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Subject: Speakers for review

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Inline-Images: image001.jpg; image002.jpg; image003.jpg; image004.png

Features and Setup

In essence, the Z-5450s are much like other high-end PC speakers. They feature a powered subwoofer with integrated amplifier, a control module/decoder unit, and five satellites. The system's total output is 315 watts RMS, which is more than enough for a PC setup or small living room. The subwoofer cranks out 116 watts, the front satellites 38 watts, the center is 42 watts, and the wireless rear speakers 40.5 watts.

The decoder is a pretty good piece of kit, really. It has three 1/8-inch stereo jack inputs for analog 6-channel sound, a coaxial digital input, and two optical inputs. That last point should light up the faces of console enthusiasts: Finding a speaker system with enough digital inputs to accept your DVD player, cable or satellite set top box, and console can be a challenge. There's also an extra 1/8-inch stereo line input jack and headphone output jack; the system will shut off speakers and switch to stereo mode automatically when headphones are plugged in.

The system supports Dolby Digital, DTS, and DTS 24/96 decoding, as well as uncompressed PCM up through 24-bit 96KHz. We should note that with 24/96 material, the rear speaker signal is down sampled to 48KHz, but we didn't really notice much of a difference in our subjective listening tests. Dolby Pro Logic II is also supported, with both Movie and Music playback modes.



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Setup is about as easy as with any other PC 5.1 system. In fact, with the wireless surround speakers, it's a little easier. In truth, you can't really call the rear speakers "wireless," as they each need to be plugged into an AC outlet. They just operate on a wireless signal from the decoder rather than using speaker wires. This makes it a lot easier to find just the right place to put them

without concern that the wires won't reach. All five satellites can have their bases reversed with a few turns of a screwdriver, turning them into wall-mounting brackets.



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The rear speakers operate on a 2.4GHz frequency and are meant to be used within 28 feet of the decoder unit, though some users might be able to get much greater range. Note that 2.4Ghz is enough for uncompressed CD quality audio, though not quite enough for 24-bit, 96KHz data.

To be honest, we don't find the range limitation a problem. These are near-field speakers, and aren't designed or intended to really fill a large room. For that, you need a more substantial home-theater setup. Though the 2.4GHz

band is very popular and could cause interference with everything from wireless routers to microwaves and some new cordless phones, we had exactly zero problems in hours of testing. Our environment isn't exactly what you would call "clean" from a wireless signal point of view, too. The apartment we tested in is surrounded by neighbors and their gadgets, uses an active 801.11g router, a wireless phone, and some wireless PC peripherals in the same room as well as the room next door. Again, we never experienced even the slightest hiccup, sound delay, or distortion from the satellites.

The remote is basic but functional. You can adjust the volume, the subwoofer, center, and surround levels, choose between the inputs, and change surround mode. [Continued...](#)

