

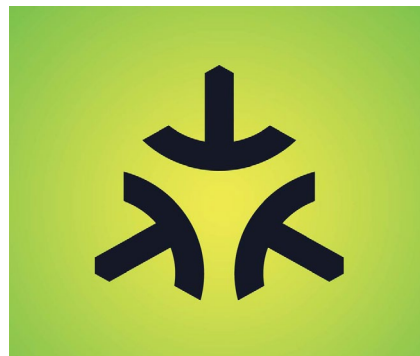
Quarterly newsletter

Consumer Electronics Market Intelligence Report

Technology

CSA

The Connectivity Standards Alliance (CSA), formerly known as the Zigbee Alliance, an organization of hundreds of companies creating, maintaining, and delivering open, global standards for the Internet of Things (IoT), has announced “Matter”. The interoperable, secure connectivity standard for the future of the smart home.



MATTER logo

**Zigbee
Alliance
Rebranded
As The
Connectivity
Standards
Alliance,
unveils
“Matter”**

The proliferation of connected objects continues to change the way we live, work, and play. From homes to offices, factories to hospitals, connected objects enable us to experience our environments in cohesive, interactive ways. Yet for too long, disconnected platforms and proprietary development paths have caused confusion for consumers and complicated processes for developers and innovators. Smart objects should be reliable, secure, and work together — this is the shared vision behind Project Connected Home over IP (CHIP), now known as the new standard, Matter. “With millions of Zigbee devices in market, adding Zigbee to Echo and Eero products has made it easier for customers to connect their smart devices, and for device makers to build Alexa-connected

devices customers want,” said David Shearer, Vice President, Amazon Smart Home.

Amazon, Apple, Comcast, Google, SmartThings, and the Connectivity Standards Alliance came together in 2019 to develop and promote this new standard, joined by fellow Alliance board member companies IKEA, Legrand, NXP Semiconductors, Resideo, Schneider Electric, Signify, Silicon Labs, Somfy, and Wulian. Now, there are more than 180 Member organizations of all sizes, across a range of business categories, and over 1700 Member individuals participating in bringing the Matter specification, reference implementations, testing tools and certification programs to life.

Matter is the unified IP-based connectivity protocol built on proven technologies, helping connect and build reliable, secure IoT ecosystems. This new technology and royalty-free connectivity standard enables communications among a wide range of smart devices. Matter is also a seal of approval, assuring that any object built on this standard is reliable by nature, secure by design, and compatible at scale.

Key technology attributes

Matter makes it easier for device manufacturers to build devices, and to ensure they are compatible with smart home and voice services such as Amazon’s Alexa, Apple’s HomeKit with Siri, Google’s Assistant, SmartThings, and others. The first specification release of the Matter protocol will run on existing networking technologies such as Ethernet (802.3), Wi-Fi (802.11), and Thread (802.15.4) and for ease of commissioning,

Bluetooth Low Energy.

Other key attributes include:

- **Simplicity** – Easy to purchase and use. Simplifying connected experiences.
- **Interoperability** – Devices from multiple brands work natively together providing greater compatibility.
- **Reliability** – Consistent and responsive local connectivity.
- **Security** – Maintaining secure connections. Robust and streamlined for developers and users.
- **Flexibility** – Matter makes it easy for users to set up and control their devices with multiple ecosystems simultaneously.

With Matter, consumers and businesses can choose the brands they want in their smart home or commercial building and be confident they will work seamlessly. Homeowners, and especially those living in a smart home with multiple devices like smart locks, thermostats or smart speakers, can add new devices with a Matter mark using a simple setup code to connect their home as one. Businesses, particularly those that rely on connectivity, can count on one network to keep their operations running smoothly.

Key for developers is that Matter isn't only a specification — it also offers an open-source reference implementation in parallel without any sacrifice to the security of the eco-system. This drives tangible benefits for developers including; faster time to market, reduced reliance on single-vendor stacks, improved quality since they can access multiple use cases to test against, and increased security with full transparency into the community's ability to identify and commit patches.

Products with the Matter mark connect securely with more devices, more reliably than ever. The Matter mark will serve as a seal of approval, taking the guesswork out of the purchasing process and allowing businesses and consumers alike to choose from a wider array of brands to create secure and connected homes and buildings.

Availability

The project is currently on track to run the first devices through certification in late 2021, depending on manufacturer's go-to-market plans. Devices targeted for launch include lighting and electrical (e.g. light bulbs, luminaires, controls, plugs, outlets), HVAC controls (e.g. thermostats, AC units), access controls (e.g. door locks, garage doors), safety and security (e.g. sensors, detectors, security systems), window coverings/shades, TVs, access points, bridges, and others.

Members poised to be early adopters of Matter include: Amazon, ASSA ABLOY, Comcast, Espressif Systems, Eve Systems, Google, Grundfos Holding A/S, Huawei, Infineon Technologies, LEEDARSON, Legrand, Nanoleaf, Nordic Semiconductor, NXP Semiconductors, Qorvo, Resideo, Schlage, Schneider Electric, Signify, Silicon Labs, SmartThings, Somfy, STMicroelectronics, Texas Instruments, Tuya Smart, ubisys, Wulian, and Zumtobel Group.

Did you know?

With the advent of IoT, and connected devices, having a state-of-the-art Wi-Fi connection free of dead-spots will be even more critical than it is today. Inverto's OneNet ProX is the perfect tool to enhance your home IoT experience

Inverto's OneNet Mesh Wi-Fi solutions ensure that you get top notch connectivity between your devices throughout your home.



**OneNet™ PROx
WiFi 6 MESH system**



Zuma

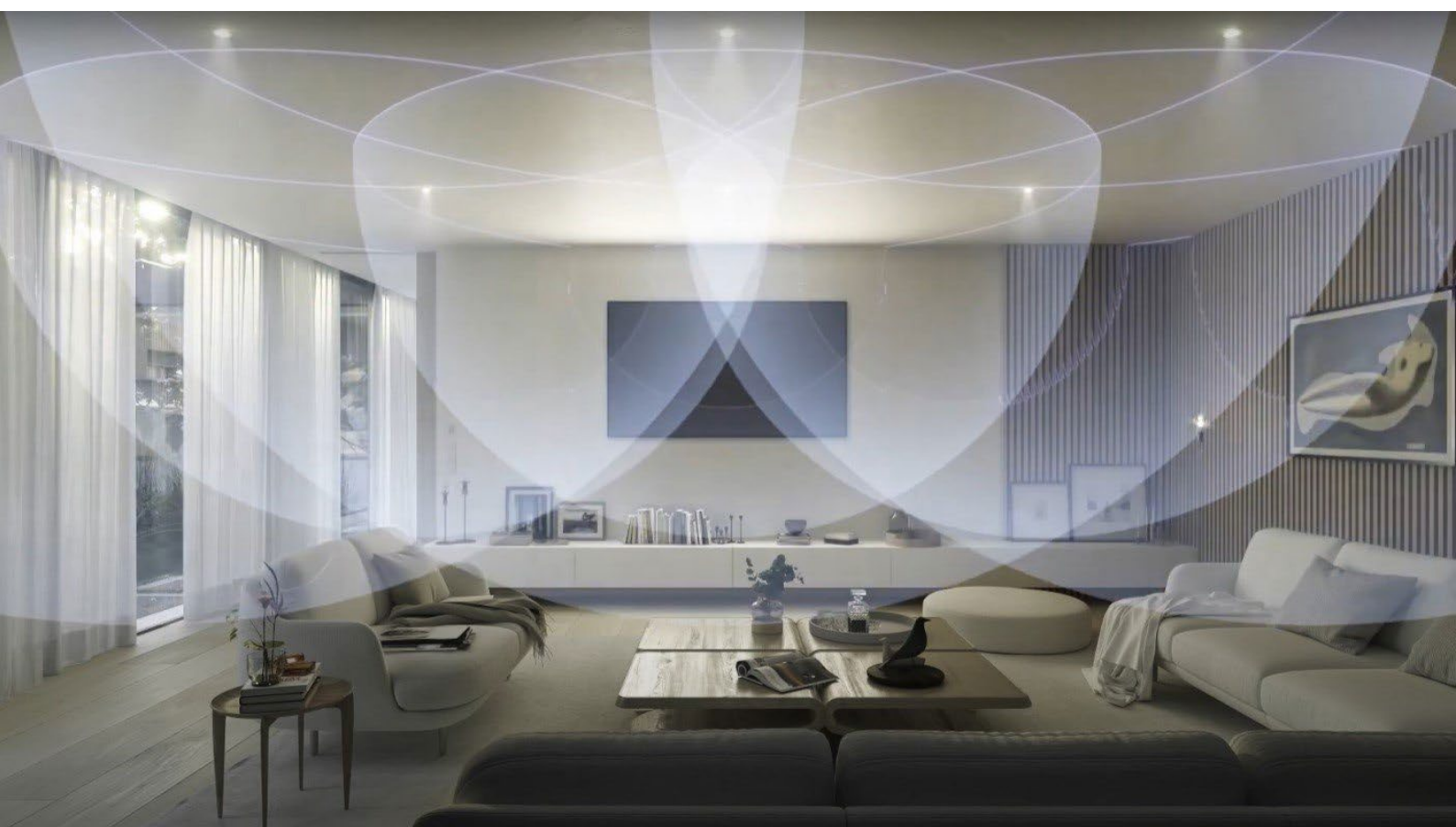
Initially offered in the UK, the Zuma Lumisonic is a ceiling light fixture that incorporates a smart speaker with AirPlay 2.

New UK and San Francisco based technology firm Zuma has launched Lumisonic, a voice-controlled smart speaker that comes as part of a ceiling light fixture. Alongside the loudspeaker, it features a low energy LED light that the makers claim creates a circadian rhythm and mood lighting experience.

“There are many smart products on the market today that do one thing - be that audio, or lighting or security - they don't integrate with each other easily, if at all,” said Morten Warren, founder and CEO of Zuma in a press release. “Our vision is that through consolidating these core applications into a single integrated platform people can easily transform their living spaces in imaginative ways.”

“Zuma doesn't just provide a totally new way to experience incredibly immersive high-performance lighting and superior audio, it discreetly becomes part of your home,” he continued.

**Zuma
launches
combined
AirPlay
2 smart
speaker and
ceiling light**



“Users can connect iPhone, iPad, or TV and enjoy a thrilling, edge of their seat, room-filling soundtrack to any movie, with no sound bar required, from anywhere in the room.”

At launch, Zuma is targeting both individual home users, and property developers. It is sold initially in the UK for £375 (\$520), though a light-only version is due in the summer for £125 (\$173). It is available via the company’s zuma.ai site.

Zuma Lumisonic supports AirPlay 2, Spotify Connect, and works with Alexa. The company says that HomeKit support is being worked on, though there is no definite release date yet. Similarly, US distribution is planned but no dates have been confirmed.



DIGITAL CONTENT

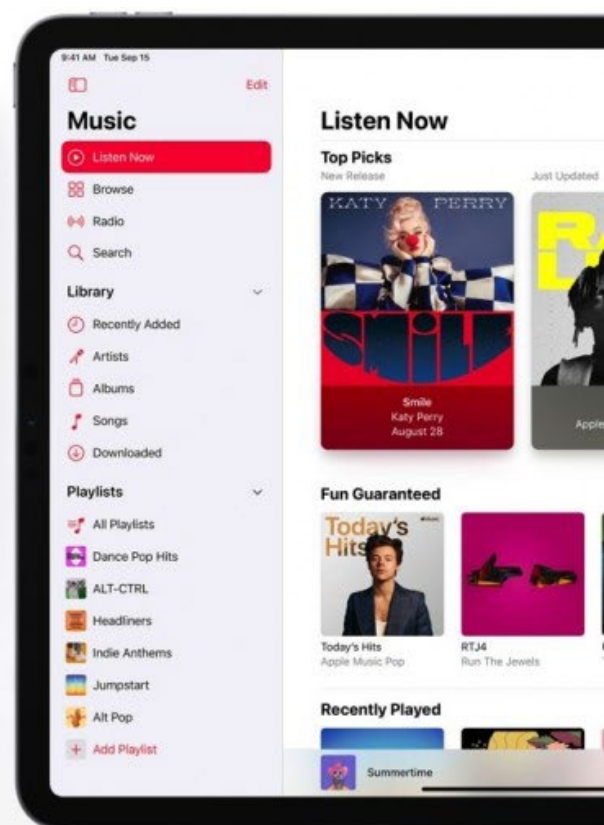
Apple Music

Apple Music is getting a big update and it's free to all subscribers. The entire catalogue of over 75 million tracks will be available in a lossless audio format using ALAC (Apple Lossless Audio Compression), starting with 20M tracks and expanding to the entire catalogue by the end of 2021. Eventually all tracks will be available in a hi-res lossless format at a maximum of 24bit and 192kHz. In addition some tracks will gain Dolby Atmos support, which can be played with lots of Apple and Beats headphones. You'll see labels on albums that show you which formats are available.

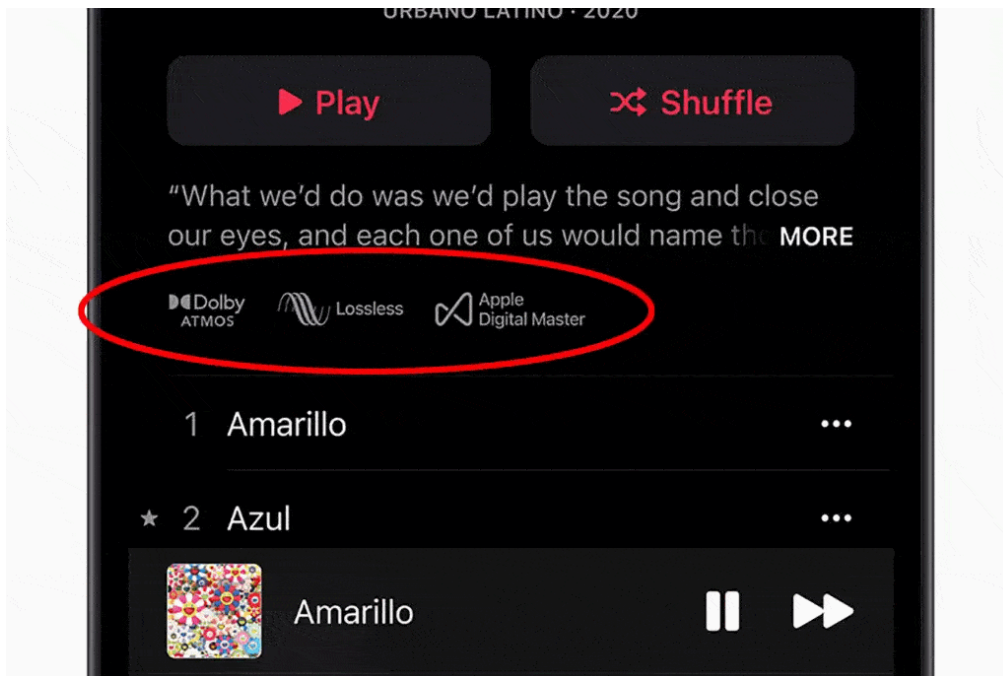
However not everyone will be able to enjoy these formats; the user will need specific hardware for each of them. (And software: The listener will have to have his Apple device updated to iOS 14.6, iPadOS 14.6, macOS 11.4, or tvOS 14.6 in order to use these new formats). Here is a simple breakdown of what you need to use these new formats.

Apple Music Lossless uses the ALAC (Apple Lossless Audio Codec) to retain all the information in the original CD-quality master. It starts at 16 bit, 44.1kHz and goes up to 24-bit, 48 kHz. No bluetooth device (not even Apple's AirPods can decode this format) so the user will need wired headphones. To enable this format on his iPhone or iPad, open Settings, then Music, then Audio Quality and choose between Lossless and Hi-Res Lossless for cellular or Wi-Fi connections. The user will also have to go into 'Settings' or 'Preferences' on a Mac or Apple TV to enable this feature.

Apple Music Lossless and Spatial Audio: Now available



The iPhone has a built-in DAC that support 24-bit, 48kHz so the user can use a pair of Lightning headphones. The 3.5mm port on the Mac also supports 24-bit, 48kHz.



Additionally, Apple's 3.5mm Lightning headphone adapter includes it's own DAC that supports 24-bit, 48kHz so high-end wired headphones will work. However, the Lightning to 3.5 mm Audio Cable that Apple sells for the AirPods Max doesn't support Lossless streaming.

High-Resolution lossless audio is a step up from the standard CD-quality lossless format. It goes all the way up to 24 bit at 192kHz. It has the same requirements as regular Lossless standard but also requires external hardware capable of handling 24-bit audio up to 192kHz, such as a USB DAC or receiver. The user will also need a USB-to-Lightning dongle for his iPhone or Mac.

It's unclear how many tracks will be available in Dolby Atmos but Apple has several playlists dedicated to the new format. Many more Apple devices are supported, every AirPods or Beats product with a W1 or H1 chip in it will automatically play compatible tracks in Dolby Atmos, as will the latest iPhones, iPads, and Macs. You can force it on for other headphones by opening 'Settings > Music' and changing the 'Dolby Atmos' setting to 'Always On'.

Did you know?

Great sound requires great headphones, yet make sure you choose a wired pair: Bluetooth compression would ruin the Lossless experience!

Supra PRO 3

Wired Over-The-Ear Headsets with Active Noise Cancelling (ANC)



Deezer

You can now use Siri on your HomePod or HomePod mini to stream music from the Deezer service natively, without having to use AirPlay on another Apple device. Before you can use this feature, you must be a paid Deezer subscriber. After connecting your Deezer account to your Apple smart speaker in Deezer's iPhone app, you can start issuing Deezer music requests directly to Siri on the HomePod range.

Paying subscribers can tell Siri on their HomePod or HomePod mini to play specific tracks, artists, albums, favorites, or playlists from Deezer's library of 73 million songs. As a bonus, you can also use Siri voice commands to like, dislike, play on repeat, and shuffle.

This is available for Deezer's Premium, HiFi, Family, and Student subscribers.

**Deezer
Now Works
Directly
With Apple's
HomePod
Speakers**



According to the company, Deezer on HomePod does not support podcasts, audiobooks, or live radio at this time, though support for those content types should be implemented at some point down the road.

Deezer Hi-Fi Works on the HomePod, Too!

The good news doesn't stop there; subscribers to Deezer's Hi-Fi tier of lossless audio can use their Apple smart speaker to listen to Deezer music in high fidelity.

While that may not matter much to owners of the \$99 HomePod mini, fans of the now discontinued full-size HomePod should notice the difference given the speaker's top-firing woofer and an array of seven tweeters, especially with two HomePods as a stereo pair.

**Spotify
Launches
Greenroom,
a Clubhouse
Competitor**



Using Siri on HomePod for Deezer music requests works in the US, Canada, the UK, Germany, France, Spain, Mexico, Japan, and Australia. Aside from Deezer, Pandora is currently the only other third-party music service that works directly with Siri on the HomePod range.

Spotify

Spotify has launched a live audio app called Greenroom, the Swedish online music streaming giant's answer to the popular platform Clubhouse. Greenroom allows users to join live discussions or to host their own.

Spotify launched Greenroom after acquiring Betty Labs, the company behind the popular sports-focused audio platform Locker Room.

Along with podcasts, social audio has taken off over the past year with the San Francisco based Clubhouse leading the way. Since December, Clubhouse has been downloaded over 18 million times, according to the site AppMagic.

Other tech giants have also jumped into the live audio sector with Twitter launching Spaces in December and Facebook hosting Live Audio Rooms.

Questions remain however, over the ability of the various platforms to monetise their content.

They will also have to compete with Discord, which has been offering live audio since 2015 and has more than 140 million users, although it has been more focused on video game players.

Spotify has the advantage of already being an audio platform through its focus on music and more recently, podcasts.

Last month, Spotify announced three new features; buttons with increased readability features, options for text resizing and a beta for podcast transcripts.

The new features will be a part of an update that will begin rolling out in the coming weeks for Android and iOS users. The transcripts feature will currently be available for Spotify Original podcasts but it is being planned to include all podcasts in the future. Spotify also announced during the Google I/O keynote that it will soon let users download playlists and podcasts on Wear OS devices.



FEATURES

BoomBocs

The sound of change is coming... If you love music then be prepared to hear it on a whole new level! The highly-skilled sound engineers at BoomBocs are bringing its users high definition audio via a portable speaker like no other.

Launching on 14th July on Indiegogo, BoomBocs are calling on all music lovers worldwide to unite and 'back the Bocs'. This is your chance to get your hands (and ears) on the ultimate wireless speaker system, synonymous with sound quality.

What is it?

BoomBocs ACADEMY is a premium quality wireless speaker that enables you to stream audio via WiFi, Bluetooth, DAB, FM radio, internet radio, USB and whole host of physical connections to wire into your more 'vintage' devices.

**Who is
BoomBocs?**



Chips

The global chip shortage disrupting the car industry and threatening the supply of consumer technology products will last for at least another year, one of the world's largest electronics contract manufacturers has warned

The forecast from Flex, the world's third-biggest such manufacturer, is one of the gloomiest yet for a crisis that is forcing car and consumer electronics groups to re-examine their global supply chains. A rapid rebound in vehicle sales combined with a lockdown-driven boom in games consoles, laptops and televisions has left the world's chipmakers overwhelmed by the sharp increase in demand.

Singapore based Flex has more than 100 sites in 30 countries and manufactures devices and electronics for companies including Ford, British household appliances designer Dyson, UK online grocer Ocado and US computer and printer maker HP. Its position in the supply chain makes it a large buyer of chips. Flex's Lynn Torrel said some manufacturers were expecting shortages to continue into 2023.

Peter Prato Lynn Torrel, Flex's chief procurement and supply chain officer, said that the manufacturers it relies on for semiconductors have pushed back their forecasts for when the shortage will end. "With such strong demand, the expectation is mid to late 2022 depending on the commodity. Some are expecting [shortages to continue] into 2023," she said. The forecast from Flex, which sits at the heart of the supply chains for the car, medical devices and consumer electronics industries, follows a bruising six months during which shortages have forced car companies to scale back production and furlough staff.

The potential disruption of decentralised finance issue has led many companies to adopt a more assertive approach to sourcing, such as paying for chips in advance. Tesla, the US electric-car maker, has explored buying a chip plant outright. Electronics manufacturers in Asia have also recently warned that the chip shortage was beginning to spread to TVs, smartphones and home appliances, with the situation made worse through stockpiling by Chinese groups hit by sanctions. Pandemic-related problems with supply chains have been compounded by the blocking of the Suez Canal in March, the extreme cold weather in Texas, and a recent fire at a large chip factory in Japan. Revathi Advaiti, chief executive of Flex, said the disruption wrought by the pandemic was prompting its multinational customers to take a far more serious look at restructuring their supply chains than the trade war between

Shortage to last until at least mid-2022, warns manufacturer

the US and China ever did. This could include making them more regional, she added “Most companies won’t make a decision to regionalise just on tariffs,” she said. “They know it could be a short-term thing but things like the pandemic and escalation of shipping costs that impact the total cost of ownership drives regionalisation”. New York-listed Flex, which recorded \$24.2bn in revenues last year and has manufacturing facilities evenly split between Europe, Asia and the Americas, has been forced to interrupt production for a wide range of electronics products.

Chipmakers are investing in new production capacity but it can take up to two years to set up the complex facilities. Torrel said the picture could improve if Covid-19 vaccinations cause consumer spending to shift towards services and people spend less money on consumer electronics as the world recovers from the pandemic. However, she cautioned that seemingly small problems (such as a recent two-week lockdown in Malaysia where many semiconductor suppliers are based) can have an outsized effect on supply chains already under pressure.

Did you know?

Inverto’s 2021 best seller product comprises a Broadcom chipset. The company has confirmed the gloomy forecast for at least the first half of 2022!

2021 BEST SELLER

High Performance, low-power,
fully programmable Unicable ® LNB



AUDIO

Apple

At WWDC 2021 in June, Apple confirmed that tvOS 15 will bring with it support for Spatial Audio using Apple's AirPods Max and AirPods Pro. The feature will work with stereo, 5.1, 7.1, and Dolby Atmos content.

Spatial Audio on Apple TV will work to create a cinema-style soundstage in your headphones so that no matter which way you turn your head it will always seem like the source of the sound is in front of you as if you were sitting in a movie theatre.



**Apple TV
Spatial Audio
will know when
you've stood up
to get popcorn**

This is one of the Spatial Audio's coolest features (which will disable if you decide to stand up and grab some popcorn or just want to get up and stretch). The feature will then reactivate once your AirPods detect you've sat down again. This will hopefully stop any wild disorientation that might come from standing up whilst locked into Spatial Audio and means you can still hear your movie clearly. Although you could always just pause whatever you're watching.

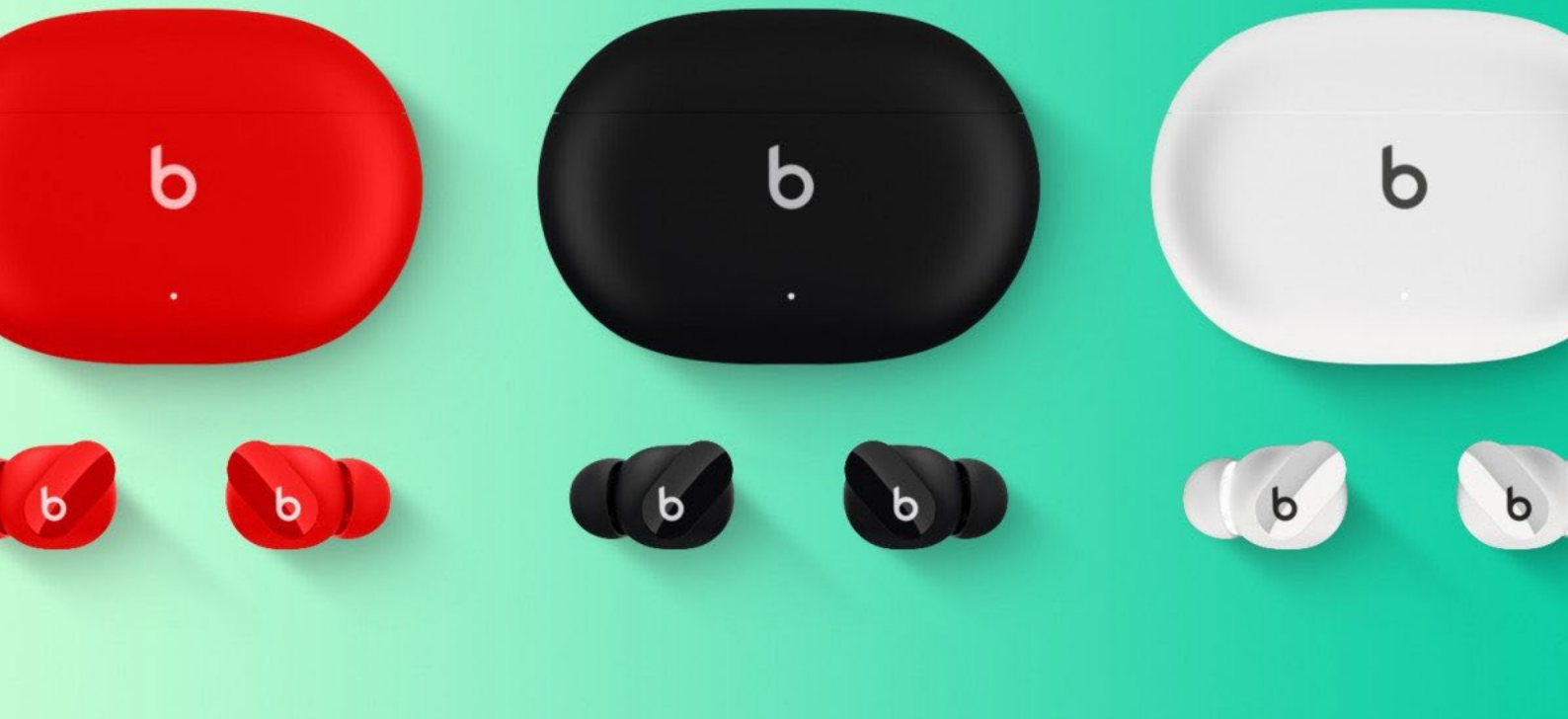
tvOS 15 also brings support for SharePlay, which will also be available on iOS 15 and iPadOS 15, as well as new Siri media commands and HomeKit upgrades. tvOS 15 will work on the Apple TV HD, Apple TV 4K (2017), and the new Apple TV 4K (2021), which is already available discounted in these early best Prime Day Apple TV deals.

Did you know?

**Inverto's Unifiber™ range
of products carries optimal
4k UHD video signals over
Fiber To The Home**

Unifiber™ dSCR Optical Receiver
with 2x Legacy/dCSR and 2x DTT outputs





Beats

The Beats Studio Buds have been Apple's worst kept secret. Star athletes have been wearing them around town, while photos and technical documents about them leaked a month ago; pretty much everyone knew about these earbuds well before their announcement.

The Beats Studio Buds are rock solid true wireless earbuds with active noise cancellation and support for Apple's Spatial Audio with Dolby Atmos format. They sound great, with a lively sound quality that elevates the highs and lows of the audio spectrum, and feel supremely comfortable to wear for long periods of time.

Battery life with either ANC or Transparency mode turned on is a little short at only five hours (15 hours with the case), and their noise cancellation isn't exactly class-leading but overall these are our favorite Beats earbuds in a very long time and could pose a real threat to the recently crowned new king of true wireless earbuds, the Sony WF-1000XM4.

The Beats Studio Buds are available to pre-order now, with an official release date to be confirmed; all Apple has said so far is "this summer". So anytime between now and the end of August.

The Beats Studio Buds will cost \$149.99 / £129.99 / AU\$199.95. That puts them well below the price of any Apple

**Hands on:
Beats Studio
Buds review**

AirPods that have been released to date. Unlike the last true wireless earbuds from Beats, the Beats Powerbeats Pro, the Beats Studio Buds come in a case that's almost as sleek and small as the earbuds themselves. The case is egg-shaped, not unlike that of the new Google Pixel Buds Series-A, and features a single USB-C port on the bottom and a status LED on the front.

Pop it open and you'll find the earbuds themselves. To pull them out, you pinch on the outer control panel and pull them up. The control panel is raised, and that helps the buds slip firmly into the ear without any over-ear hooks or a fin that pushes against the outer ear. The buds then sit almost flush with the ear, and while you won't be able to wear them to sleep (they stick out a bit too far for that), they're still supremely comfortable.

Inside the box, all you'll find are a USB-C to USB-C charging cable and additional eartips. Disappointingly, all of the included eartips are silicone instead of foam. They only come in two extra sizes but you should have everything you need to get a proper seal.

Beats designed the Studio Buds to work with both Apple and Android phones with just a tap. All you need to do is open the case near either device and you'll see them pop up on your screen, ready to pair.

According to Beats, the Buds are using Bluetooth 5.2, and support both Find My in iOS and Find My Device in Android. That's good, because the earbuds themselves are pretty small and, if you get the all-black color, can be pretty easy to misplace if they accidentally drop behind the bed... not that we're speaking from experience.

Once you've got the right fit, it's time to turn the earbuds on and give them a listen. For our testing, we paired them with an iPhone 11 Pro and turned on Apple Music, which now supports Spatial Audio with Dolby Atmos and Lossless Audio.

While you won't be able to get the full effect of Lossless Audio with the Buds (Bluetooth compression ruins the lossless nature of the music), you can still use them to play songs with Spatial Audio and it sounds great. Unlike previous Beats earbuds and headphones that blasted you with thumping bass, the Studio Buds have a lively sound quality that elevates both the high and low end of the mix. The result is toe tapping, head bobbing music that doesn't fatigue you, but engages you for long periods at a time.

As for the noise-cancelling aspect of the earbuds, it's a great inclusion and performs moderately well, although Beats still has some work to do to catch up with the likes of Sony and Bose, each of which has years of experience tinkering with the design, processor and noise cancellation algorithm, to make its Buds keep the maximum amount of noise out of your ears.

To that end, it feels like the Studio Buds will be a great office companion; keeping the dull roar of office conversation to a minimum but likely struggling to be heard over the jet engine on an airplane or the ear-shaking rattles of a subway car. Of course, thanks to lockdown restrictions it's been a while since we've been on either, so that's something we'll have to put to the test before we pass a final verdict on the Studio Buds.

Our other slight issue is that the battery life leaves something to be desired. They're only good for five hours per charge, or 15 hours with the case, when you have either ANC or Transparency mode turned on.

That's not awful, and it certainly falls in line with other noise-cancelling earbuds, but it falls short of class-leaders like the WF-1000XM4, which offer eight hours per charge and another 12 in the case for a total of 20 hours before you need to go back on the charger.

Additionally the Beats Studio Buds don't support wireless charging, which isn't a deal breaker but can be a minor inconvenience if you already have a charging pad setup for your other devices. The good news is that the Studio Buds do support fast-charging, and can be juiced with one hour of playback time from just five minutes on the charger.

In the short time we've spent with them the Beats Studio Buds have proven to be a consistently reliable and comfortable pair of true wireless earbuds. Their fun and lively sound quality and their support for Spatial Audio has made them our go-to earbuds for listening to Apple Music for the last week and a half and they seem to hold up pretty well against the class-leading Sony WF-1000XM4.

The cross-platform support for both Android and iOS is surprisingly wonderful and we appreciate the inclusion of active noise cancellation; even if Beats still has some work to do in this area.

The battery life could be better and you'll have to make sure you don't lose these tiny little buds but otherwise we're really enjoying our time with the new Beats Studio Buds and we think you'll enjoy them too.

Did you know?

Inverto's Indy Pro 7 offers Active Noise Cancellation!

Indy PRO 7

True Wireless Stereo Earbuds
with optimized Active Noise Cancelling (ANC)



IKEA + SONOS

Everyone has a song that takes them back to a memory. IKEA's latest speakers go one step further. As part of a growing array of SYMFONISK speakers with audio product maker Sonos, the furniture giant has rolled out a “Wi-Fi speaker and a picture frame in one” that is meant to blend into your home, just like its other “invisible” speakers.

**IKEA Unveils
A Picture
Frame That
Doubles As
A Speaker**



The SYMFONISK picture frame, which comes in black and white options, can be hung on the wall or supported with a base. IKEA lauds the speaker’s “fantastic sound,” available to stream via Apple’s Airplay 2 or Spotify Connect.

However, the listing’s limited images don’t show a slot to fit your photos in, so it could really just be a home accent masquerading as a picture frame. With its LED light panel, the speaker aims to harmonize the senses of sight and sound. To switch on the SYMFONISK picture frame, you’ll simply need to plug it into a power outlet. Volume and other controls can be toggled through the accompanying SONOS S2 app, which will also be used to automatically update the speaker’s software. IKEA said it could not have been able to design the waif-like speaker on its own.

“IKEA and Sonos are a really good combination to help more people enjoy streamed music and podcasts without speakers that steal space,” described IKEA Home Smart product developer Stjepan Begic. “We challenge each other and find new solutions.” Sara Morris, Sonos’ Senior Principal Product Manager shared, “By working together with the designers we were able to keep the thin edge of the picture frame while hiding a deeper acoustic volume behind it. Together with a waveguide, this lets us make [a] big room-filling sound from what looks like a thin speaker”. That visual simplicity might be its strength but

it's not the only one. This US\$199 picture frame, as are IKEA's other SYMFONISK speakers, can be integrated with Sonos speakers to create a larger sound system, whether you'd like a serenade or a whole orchestra, that's your call.

**SONOS
ENTERS
THE CAR
AUDIO
INDUSTRY**

AUDI + SONOS

Audi and Sonos have quietly partnered on in-car audio, Sonos' first foray into automotive, with the technology first showing up in the new Q4 e-tron all-electric crossover. Audi previewed the cabin along with its augmented reality head-up display but it was a handful of surreptitious Sonos logos on the speaker grilles that caught the eye.



Bang and Olufsen

Bang and Olufsen's latest Bluetooth speaker is the Beosound Explore a \$199 (£169) speaker that's rated to run for 27 hours "at typical listening volumes" before needing a charge.

This is an impressive amount of battery life for a small (roughly 5 x 3 x 3 inch) Bluetooth speaker like this. For comparison, JBL's slightly larger Charge 5 speaker goes for 20 hours, while even the much larger UE Hyperboom tops out at 24 hours.

Bang and Olufsen tells me that the Beosound Explore's battery life is thanks to a couple of things. It is one of the first speakers to support the new Bluetooth 5.2 standard, which offers a more power efficient way to receive audio from your devices. This combines with the Explore's innards, which are tuned with power efficiency in mind. It means the speaker should get a lot of playback out of its modest 2,400 mAh battery. Beyond its battery life, the Beosound Explore offers a more

**Bang and
Olufsen's first
Bluetooth 5.2
speaker has
27 hours of
battery life**



typical range of features for a Bluetooth speaker. It is IP67 water resistant, so it should survive being briefly submerged. It supports being paired in stereo if you have two Explores, and it supports Apple, Google, and Microsoft's fast pairing standards. Charging is handled over USB-C and takes around two hours, the company says.

The Beosound Explore is available from today in black and green, with a gray model following this summer.

Cell Alpha

Christopher Stringer, an ex-Apple designer who worked on everything from the HomePod to the original iPhone during his 22 year-stint at the company, has unveiled his new startup's debut speaker. It is called the Cell Alpha; a futuristic "Death Star" shaped connected speaker with an emphasis on spatial audio. It costs \$1,799 or \$1,969 if you want the model with a floorstanding base.

The Cell Alpha has woofers on its top and bottom arranged into a "force-balanced" configuration. These are paired with three mid-range drivers that are distributed around its equator, where they're presumably joined by a small thermal exhaust port; the Cell Alpha's only known weakness. Jokes aside, Stringer's company 'Syng' claims this three-driver configuration (dubbed "The Triphone") is able to project sound with "pinpoint accuracy" around a room.

Syng is making big claims about the spatial audio capabilities of the Cell Alpha. It's styling it as the world's first "Triphonic" speaker, because it offers spatial audio capabilities beyond the stereo audio that's long been the traditional standard. In practical terms it's supposed to allow the speaker to fill an entire room with surround sound audio, creating the impression that

**That's
no moon:
veteran Apple
designer
unveils
\$1,799 Cell
Alpha speaker**

specific sounds or instruments are coming from distinct areas of the room. There are three microphones built into the speaker's stand to measure the geometry of the space it's in, similar to the HomePod, which helps it create the impression of surround sound using just a single speaker.



While Syng says one speaker is capable of offering surround sound, anyone with \$5,397 to spend can pair three Cell Alpha speakers together in a single room to get “the fullest expression of Triphonic audio”. According to a report from the Financial Times, Syng hopes to generate revenue from licensing out its audio technology in addition to selling hardware.

In terms of connectivity, Syng says the Cell Alpha supports AirPlay 2 and Spotify Connect over Wi-Fi. Physical connectivity is handled by a pair of USB-C ports, and Syng also says it's planning on releasing a USB-C to HDMI cable to let the Cell Alpha connect to TVs (it can also output sound from a TV using AirPlay). A



companion Syng Space app is available for setup and playback control.

Syng currently has around 50 employees and is reported to have raised \$15 million in funding. The FT's report last year said these employees include ex-Apple designers and engineers, as well as former Nest, Ring, Nike and Facebook employees. Others have reportedly joined from the audio companies Harman and Bowers & Wilkins.

The Cell Alpha is available to purchase now from Syng's website. As of this writing, shipping is expected in six to eight weeks.

Naim

British audio purveyor Naim is today launching its 'Uniti Atom' Headphone Edition with AirPlay 2 support. According to Naim's website, these headphones "can transform any space into your own audio cocoon."

The Uniti Atom Headphone Edition, which is an optimized version of the Unit Atom, also features a 6.3mm and Balanced XDR and Pentagon outputs, plus it's compatible with an array of headphones.

Stream your own digital music library, favorite radio stations, podcasts and music from Spotify, Apple Music, Tidal, and Qobuz through your headphones without life disturbing you. Also wirelessly stream directly from all your devices via Apple AirPlay 2 and Chromecast built-in, plus connect other sources, from turntables to USB drives. Explore and curate all these choices via the Naim App.

The Uniti Atom Headphone Edition is also a compact streaming

**Naim launches
Uniti Atom
Headphone
Edition with
AirPlay 2
support**



pre-amplifier. The user just have to add active speakers or a power amplifier and speakers for an instant system.

“We have designed this special edition of the mighty Uniti Atom to be the premium music streaming system for solo listening. Just add headphones to escape into your own world of high-quality sound,” said Paul Neville, Naim research & development director.

Apart from AirPlay 2, users can also connect other devices via digital inputs such as turntables. Audio can be played at up to 32bit/384kHz resolution. The Naim app makes it easy to control the Uniti Atom Headphone Edition and even link up to other music system arounds the user’s home. The app shows all your music, including your favorite radio stations, streaming services and playlists. Additionally they explore artist discographies and biographies.

Uniti Atom Headphone Edition works seamlessly with other Naim streaming products, including Mu-so systems as well. Naim’s Uniti Atom Headphone Edition is available now and will sell for \$3,290, £2,399, or €2,899.

After waiting almost five decades, we finally get a Naim turntable. The Solstice is a fascinating mix of clever engineering and fuss-free operation. The introductory run of 500 units is only available as a package, which includes the turntable (complete with arm and cartridge), a phono stage and a dedicated power supply.

You also get a bespoke accessory set, which includes essentials such as a digital stylus gauge, spirit level and hex tools to set up the deck, along with a special Naim-produced record and a book on the company’s history and the Solstice’s development. The price for all this loveliness is £16,000 / \$20,000 / AU\$32,000.

**The Naim
Solstice
Special
Edition**



EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS

IBC

Last month the show's organizers had said they planned to have the event in September as scheduled, but also that they had plans in place to allow the option of pushing back to December if necessary; they've now triggered the latter option.

So the show at the RAI Amsterdam Convention Centre will take place Dec. 3 to 6.

IBC CEO Michael Crimp said that, against a background of optimism about the pandemic, the show board met yesterday. "We are pleased to announce we've decided to hold IBC 2021 in December. The reasons are mainly safety and readiness to engage."

This year's event is expected to have more of a festival feel, with a large perimeter to the site that will enable attendees to move around more freely. Attendees are to have their temperatures checked, and there is to be no physical onsite registration.

Crimp said those plans are still in place, though they could be eased if the health environment improves further in the interim. Crimp said surveys of the show community showed sentiment for the December date.

He said the decision will allow "more vaccinations, clearer systems and more confidence." He characterized the later date as the "strongest of two [schedule] opportunities."

"We also had to consider the ability of the supply chain to deliver a high-quality event. We believe that key services such as airports and airlines, and hotels will have established smooth operations and be able to provide a more streamlined service by December."

Prebook your meeting at: sales@inverto.tv

VISIT US
HALL 1 / STAND D65

**IBC
Postponed
to December
2021**



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