

# An Indian Masterwork That Provides Purists With Pure Sound

Sonodyne-malhar/"><https://news.hybriques.com/review-of-sonodyne-malhar/>

Over time, it seems most of us have lost the context of pure sound. What we are used to these days via our headphones, televisions, and Bluetooth speakers is a cacophony of amped-up bass and synthetic sounds. Yes, audio has to be a very personal choice, but it has to be a choice where a user decides this is exactly how they want to listen to their music. Every once in a while, an audio device comes along trying to underline the beauty of pure sound, which is more natural and live. The Sonodyne Malhar is clearly in that range of products.

The Malhar, manufactured by Sonodyne in Kolkata, is immediately noticeable when you take it out of the packaging. This one has a substantial 8 kg wooden cabinet that exudes a beat-box-like vibe and gives off the impression that it means business. Additionally, there's a certain simplicity that makes people like me, who have been around for a while, feel a little nostalgic. Malhar boasts a wide soundstage with excellent fidelity, thanks to its two front-facing drivers and tweeters, which are surrounded by two side-facing radiators.

The top of the cabinet has a number of buttons that allow you to change songs and volume in addition to input modes. Even the remote control is designed to prevent users from tinkering with the bass or treble levels on the Malhar. Easily switch between multiple sources that you can connect, including USB, optical, and auxiliary, based on what you have.

Some audio devices give off vibes that make one want to listen to certain types of music on them. The Malhar clearly gave me Carnatic, Hindustani, and Leonard Cohen vibes, not just because of its name. And I was not wrong. The first playlist I went to was a Spotify Hindustani Classical playlist with many renditions of Ragas I had not even heard of, clearly a good sign for music discovery. Not one to be intimidated, I settled for Nirali Kartik's familiar voice and a less familiar Gurjari Todi. Soon her voice was filling the living room and overpowering this year's subdued December chill. But on the Malhar, her voice, the Tanpura in the backdrop, gets centre stage so that gets into a meditative state with the Todi, just as intended. The audio profile also has a warmth radiating from it, almost mellow, perfect for this time of the year.

With a richer composition like Manasa Sancharare by Bombay Jayashree, the mrudangam comes into the mix, activating the radiators and telling us the speaker can handle deep lows really well too. But I could not help but feel I was enjoying her silken voice. That is how the soundstage of the Malhar stands out. And the Malhar is not content with just classical. When you listen to a live performance of Fever or Chantal Chamberlain's Besame Mucho in HiFi, you can experience Malhar's rich sound profile. This speaker excels at isolating the vocals from the rest of the sound. With the vocals slightly ahead of the instruments, the song appears to be projected in three dimensions.

Interestingly, Apple Music and Spotify were being streamed over Bluetooth for all of this. To push the boundaries a little further, I downloaded Apple's Classical Music app and looked up the London Philharmonic, who is once again up for Orchestra of the Year. Even though the volume was not at maximum, the Bach Concerto for Oboe, Strings, and Continuo was audibly powerful, filling the room even though it took a few seconds to load. The Vienna Philharmonic's rendition of Mozart's overture also produced a stereo effect that was striking, something that very few one-piece speakers could match. My house started to feel like Christmas all of a sudden. I continued so as not to leave my fifth-floor window's neighbors wondering why there were reindeer outside.

I loved the Malhar for its ability to stay true with renditions that switch from highs to lows, like with most of the orchestra compositions. And even at high volumes, the speaker does not struggle. There is a fullness to whatever the Malhar does so you will not be disappointed.

My only complaint is that power lights are on top and often you can't tell whether the speaker is on. And this means it stays connected to the phone without you realising it. The LEDs would be more useful on the front. Also, I would like to see a Wi-Fi version of this so that I can start streaming to the Malhar without the irritations of a hyperactive smartphone like mine.

The Malhar, which retails for Rs 37,500, is the kind of speaker that appeals to people who value purity in music and who share that appreciation. I would spend money on a speaker like this for my weekend morning sessions, where I discover new music and revisit my favorite songs. The Malhar is the kind of speaker that could easily be mistaken for a European audio masterpiece. And the fact that this is coming from an Indian business that is speaking out and telling the world that it's time to listen to us makes me proud.