

Review: Big TV sound for big price: Sonos Playbase packs power of 10 speakers

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\$1,400 on upgrading its sound.

It seems Sonos heard my whining and now they've introduced a one-piece TV speaker unit called the Playbase (\$699, sonos.com).

The Playbase is a combination soundbar and subwoofer all in a small enclosure designed to sit under and support your TV (up to 77 pounds).

Of course, this means people with their TV mounted on the wall will find it difficult to use the Playbase, which has to sit on a flat surface.

SETUP

The Playbase is designed to play simply the sound from your TV. It requires your TV to have an optical audio output. A power cable and the audio cable (included) are all you need to get the Playbase up and running.

The setup is done with a smartphone app and is painless.

You don't need any other Sonos speakers in your home to use the Playbase, but if you do have an existing Sonos system, you'll be joining it.

The beauty of the Playbase is that it works as a TV sound system when you're watching TV and works like another Sonos room speaker when you're not.

In addition, you can pair the Playbase with a pair of Play:1 speakers and a Sonos subwoofer to create a wireless 5.1 surround sound system.

You will be connecting the Playbase to your internet, either wirelessly or through an Ethernet cable. The Playbase does not use HDMI and is not designed to be used with a home theater receiver.

The setup will also walk you through getting your TV's remote to control the volume on the Playbase.

Sonos. It's the gold standard for multi-room audio.

It brings you the ability to play music throughout your house with the [sound](#) synced perfectly from room to room. It also has the ability to play different audio to each room or speaker.

In my earlier years, I was always a fan of Sonos but, because its speakers were expensive (\$400 each in 2009), I had to admire them from afar.

As time went on, Sonos introduced smaller and cheaper speakers, including the \$199 entry-level Play:1.

I jumped into Sonos a few years ago with a few Play:1 speakers and accomplished my goal of getting music to most of the rooms of my house.

Sonos has kept innovating and, a few years ago, introduced a TV sound system consisting of a sound bar called the Playbar and a subwoofer, the piecing selling for \$699 each.

I love my TV but not enough to spend nearly

One minor annoyance: When I changed my TV's configuration to disable the internal speakers, every time I adjusted the sound on the Playbase, my TV displayed a small dialogue that said, "Speakers Off."

SOUND QUALITY

Inside the Playbase are 10 amplified speakers - six midrange, three tweeters and one woofer. The Playbase makes the speakers in my Panasonic TV sound pale in comparison.

I found myself searching out video with great music scores and my favorite concert DVDs. I was hearing sound from them my TV could never reproduce.

My TV has very little bass in the speakers, so when I played a Rolling Stones concert DVD using the Playbase, I began looking around to see if a car was driving by with a booming bass, only to realize the thumping was coming from the Playbase.

The Sonos app brings some special features to the Playbase. There's a speech enhancement mode that keeps dialogue volume consistent while reducing the intensity of loud sound effects.

I especially liked using Night Sound mode, which, at lower volumes, gives quiet sounds a slight boost while loud ones are automatically reduced. It took the thump out of the TV sound so others in the house were not disturbed.

But the Playbase can get plenty loud if you want to fill your media room with sound.

SONOS APP

When the TV is off, the Playbase is the best-sounding Sonos speaker I've heard, and I've heard them all. It's certainly the Sonos speaker with the most speakers and the greatest range.

And I've found the Sonos app to be the best streaming app going.

Sonos has a slogan - "All the music on Earth. And then some."

They mean it.

Every streaming music service I'm familiar with is on the Sonos app. Pandora, Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon Streaming, SiriusXM, TuneIn, Google Play, SoundCloud and iHeartRadio are just a few. There are plenty more.

Of course you'll need a subscription or account for the pay services. Content from TuneIn, iHeartRadio and even Pandora (the basic tier) can be heard for free.

One feature I love about the Sonos app is its ability to gather all the local radio station streams into one convenient list.

WHEN TO BUY

The Sonos Playbase is a nice addition to the living room or media room. If you're just starting out with Sonos, it would be a great first [speaker](#).

If you already have a Sonos system and you are thinking about the Playbar, I'd recommend you listen to the Playbase, which sounds better to me and costs the same.

The Playbase is a nice TV sound system even if you don't decide to use other Sonos products.

The Sonos Playbase

Pros: Great sound, design disappears under your TV, easy setup.

Cons: Expensive, can't hang on a wall.

Bottom line: Simple to use and sounds great. What more could you want?

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