with ads, with the volume out of sync with the rest of the film.

Priced at Rs 55,000, I would recommend the Malhar G2 for those who are looking for a classy audio companion in the living room. Buy this if your preference is for music first and streaming movies later.