

Gadgets

# Sonodyne Malhar review: Sonic superiority

*Past meets present in Sonodyne's ode to audio purity*



Inframe: Sonodyne Malhar



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Sonodyne is an Indian brand many of us (and some of our parents) grew up with, and my earliest memories of the brand date back to the late '80s/ early '90s, when I used to regularly visit an uncle in Kolkata who was a big fan of the brand and its single-minded focus on recreating music “as the artist intended”. Fast forward to 2024, and while the brand continues to serve the serious audiophile and pro-studio markets, it's their Bluetooth wireless speaker range that caught my eye, specifically the most powerful in their range, the aptly named Malhar (after the raga, Malhar which, as the myth goes, has the power to induce thunder and rain).

Not one for slimline aesthetics, the Malhar resembles a cajón (or a clapbox as many may know it), an immediate throwback to when audio equipment was engineered for producing clean sound, first and foremost. With its wooden cabinet, classic aesthetics and all, the 8-kilogram Malhar is pleasing on the eye, but it demands pride of place — it's not one to disappear into the décor. Around the front are two 5” glass-fiber cone drivers accompanied by two 1” tweeters, and the sides have two 5” passive radiators. Inputs are all clustered towards the rear, with optical, aux, USB ports along with a handy 5V DC USB port to charge a phone while it's connected to the speaker.

Controls to switch between these inputs and change tracks/volume are all on the top and are mirrored on the supplied remote. No buttons to fiddle around with bass/treble settings (intentionally so to retain the original feel of the track), and I would have preferred the indicator LEDs to be more visible, so you know the speaker is on or which input is selected. No app or Wi-Fi connectivity, which one starts expecting at this price point.

Any reservations you may have had subside the moment you start playing music on the Malhar. Irrespective of genre, the speaker stands up and delivers, with a balanced sonic signature that accurately renders the highs, mids and lows without colouring the audio, so to speak. Streaming tracks as varied as Simon and Garfunkel to the Beach Boys to some of AR Rahman's classics, Malhar reproduces the tracks damn near flawlessly across its wide 40Hz – 20kHz frequency range.

Throw in some punchier tracks and bump up the volume, and you really have to wake up the neighbours before the speaker starts showing the slightest hint of distortion at the top end. Worth noting as well is the expansive soundstage and the open quality to the playback. At its price, Malhar is likely to appeal to audio purists, and despite its name, this truly is a speaker for all seasons. The ‘Made in India since 1970’ is bonus appeal.

Rating: 8/10

Price: INR 37,500