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## Zvox 315 Sound System

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#### Introduction

Ever wish that your TV was equipped with speakers that do not sound muddy and congested? Or perhaps you wished your boombox had speakers that didn't sound so boomy? Wish no more, because the ZVOX 315 is a one-box audio console that is designed exactly to address these very issues. The premise of its design is simple: to improve the sound by replacing the function of the unsatisfying speaker systems in an easy and low-cost manner. Many electronics manufacturers put very little emphasis on good speakers. Some expensive TVs or computers often include only rudimentary speaker systems, which could be detrimental to the enjoyment of the systems.

Simplicity and low cost are the key designs of the ZVOX 315. Of course, you can always improve the sound from your TV or computers by adding a receiver and a set of nice speakers. But that might be more complicated and involve a higher cost than what you would be willing to spend. Therefore, the ZVOX 315 with a \$200 dollar price tag definitely provides a very attractive solution. Now, let's see if it truly delivers.

#### Look and Features

The appearance of ZVOX 315 is very low key. It is basically just a plain matte-gray box with a speaker grill on the front. The controls, connectors and the subwoofer port are on the back. If you have a dark gray TV, you can put the ZVOX 315 under (if your TV is 20" or smaller) or on top of it relatively inconspicuously. It is another story if your TV has a silver finish, like many televisions today. But ZVOX informed us that a silver finish version of the ZVOX 315 is underway and might be available by the time this review is published.

#### Where to buy:

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#### Review Date:

November 1st, 2004

#### Topic:

[Speakers and Subwoofers](#)

#### Author:

[Yongki Go](#)

#### Score:

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#### Setup and Sound

For this evaluation, the ZVOX 315 console was connected to our stereo preamp outputs. This configuration allowed us to easily try the console with various components that are connected to the preamp. These included a TV, CD player, and DVD player. The key to get optimum performance from the ZVOX 315 is to dial in the Main Volume, Phase Cue, and Subwoofer Level controls properly. This was not difficult, but some trial and error was needed to get to what we considered the best settings. Once the best settings are achieved, the controls can be left alone and the preamp's volume control can be used for everyday volume adjustment. The Phase Cue control was important to get the right balance between the soundstage and neutrality. If you dial in too much phase cue, the resulting sound lacks neutrality, and while if you dial in too little, the soundstage becomes too narrow. With the right Phase Cue setting and some program materials, a certain degree of surround envelopment can be felt.

The ZVOX 315 worked wonderfully for channeling the sound from our TV. It eliminated the muddiness and anemic bass of our TV's built-in speakers, and replaced them with clear and open sound with good dynamics. Flat TV sound now became full of textures with the ZVOX. The difference was just night and day. It was like somebody had just removed a blanket covering the TV speakers! With good program materials, we even noticed some surround effects. When we watched the Yankees-Red Sox playoff game using this console, we were able to hear the crowd noise coming from the sides and rear of our room. The surround effect was not as distinct as in conventional surround configuration with five or seven speakers, but nevertheless it was there.

The fact that the ZVOX 315 was good for substituting mediocre speakers was probably of no surprise. But this sound console could do more than that. We were pleasantly surprised by its performance in handling high quality program materials such as CD and DVD playback. The ZVOX 315 produced room-filling sound that belied its size. Its bass response was surprisingly good. For example when playing the Best of Sade CD, even though the in-room bass response of the ZVOX console went down only to about 60 Hz (-3 dB), the bass sounded full and had good definition. For most music listening (unless you are into organ music), it should be sufficient. You would notice lack of bass extension impact only when you watch movies with a lot of low frequency content. Even then it was still much better than what you'd normally get from just using the built-in TV speakers or cheap boom boxes. The ZVOX 315 was also capable of reproducing vocals nicely and quite naturally as exemplified by Diana Krall's voice from her album. Treble might lack slight air and extension, but this was only obvious with some program materials. Overall, though, we were quite pleased with the resulting sound, especially when we factored in its cost.

Perhaps the greatest attribute of the ZVOX 315 is its capability to produce out-of-the-box sound. This proved that the ZVOX's Phase Cue technology really worked. Because of that, the resulting soundstage was in general more spacious and not limited by its dimensions. How else would you get such a sound improvement for \$200?

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## Conclusions

The ZVOX 315 is a product that works, period. It is relatively small, easy to place, and simple to connect. Most importantly, it produces excellent sound with spacious and out-of-the-box quality. For a couple hundred bucks, it is a cost effective way to increase your enjoyment by replacing the function of mediocre speakers that come built-in to most consumer electronics. The ZVOX 315 is highly recommended.

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"Good, when it works."

apcroz at Mar 12th, 2006 at 3:49 PM  
Score: 2

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"Great 1 piece unit!"

Sharon at Mar 27th, 2005 at 6:51 AM  
Score: 8

Sounds great. I use it for my HDTV and my MP3 player. I did not want to spend a thousand dollars on great sound. I can hook my MP3 player up to it. Now I do not have to buy a separate CD player or stereo system. It has few connections and you can move it from room to room. I am impressed.

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The front of the ZVOX 315 has a very simplistic design

### Rear look of ZVOX 315

The ZVOX 315 has three 3.25" front drivers and a 5.25" subwoofer driver in a band pass design. The ZVOX 315 has its own built-in amplifier which can be adjusted separately for the front drivers and for the subwoofer.

Two mini-jack stereo inputs are provided on the rear panel. Signals from these two inputs are mixed in the console. One of these inputs can also function as subwoofer output, so you can add an external subwoofer if you feel the bass from the ZVOX 315 is not adequate.

Besides the on-off rocker, there are three controls on the rear panel labeled Main Volume, Phase Cue, and Subwoofer Level. As the name implies, Main Volume is to adjust the overall amplification level of the console, while the Subwoofer Level control is meant for adjusting the bass response. Phase Cue is ZVOX's proprietary patent-pending technology to create a large soundstage from the single-enclosure speaker configuration by adjusting the mixed proportion between in-phase and out-of-phase signals.



The rear of the ZVOX 315 features the inputs and the subwoofer port

The ZVOX 315 is supposed to be connected to variable outputs of your component (television, portable CD player, Apple iPod), such as the headphone or preamp outputs. That way you can use the volume control in your component to control the volume. Mini-jack to mini-jack and mini-jack to stereo RCA cables are provided to make the necessary connection from your component to the ZVOX console.

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