

Piega Premium Wireless 301 Standmount Speakers Review

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Jay Garrett spends time with a small but perfectly formed active loudspeaker system...

Piega

Premium Wireless 301 Loudspeakers

£1,999



Based on the shores of Lake Geneva in Switzerland, Piega is a family-owned business that's been making handcrafted high-end loudspeakers since 1986. Its name happens to be Italian for 'fold', which hints at one of the manufacturer's design strong points – its renowned folded ribbon speakers. The other headline characteristic of Piega speakers is the use of aluminium for the rather striking curvy cabinets.

Aluminium is light, rigid and has decent damping characteristics, as well as being machinable into almost any shape. Piega speakers have been designed to significantly reduce sound-damaging standing waves that occur in speaker cabinets, the company says. It adds that it has taken several years of effort, along with high tech vendor parts and a hefty investment in development, to produce the speaker you see here. The smallest of Piega's Premium Wireless range, the £1,999 301 standmount, was announced in 2019 ([/news/piega-premium-wireless-series-sees-the-swiss-speakers-cut-the-cables](#)) and is the most affordable system in the brand's wireless range.

UP CLOSE



While measuring a compact 340x180x230mm (HxWxD), this Piega speaker took me slightly by surprise as it tips the scales at a not inconsiderable 9kg. The drive units are fitted to a baffle roughly the same size as an A4 sheet of paper and comprise Piega's 140mm MDS mid/bass driver and an LDR 2642 MKII ribbon tweeter. Working in conjunction with the internal 100W amplifier, the resulting two-way design delivers a claimed 39Hz–35kHz frequency response.

Being active, you'll find more than speaker binding posts on the rear baffle. Instead, you're greeted by a control panel featuring a Group switch with red, white and blue options. This enables you to link or separate multiple pairs of Piega wireless speakers throughout your home. There are also toggle switches for setting whether the speaker is the right or left one and for its positioning. The positions covered are Neutral (at least 50cm from the boundary wall), Wall (less than 50cm) or Corner for you-know-what. Also on the rear panel is a USB port for updates and a single analogue input.



A small 33x162x167mm, 650g Piega Connect unit is supplied, which is essentially the conductor of this ensemble cast. It accepts digital and analogue sources via RCA, coaxial and S/PDIF inputs, as well as Wi-Fi, and aptX, A2DP and AVRCP Bluetooth. You get to choose from three flavours of Wi-Fi just in case one or two of the available channels are already busy. There's also a set of RCA outputs for either a subwoofer or amplifier, a switch to select a fixed or variable volume level and a three-way selector to set which source has priority after Bluetooth.

This hub transmits to the speakers at 24-bit/96kHz if switched to the Red group setting; otherwise, you get 24-bit/48kHz from the other two. Save for its top-mounted volume and Bluetooth pairing buttons, it's quite an unassuming member of the team. Meanwhile, the speakers are happy basking in the limelight. There's no remote control – Instead, the idea is you connect the hub to your amplifier or use the volume control on the Connect direct with your sources. Although it might appear a complicated process, set-up was achieved in short order. The only limiting factors over speaker placement was the location of accessible power outlets and the length of extension cable available. This freedom is undoubtedly a plus point for those who demand a degree of aesthetic balance alongside aural satisfaction.



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Atop a pair of Solidsteel (/brands/solidsteel) SS-6 speaker stands, my review pair of Premium Wireless 301 loudspeakers looked striking in its aluminium finish, although white and black are also available. Furthermore, the 301 is one of those rare beasts that, in my opinion, looks as good with the grilles on as off.

THE LISTENING

This speaker sounds unexpectedly musical. Even playing streamed music from my smartphone over Bluetooth, I was pleasantly surprised by how much fun it was. The sound was very well balanced for this sort of product, with plenty of detail and a complete lack of shrillness. It's good enough to let you really enjoy the music.



Playing **Talking Heads' *Burning Down The House***, and I was struck by the Piega's imaging which was clear and precise, with plenty of space creating noteworthy instrumental separation. Synth stabs seemed to emanate much further out than the shiny compact cabinets, and tom rolls were as fulsome as they were punchy. Considering that at this price point, we're still in the realms of one-box solutions such as Naim's Mu-so 2nd Generation (</reviews/review-mu-so-2nd-generation-the-best-all-in->

one), the Premium Wireless 301 produced a much wider soundstage, as one would expect from a pair of speakers as opposed to an all-in-one box. Indeed, things were more in the KEF LS50 Wireless II (</reviews/kef-ls50-wireless-ii-review/>)'s stomping ground in terms of sound, which the Piega package manages to undercut pricewise.

Still, the aforementioned KEF duo does away with a separate box for connectivity and also seems to have more fun with tracks such as *Inertia Creeps* by **Massive Attack**. Don't get me wrong, the Piega did more than a fine job with the track's tribal rhythms and panned sequences. Vocals were rich and perfectly placed, and the bassline was delivered with sufficient gusto and control, but that last point had me thinking. Is it too controlled? I wondered if the 301 couldn't do with a drink or two to loosen it up a little and have some fun throughout this track. Perhaps it was just a year's worth of lockdown talking, but it sounded like the speaker was just a little too buttoned-up for this song.



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Still, I could not fault the Premium Wireless 301's handling of rhythm, nor its fine sense of scale, precise instrumental placement and use of space. Take *Heroes (Kruder Long Loose Bossa/Edit)* from **Roni Size**'s *New Forms (20th Anniversary Edition)*, for instance. There are many subtleties in this track that lesser wired speakers either miss or not get quite right. However, here I was mesmerised by how this pair of active wireless speakers behaved.

Josef Erich by **Trilok Gurtu** proved that the 301 was no slouch at producing the metronomic timing that's associated with its home country's timepiece manufacturers. Furthermore, the bass playing came through naturally, and the all-important percussion was sharply in focus and distinct. The piano part really appeared to benefit from the Piega's excellent ribbon

tweeter, which had a cohesiveness with the mid/bass unit that underlined this speaker's high-end heritage. **Dolly Parton's** *Jolene* sounded rich, with Dolly's vocals and **Pete Drake's** pedal steel coming through with an ethereal presentation, such was the transparency of this design.



Hooking up my Oppo UDP-205 to the Piega system via an optical connection whilst spinning **Rush's** *Moving Pictures* album didn't quite produce the same kind of scale as I usually get from the disc player's DAC into an amplifier via XLR. However, renditions of *Tom Sawyer* and *YYZ* were still immensely enjoyable, with the volume dialled up a touch. Indeed the 301 seems to like being driven hard, as there's a feeling that the listener might lose some of the dynamic nuances at lower levels.

The oddest thing was when I attempted to play the very same disc but through the Piega Connect's analogue inputs to – so I thought – take advantage of the Oppo's DAC. Unfortunately, things didn't sound so good. I had not taken into consideration the digital-to-analogue-to-digital and back to analogue conversion that my music had to go through before reaching my ears. This did seem to subdue the dynamics a touch compared to simply having to deal with a digital signal. This is an issue that Goldmund ([/brands/goldmund](#))'s wireless system ([/reviews/review-goldmund-metis-wireless-mk2-loudspeakers](#)), for example, does not have – yet still, the Piega system proved an enjoyable listen.

THE VERDICT

The combination of Piega's impressive aluminium loudspeaker design and the flexibility of wireless connection sets the Premium Wireless 301 active speaker system apart from most other standmount designs. I have found offerings from Goldmund much more satisfying in dynamics and resolution, but there's quite a difference in pricing between the Swiss brands. Looking elsewhere and unexpectedly, the Piega undercuts the DALI (/brands/dali/) Rubicon 2 C, making it a far more affordable offering than one might expect from such a high-end speaker specialist as this. It needs some serious driving to give of its best, but find that sweet spot and your ears will just be as pleased as your eyes.

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