

Dynaudio Music 5 wireless loudspeaker

by Alan Sircom



A few years ago, products like the Dynaudio Music 5 simply couldn't exist because the technology that underpins them didn't exist. Even a couple of years ago, this class of product would come with such compromises, their inclusion in a high-end audio magazine would be at best 'outreach' and at worst highly dubious. But if anything highlights just how far and how fast the audio world is changing, it's the Dynaudio Music 5.

The '5' is one of a quartet of Music products designed by the Danish company; the Music 1 and 3 being smaller, battery powered portable devices, the Music 7 being a larger device ideally used as the best sound-bar around, but arguably too bulky for easy transport. The Music 5, then, sits in the Goldilocks spot, as it is a sizeable, mains-driven device (so you can really give the Music 5 some beans without it running out of puff) but not so bulky that it impersonates a boulder.

The distinctive, angular look of the Music 5 isn't just there to make it awkward to photograph. Under the grille there sits a pair of 25mm soft-dome tweeters, a pair of 75mm midrange units and a lone 128mm woofer, all fed by 250W of Class D power. The angled aspects allow the Music 5 to project a cogent stereo presentation, but also – thanks to Dynaudio's RoomAdapt DSP – help tailor the sound to the Music 5's position in the room. This is extremely useful in a product like the Dynaudio Music 5, because it's unlikely to be used in more orthodox audiophile installations, and might end up being used in the corner of a room (for example). This can be adjusted using Dynaudio's own app.

The app is remarkably intuitive to use, especially in setting up the system. Grouping loudspeakers (or turning two speakers into a stereo pair) is as simple as dragging icons into circles on your smartphone screen. Unless you have a phobia about Venn diagrams, set-up is a breeze. ▶

“The Music 5 quickly becomes spookily good at finding the sort of music you like. And I really mean ‘spookily good’... almost ‘music stalker’ good.”



- ▶ The Dynaudio app also unlocks a host of functions and features that essentially transform the Music 5. Without app support, it's a good wireless active speaker system that can connect to the outside world through Bluetooth, and a USB port for wired iDevice connectivity. Use the app, however, and it opens up on a far wider world of music, and becomes something like its own DJ. The app supports and Tidal (there's a free nine-month trial included), but wireless DLNA connectivity, so your home music network can be accessed, or something like Spotify require third-party app support. But where the Music 5 really comes into its own is the combination of a row of five buttons along the top of the Music 5 and the Music Now algorithm within the app itself. The five buttons relate to a range of options, including user-defined – but 'intelligently' curated – Music Now playlists.

The app generates Music Now playlists depending on the artists you select as favourites. They can be Music Now (Your personal mix), Music Now (Discovery), Music Now (Favourites), Rock, Pop, Hip Hop, etc.

You can't create playlists in the Dynaudio Music app but instead play the ones generated by the app/Music Now and your saved playlists from Tidal. You can, however, shape the Music Now playlists by click 'dislike' or 'like' when a specific track is playing. Also, if you create your playlists in Tidal and then they will automatically show on the front page of the Music app. The best way to think of the Music Now function, is as an 'always on' playlist that is constantly adapting to your taste.

This is one of the true strengths of the Music 5, and the Music system entire. Pretty soon, the app goes away, and you just press one of those five buttons for your music (you can also assign specific albums, fixed playlists, or even internet radio stations to those hard buttons). In fact, about the only time you end up using your tablet or smartphone is when you hear something so good, you want to play it again. That happens quite a lot because the Music 5 quickly becomes spookily good at finding the sort of music you like. And I really mean 'spookily good'... almost 'music stalker' good. You press that button and music you never knew you liked comes out of the speaker.

OK, you can make the Music Now algorithm fail (if you made a playlist that includes plainchant, Kabuki, Burt Bacharach, and Dead Kennedys tracks, then don't be surprised if your virtual-music-curator acts a little psychotic), and it's bound by the limits of Tidal, but that means it's functionally limitless for most listeners.

Even this isn't the end of the Music's 'smarts'. It includes a NoiseAdapt function that 'listens' to the ambient sound. It may adjust the volume slightly but it is more about adjusting and adapting the dynamics in a specific area of the soundstage. Personally, I'd like that to go further and include a 'drowning out boring conversations' option, but I think that's beyond the technology as it stands. In fact, the technology has existed in recording systems for years, but usually alters the volume level alone, and as a result can 'pump' the volume up and down a little with the flow of speech. ▶

“No teenager is going to be impressed by listening to well-recorded songs penned 25 years before they were born (sorry, Rickie Lee Jones).”

▶ Given the relative size of the Music 5, it also plays impressively loud. Not ‘PA system’ loud and not even ‘bring the club home and party’ loud, but certainly loud enough to get the party started. This can be something of a double-edged sword if you are in possession of a teenager. If this is the case, you’ll probably need to buy more than one Music 5, because your one will be purloined, reprogrammed, and played a lot, at a decent lick. That’s actually great, and great for keeping the audiophile flame alive because it’s promoting the notion of good sound to an audience that might not otherwise experience the concept. And here’s why: the audio industry keeps banging on about ‘new blood’, but what they mean is ‘younger people listening to the same stuff we did.’ This will never work; no teenager is going to be impressed by listening to well-recorded songs penned 25 years before they were born (sorry, Rickie Lee Jones), but this gives the same teenagers some kind of context in which to appreciate good music (on the Music 5). That makes these loudspeakers a gateway into good audio. Excellent!

In outright audiophile terms, the Music 5 is pretty good. OK, so it’s not ‘bulldog chewing a wasp’ audiophile-grade good, but they will be damning it for not being a pair of Special 40s anyway. There is some slight tailoring around the upper-bass, which comes across when playing fast bass drums; instead of ‘bop-bop-bop’, it’s slightly ‘blomp-blomp-blomp’. However, that tailoring is akin to reducing a sauce to make it richer, and makes for a more fun sound. The difference between Music 5 and conventional hi-fi is fairly narrow, and mostly relies on the more meticulous nature of traditional systems. Sound will be presented in full marching order on a good stereo system, where the Music 5 takes a more relaxed approach to things like dynamic range. In its peer group, however, it’s hard to beat.

Using a pair of Music 5s makes a lot of sense, too. Pair them as stereo and they make an expansive sound, albeit not a sound with a pin-point soundstage and rock-solid instruments in an audio hologram. Group them and you have a multi-room system. Run them as two standalone devices and you have two separate music systems in the house. You can switch between these scenarios easily on the app.

No, the big downside is an intellectual one. It slowly dawns on you that you are not that musically special, after all. I pride

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Type: Wireless active loudspeaker

Cabinet type: vented chamber

Drive units: 2x 25mm tweeters, 2x 75mm midrange units, 1x 128mm woofer

Amplifier power: 5x 50W Class D, one amplifier module for each drive unit

Audio inputs: AirPlay, Internet Radio, UPnP, Bluetooth, USB-A (for iOS device, includes charging facility), TOSlink optical input, 3.5mm mini-jack line input, RC5 remote control

Connectivity: Wi-Fi (802.11a/b/g/n) and Bluetooth aeriels

Audio Formats: FLAC, WAV, AIFF, ALAC, MP3, AAC, Bluetooth (aptX), from 16bit/32kHz to 24bit/96kHz

Frequency response: 45Hz-20kHz

Distortion % THD: <0.3%

Finishes: Light and dark grey, red, and blue cloth

Dimensions (WxHxD): 659 x 201 x 185mm

Weight: 5.4kg

Price: £700

Manufactured by: Dynaudio A/S

URL: dynaudio.com

Tel: +44 (0)1638 742427

myself on having catholic music tastes, and feel “no robot could label me”. After some lengthy playlist action, including introducing me to ‘Everyday’ by Logic and Marshmello, the Music 5’s played ‘Instant Replay’ by Dan Hartman followed by ‘Rock Around The Clock’ (the Telex version, not the one by Bill Haley and the Comets)... how the hell did it know that I bought both records in the late 1970s?

The Dynaudio Music 5 is one of the best named products on sale at the moment because it really is all about the music. Couple this with Tidal, spend a few minutes creating a few playlists, and it’s like you hired your own DJ who has spent the last few years meticulously cataloguing your music and knows precisely what you like. Who’d not love that? +