

Apple HomePod reviews: Amazing sound quality, not much else, iPhone users only

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A slew of reviews for Apple's new smart speaker HomePod dropped recently, and they all come to the same conclusion: It's good—if you can afford it and only use Apple products such as the iPhone and services such as Apple Music.

Universal praise of the HomePod, which will be available for \$349, was about its [sound](#) quality, with reviewers saying it is by far the best-

sounding speaker in the market. Apple has marketed the HomePod as a smart "musicologist" for the home since it was revealed at the Worldwide Developers Conference last June in San Jose.

Since then, Apple has avoided comparing the HomePod to the Amazon Echo and Google Home—devices with better voice-activated smart assistants compared to Apple's Siri—and said it is instead competing with audio-focused speakers such as Sonos. Compared to the Amazon Echo and Google Home, the HomePod certainly wins the sound test, making the latter two sound "muffled and tinny in comparison," wrote Brian X. Chen of the New York Times.

For audiophiles, the HomePod is built like a tank with a woofer, a custom amplifier and seven tweeters to provide a rich range of sound, according to reviews from TechCrunch, the Verge and the New York Times. The HomePod is also able to detect its position in a room by sending sound beams in all directions and detecting when and where the beams are bounced back from a wall in a sound test that lasts 10 seconds, according to the Verge.

"The HomePod is a remarkable new kind of audio device," wrote Nilay Patel of the Verge. "It does more to make music sound better than any other speaker of this kind has ever done before, and it really, truly works."

But in almost every other aspect, the HomePod seemed to have fallen short.

For one, Siri is just not smart enough to compete with Amazon's Alexa or Google's Home assistant, creating frustrations for reviewers. The HomePod does have features the Amazon Echo or Google Home don't, such as the ability to play podcasts at a faster speed or use voice to send iMessages and WhatsApp texts, according to BuzzFeed's Nicole Nguyen.

But there are many more restrictions to using HomePod as a home assistant, such as not being able to hail an Uber ride or to schedule a meeting on a calendar, according to the New York Times.

One of the worst HomePod limitations is its inability to distinguish different voices, meaning anyone can ask the HomePod to read or send text messages on behalf of the HomePod owner if the owner said yes to all the setup prompts, according to the Verge.

"Until Apple adds personalized voice recognition to this thing, you should definitely turn personal requests off," said Patel.

Another shared complaint was the HomePod's straitjacket boundaries when using non-Apple apps. WhatsApp is supported by Siri, but beyond that very few apps are. For users of Spotify, Apple Music's main competitor and a [music](#) streaming service with nearly twice more global subscribers, the only way to play tunes is by using an iPhone or Mac and connecting to the HomePod via AirPlay.

Apple Music can be controlled by voice commands to Siri.

"If you don't like Apple Music, don't buy a HomePod," said Matthew Panzarino at TechCrunch.

But Apple Music subscribers with Android phones get shortchanged because Apple Music integration only works when there is a matching iPhone in the same Wi-Fi network. The HomePod does not have Bluetooth support to allow Android phones to wirelessly connect with the HomePod.

With such self-imposed borders, there is a limited demographic that can truly harness the power of the HomePod.

"The HomePod is designed for someone with 100 percent Apple product buy-in, who lives in the iOS/Mac ecosystem, who subscribes to Apple Music, and who just wants basic smart speaker features," writes Nguyen at BuzzFeed. "Anyone else should consider other options."

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