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This pre-holiday markdown lets you save \$120 on the Arena 9 surround sound system, bringing the price to just \$430. So if you've got a gamer on your shopping list looking for the ultimate audio solution for both PC and consoles, it's a great option for a premium gift.

I have to admit: when I first saw the SteelSeries Arena 9 speaker system, I thought it was complete overkill. Five speakers and a subwoofer (plus the OLED controller and the many, many cables) felt like an absurd amount of audio equipment for most gamers who may only have one platform they prefer: PC, Xbox, Switch, or PS5. And it is.

That said, if you frequently switch between console and PC gaming, or your home office doubles as your gaming room, the Arena 9 transforms into a home theater powerhouse that's a more affordable option than a traditional 5.1CH system from brands like LG or Samsung. I've been testing the Arena 9 -- here's everything you need to know about it.

Setting up the Arena 9 is a lot less intimidating than the included quick-start guide makes it seem. The main left, right, and center speakers connect directly to the subwoofer, while the rear speakers connect wirelessly (and have their own AC power cable).

The system also comes with an OLED control dial for quick and easy adjustments to volume and EQ presets, connecting via Bluetooth, and viewing essential product information like the serial and model numbers for

warranty claims.

The subwoofer also acts as the main connection point for audio output via USB, Bluetooth, or optical cable -- you can use the subwoofer as an optical passthrough for theoretically connecting third-party soundbars or speakers if you already have something you're using to boost dialogue or ambient sound.

While you can set up all three connection types at once, you can only use one physical connection at a time, along with the Bluetooth-connected device. The Bluetooth source will mix with the physical one, allowing you to catch PC or console notifications while using another device to stream music, movies, and shows.

I connected the Arena 9 to my PS5 via USB and used Bluetooth to connect to my iPhone 13 and desktop PC. While you'll get an excellent dialogue and hi-tone boost straight out of the box, you do have to take some time to tweak settings, either via the OLED controller or Sonar desktop app, to get the best tones and volume levels for each set of speakers. The rear speakers like to be very quiet and flat-sounding at first, but switching to the Excite or Bass Boost EQ preset on the OLED controller immediately improves the surround sound effect and overall quality.

The OLED dial gives you a good amount of flexibility and control when selecting EQ presets or making manual adjustments, especially if you're connected to a non-PC device like a cell phone. You can toggle the 5.1CH Upmix on and off, which disables the rear speakers for more focused audio, though it does sound much more flat and uninteresting than when enabled.

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