

# Hands-On Review

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## ZVOX AUDIO 315 Speakers, amp and subwoofer in one box!

The past few years has seen a plethora of speaker solutions aiming to reduce the number of boxes needed, especially to reproduce surround sound. KEF has its tricky little KIT 100 system which marries Uni-Q and NXT speaker technology replicating 5.1 from a subwoofer and single pair of speakers, while Yamaha's Sound Projectors 'beam' sound all around the room from a single driver-laden speaker.

Another single component which Zvox calls a sound console aims to do the same sort of thing. This single box contains speakers, amplifier and subwoofer and is designed to be used as an add-on to improve sound quality with an existing TV or with external devices, such as an MP3 player, games console or even a wireless PC networking device.

The 315 looks like a big centre speaker but it's much more than simply a box with a couple of drivers in it. There's 40 watts of amplification onboard which is shared between the subwoofer and two stereo channels. There are three 8.25cm full-range drivers mounted on the front baffle, while internally bass is generated by a bandpass subwoofer with 13.3cm driver.

The 315 aims to deliver an 'out-of-the-box' sound and it achieves this by something called PhaseCue. This essentially mixes in and out of phase components of the stereo channels and 'tricks' the ear that it is hearing a far wider soundstage than you'd expect from a single point source. As always, I reserve judgement on such jiggery-pokery, but the designer behind the Zvox has some fairly serious credentials, having worked for several well-known speaker brands.

As always, the proof's in the pudding and hooking the 315 up to my AV system was a doddle. I also connected a portable MiniDisc player directly to the second of its inputs. Three controls on the rear adjust volume, the subwoofer level, while the third varies the degree of PhaseCue.

The speaker's designed to sit beneath a smallish flat-panel screen (as per the pic) and I must admit, I wasn't expecting much from it replacing my usual AV speaker system. To be fair, the 315 hasn't been designed to deliver surround sound, but it does work with processed soundfields such as Dolby's Virtual Surround. Sitting back watching a live 2006 World Cup football match the Zvox certainly leaves TV speakers for dead.



It soundstages too and there's a definite sense of spaciousness and a three dimensional quality to the sound. I wouldn't go so far to say it was enveloping, but it does sound as spatial as a pair of speakers some six or so feet apart.

With music the Zvox also plays its sonic tricks well. I sat a mate down with a beer and popped on some Nine Inch Nails. When asked what he thought of the sound he was convinced it was coming from the main speakers either side of the screen. He only believed me when I showed him (with the music still playing) that the speaker leads weren't attached.

It has its volume limits but for everyday levels the 315 produces decent levels of bass and room-filling sound. It's not silly money considering the job it does and if you're short on space and want better than average TV or MP3 sound, this little box of tricks is a simple solution. **AVL**

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Verdict: ★★★★★