


Dynaudio Xeo 2

wireless speakers

From little things...

+

Dynaudio's Xeo speakers aim to reinvent the hi-fi experience wirelessly, and the neat new Xeo 2 offers a great starting point.

SUMMARY

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Price: \$1999

- + Style and substance
- + Great with Bluetooth
- + Great for TV sound as well as music
- + Many options to expand
- Fiddly to connect

Dynaudio delivered the original Xeo range back in 2012 when wireless was still something of a dirty word, seen as a sacrifice of audio quality to achieve the convenience of relative cable-free operation. Most wireless speakers then were one-box Bluetooth units incapable of holding up their heads against traditional hi-fi. The first Xeos proved that there was another way, as you might hope from a company which makes loudspeakers rising up into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Those first Xeos used a hub unit to which you connected your sources, with a dedicated CD-quality wireless link from the hub to the active speakers — no amp, no speaker cables required. The Xeos were among the first to successfully deliver wireless hi-fi.

Equipment

Now we are into the second generation of Xeo, and here audition the compact Xeo 2, the latest and smallest of the breed yet devised by Dynaudio. The aim has been to maintain the audio quality while increasing convenience, and they're certainly physically convenient, being an impressively compact two-way active

speaker in black or white (the missus gave the white ones a most rare tick of approval, even grilles off), with a protruding 27mm soft-dome tweeter and a magnesium-silicate polymer (MSP) mid-bass woofer which Dynaudio's specs quote at 14cm diameter, but that's measuring the mounting assembly; the actual cone is nearer 10.5cm from roll to roll.

We used the Xeo 2s sitting directly on a sturdy stand, but there's also a \$229 wall-mounting kit (they're usefully shallow at 15cm, so you can mount them either flush or out a bit to allow swivelling), and also good-looking aluminium footstands for \$399 the pair to raise the Xeos up — Dynaudio says this enables optimum sound and it also might put the tweeters nicely at ear-level if on your average TV-level unit, as pictured top right.

Indeed positioning either side of your TV might be an excellent way to use the Xeo 2s. Their physical inputs allow for direct connection of one minijack analogue, one pair of RCA phono analogues, and one optical digital input that's good for digital playback up to 24-bit/192kHz high-resolution audio. Plus there's Bluetooth for direct streaming — and then that almost hidden wireless ability. This is

not a network connection to your home Wi-Fi in the manner of most wireless products. The Dynaudios use their own bespoke wireless between the two speakers, and also to the optional Hub and Connect units which Dynaudio has available. You will need one of these if you wish to take advantage of the zone-based multiroom abilities of the Xeos; the Hub and Connect also add additional inputs, and can be positioned usefully elsewhere in the room.

So the Hub (\$549) would add two analogue inputs and one each of digital optical, coaxial and USB, all good to 24-bit/96kHz though sending wirelessly to the Xeo 2s at a maximum of 16/48.

The Connect (\$799) would add two analogue inputs, 24/96 USB and 24/192 optical and coaxial inputs, while also allowing Spotify Connect and DLNA streaming from the home network, and control of your system from an iOS app. Given only \$150 between the two, the Connect seems by far the more powerful device, especially as it can stream all these to the Xeo 2s (and other Dynaudio speakers) at 24-bit/192kHz.

If this is all sounding complicated, let's back up. You don't need any of that. The Xeo 2s alone make a fine-sounding system for Bluetooth streaming, your TV sound and a couple of other devices, with nothing whatsoever to add.



Performance

The tag of 'convenience' runs through the Xeo 2s at almost every stage, including giving you the choice of which speaker is the left and which the right. Since only one of the speakers has the inputs, you'll choose to put that one closest to your sources. You can also usefully set switches for flat, corner or wall positioning, with Dynaudio dialling in suitable EQ parameters to correct for your choice. The one slip in convenience is that the sockets are tucked several centimetres up behind a solid back plate (in the image below, this has been made transparent). It was fiddly enough that we hunted an Allen key to remove the back plate while we made the connections — otherwise we strongly advise you leave the sturdy orange plastic tweeter guards in place until you've finished making connections. We connected our TV to the optical input, our iPod touch via Bluetooth, and a Blu-ray/CD player to the RCA connectors.

The remote control is excellent — solid, weighty, with a perfect layout and priority for the volume buttons. (If you use the Hub or Connect, you'll get an additional remote.)

We began, as we often do, with an episode of *Rockwiz* from the TV via optical, and the Xeo 2s immediately thrilled us with a tight, extended, realistic delivery of both music and voices. Moving to CD and Bluetooth, bass performance was impressive from speakers so compact — massively delivered on The Flaming Lips 'A Spoonful Weighs a Ton', and strong down to an organ G2 at 98Hz, dropping before D2 at ~75Hz, impressive for

a speaker 25cm high! (It is also possible to add a subwoofer to the Xeo 2s using Dynaudio's Hub/Connect and Link options.)

Midrange was prominent and forward but without excess presence, while the top-end was a delight — open, clean but not edgy, and able to deliver the detail and accuracy required for excellent soundstaging between the Xeo 2s. The right-channel snare brushes on kd lang's 'The Air That I Breathe' were delightfully delicately presented, and the whole picture held together impressively coherently during this song's climaxes, the dynamics marginally tamed, showing there are ultimately air-shifting limits to what a speaker this size can achieve. But really, these are exceptional performers, and with TV too — for an action soundtrack we'd take this big, well-delineated and well-balanced delivery over almost any soundbar on the market.

Conclusion

As standalone active speakers with three inputs plus Bluetooth, the Xeo 2s make a neat and fine-sounding system for music and TV, with nothing whatsoever to add. In this they are up with the very best of their competitors. But here you also have the option of building to something more — add a Connect for high-resolution streaming, other Dynaudios for multiroom operation and more. It's a powerful proposition. *Jez Ford* +



Wired inputs

The back of the Xeo 2 accepts two analogue inputs, one minijack and one stereo RCA, plus optical digital. There's also Bluetooth onboard.

Wireless inputs

As standalone active speakers, the Xeo 2s receive wirelessly via Bluetooth, but you can add a Hub or Connect unit which will then stream wirelessly and losslessly using Dynaudio's own wireless connection.

Optional extras

Dynaudio's Hub (above) or Connect add further inputs delivered by lossless wireless streaming, plus the ability to use the Xeos within an extended multiroom implementation.



SPECS

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\$1999

Drivers: 27mm soft-dome tweeter; 10.5cm MSP mid/bass

Quoted power: 2 x 65W per channel

Inputs: 1 x minijack analogue; 1 x RCA stereo analogue, optical digital inputs, USB (firmware only), Bluetooth, wireless from optional Hub (16/48) or Dynaudio Connect (up to 24/96)

Dimensions (whd): 173 x 255 x 154mm

Weight: 4kg (each)

Warranty: Two years

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