

IKEA and Sonos team up for SYMFONISK speakers and a lamp

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For years, the Sonos Wi-Fi speakers have been beloved by music fans for the ease of listening to streaming music at home with great sound. Also, add the ability to add multiple speakers for even better sound

without having to resort to stringing speaker wire all over.

The one drawback: Sonos speakers can be pricey, topping off at \$499 per [speaker](#) and even higher for the \$699 TV Playbar.

So good news consumers: The most affordable way to get into the Sonos system goes on sale Thursday. But you won't find the speakers at Best Buy, Amazon or any of the other retailers which usually stock Sonos products.

Instead, you'll need to go to IKEA, the giant home furnishing store.

The Swedish based firm has collaborated with the Santa Barbara, California-based Sonos on a new line of bookshelf speakers, and a [lamp](#) that doubles as a speaker.

Pro

—Lowest priced Sonos speakers to date at \$99 apiece.

—More stylish than standard Sonos speakers

—No screwdriver needed. Installation easy.

Con

—Power cord is way too short, hard to fit in the places they belong.

—Not as full-featured as Sonos One (with Alexa and Google Assistant) and [sound](#) not as rich.

—Sound is OK with one speaker, way better if you buy two of them.

At \$99 apiece for the SYMFONISK speakers, this is the lowest-priced Sonos product ever released, compared to \$149 for the small Play One speaker or \$199 for the popular Sonos One, which connects to the Google Assistant or Amazon's Alexa. The lamp/speaker costs \$179.

These are the best-looking speakers we've seen to date from Sonos, thanks, no doubt, to the design influence of IKEA. They're not just all black or white, as way too many tech products are, but they look like they belong in a living room, in shades of gray.

They aren't the best sounding Sonos speakers, but that shouldn't come as a surprise since they're only \$99. Are they better than what you would get on a similarly priced Amazon Echo speaker? No question. Do they sound even better when you pair two of them as stereo speakers? Yes, indeed.

But they're kind of retro. In this era when most popular speakers are of the talking "Hey, Google" "Alexa" variety, these don't talk, although you can bring that functionality easily by pairing them with an Amazon or Google speaker. Just add these via the Alexa or Google Home smartphone apps.

And the Sonos One has more sonically pleasing, fuller sound with one speaker, than even the two SYMFONISK's combined. That's a nit-pick. For the majority of consumers, they'll sound just fine.



I used the Sonos app to program music while testing the pair. This is one easy-to-use, functional app that lets you find streaming music to listen to and choose which Sonos speakers to hear it from.

In the second nitpick area, I have a big one. These are billed as "bookshelf" speakers that will fit easily on shelves, which they do. But the [power cord](#) is so small, I couldn't slip a speaker on the shelf and have the cord reach down to the power outlet. For this, I would need a hefty extension cord, and I would have to scramble to find a way to hide the wires.

A lamp that doubles as a speaker

Pro

—It's nice to see Sonos speakers show up in other products.

—You can pair this \$179 device with other speakers and easily pick up streaming music off the phone or computer.

—For those who want music from their lamps, only one product to plug into an AC socket, instead of two.

Con

—Do we really need a lamp with music?

—No instant connection to Alexa or Google.

—Some might find it a little ugly and large.

The lamp is an oddity. "It looks like a mushroom," my wife said when I pulled it into the dining room to set it up.

There's that, as well as the reason for being. Have you felt an itch for a lamp that also played music? Many of us made fun of the Alexa microwave Amazon released last year, but at least it had a function. You could connect it to an Echo speaker and dictate commands.

Maybe think of this function as a way to ditch the [alarm clock](#) and bedside lamp and combine them.

As IKEA notes on its website, the combo lamp/speaker "means one less

cord to hide, one less power socket to reach, and one less product to buy."

But the lamp isn't staying in tune with trends. Yes, you can get an alarm going via the smartphone app, but to turn the light on and off, you'll need to actually reach for the old-fashioned knob. No, goodnight Alexa here.

And then there's sound. On my A/B tests between the \$179 lamp and the \$199 Sonos One speaker, the lamp's sound was decent but tinnier and less rich.

Audiophiles take note: Lamps are cheap. You can pick up the Gottorp for just \$17.95 at IKEA.

And if turning off the lamp manually bothers you, you could always pick up a smart plug, (around \$20 to \$25 on Amazon) and program your smartphone to accept voice controls for the lamp.

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