

Product Information

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List Price: \$99 for speakers and subwoofer

Street Price: \$89

System Requirements

A multimedia device with a standard 3.5 mm sound output jack

Everything around us seems to get more compact and beautiful, with the possible exception of SUVs and computer speakers. Why is that computer speakers have to be so ugly, boxy, and—if you want to have nice sound—big?

A new generation of speakers, named “flat panel” for their design, promises to change the whole situation. In the age of miniaturization, this is an overdue development. Several manufacturers are beginning to introduce flat-panel speakers into mainstream computing. Benwin already has them on the market. The Benwin BW 2000 speaker system is small, stylish, and offers very good sound in a small and affordable package.

Flat panel speakers operate differently from traditional speakers. Instead of a cone and the movement of a diaphragm, they rely on a transducer that translates electric signals into a complex pattern of vibrations on a stiff, flat panel. This flat surface can be very small and very thin. It also offers the advantage of eliminating “hot spots.” Traditional speakers have their best sound quality right in front of the speaker, which degrades in volume and quality as you move to the side. Flat panel speakers, however, emit the sound at an even 360-degree angle. They sound just as good if you are standing on the side or behind the speakers.

he BW2000 is indeed very small. The speakers are a little larger than my hand, although I might have to add that I have big hands. They are no deeper than an inch, and most parts of the speakers are much thinner than that. With 0.59 lbs (270g) for the speakers and 2.2 lbs (1000g) for the subwoofer, they are also rather light. They came with two little desktop stands, but with the right accessories you could hang them on the wall. The two speakers are each connected to the central subwoofer by a single cable that splits into two parts, and allows each speaker to be no more than seven feet away from the base. The subwoofer itself has an on/off button with an LED to show power, a volume dial and a bass dial, as well as a button that enables the 3D effect. That button is a new addition to the speaker and replaces the headphone output. When activated, it produces an astonishingly real surround effect that makes you feel as if you were right in the middle of a set of speakers. Sometimes this slightly distorts the sound, but you can do away with most of that by turning down the volume a little. The whole system has an excellent design as you can judge yourself from the picture. If you don't like the light gray of the speakers, Benwin will introduce a black version in April.

I had a little trouble in the beginning because the cable that connects the subwoofer to the computer seemed to be defective. I replaced it with my own cable, and everything worked fine. I contacted Benwin and they assured me that that was an exception. The sound quality of the speakers is very good and can satisfy the needs of most of us, with the exception of people who would not pay that little for a speaker system anyway. At the recently reduced price tag of \$99 for the complete system, it is almost too good a deal to pass up on. So if you have too little space on your desktop or are searching for a good-looking set of speakers, I fully recommend the BW2000. If you have too much money, you just might want

to get a second set for that radio in the living room!

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