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Tushar Kanwar | 5 min read | 18 Sept 2025, 10:30 am IST



Good soundbars are heard and not seen

SUMMARY

The Sonodyne Sama 5000 soundbar promises an immersive audio experience without the complexity of traditional setups. With its innovative DSP technology, it enhances TV sound remarkably, making it a strong contender in the budget soundbar market

Are your movie nights marred by the hollow clatter of built-in TV speakers? Is the roar of the football crowd more of a meow? Or are you left struggling to discern the dialogue over the background score on your favorite Netflix show? If you're looking to upgrade your TV sound, perhaps even dip your toes into the Dolby Atmos spatial sound pool with something living room (and pocket) friendly, take a look at the Sama 5000 soundbar from Sonodyne (₹24,999).

The homegrown brand—long a well-regarded name on the pro-studio circuit—has recently shifted its focus towards consumer audio, with each product being sprinkled liberally with their “music, as the artist intended” ethos. Is the Sama 5000 what the director ordered?

Now, good soundbars are best heard and not seen, and the Sama 5000 did well to nearly disappear under the 65-inch TV in the living room. With its 35-inch width and 3-inch height, it didn't block the TV remote when placed on the table, and the 3.2kg soundbar can be wall-mounted as well. Controls are to be found on the top edge of the

mounted as well. Controls are to be found on the top edge of the soundbar, and there's a remote with all the usual buttons for soundbar and subwoofer level adjustments, plus dedicated music/movie/voice mode and Dolby Atmos buttons. Around the rear, there is a generous complement of connectivity options—an HDMI eARC port assumes primary duties of connecting with your TV, plus another HDMI input to connect a source directly, along with optical, AUX and Bluetooth 5.4 to connect to older devices and to smartphones for music streaming.

In a strange turn of events, the well-built and premium-looking soundbar is paired with a surprisingly light and plasticky subwoofer that feels built to a cost. Sigh, at least it's wireless and can be hidden out of view, and setup is exceedingly easy to boot! Plug in both units, connect the soundbar to the TV over HDMI, and you're done. No apps to contend with, no account setup to sign into a smartphone app—Sonodyne makes the process seamless and frictionless for first time users.

Peel back the metallic grilled covers, and the Sama 5000 offers up 400W of rated power, split between three full-range drivers in a left/center/right configuration and the 6.5-inch wireless subwoofer (with a Class D amp). Keen eyes would spot the lack of upward firing speakers, traditionally required for the illusion of height needed for Dolby Atmos—instead, the Sama 5000 uses some DSP (digital signal processor) wizardry to accept an Atmos signal and simulate a much larger soundstage, far beyond the physical footprint a 3.1-setup soundbar would suggest.

The moment one hit the Dolby Atmos button—no matter whether you were watching a movie or listening to music—there's an almost immediate and very discernible increase in the richness and sheer body of the sound as it envelopes the viewer. To be clear, the soundbar doesn't completely defy physics to create any overhead or rear speaker effects—if you're looking for the whooshing sound of planes flying overhead in *Top Gun Maverick*, this won't quite give you that. By any measure though, the expansive soundstage is leagues above what tinny TV speakers can manage, even those with Atmos-rated speaker setups.

Even with the Atmos effect switched off, the Sama 5000 boosted dialog intelligibility across streaming TV shows and quieter debates on news channels and podcasts, without having to crank the volume quite as high. Across all the audio I sampled, the soundbar retained clarity and detail, though you'd be well advised to try switching between the three modes—music, movies and voice—depending on what's playing.

This doesn't just fiddle around with equalizer presets, instead it makes noticeable changes to the way the audio is delivered, with music leaning towards a wider soundstage, movie emphasizing the low-end rumble from the subwoofer and voice accentuating the mids for news and sports commentary. If anything, the one area you'd likely want to tweak to your liking and room setup is the subwoofer—it works best at moderate volumes and when it's kept close to the soundbar, as the sound tends to get a bit localized if it's placed too far away.

And maybe this is me nitpicking, but after a couple of weeks of use, I got the distinct feeling the Sama 5000 is tuned more for TV/movie use than it is for audiophile-grade music listening, and that really is fine for most soundbars, just not one from the house of Sonodyne.

Verdict

The Sama 5000 soundbar is a solid offering, one that knows its strengths and delivers well on those counts...while not trying to please everybody with the latest bells and whistles like app connectivity and Wi-Fi streaming. The DSP-driven audio bubble it creates may not check off all the Atmos boxes, but it does do a bang-up job of elevating your TV audio without breaking the bank or surrounding your sofa with a maze of AV equipment.

Alternatives

Competent budget soundbars aren't quite the rarity they used to be, and the Sama 5000 competes with several options in the sub- ₹30,000 category, from the JBL Cinema SB590 with its 3.1-channel setup and virtual Dolby Atmos to the deeply discounted Sony HT-S40R with its 5.1-channel home cinema setup that forgoes Atmos branding for a pair of wireless rear speakers for proper surround sound.

Or even the Samsung HW-Q600C compact soundbar and subwoofer system, designed for smaller spaces yet featuring two upward-firing channels for Atmos. And, in a category where listening to the product is key to the sale, the Sama 5000 just isn't present across the sort of offline distribution network as its peers are.

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