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Best audio tech at CES 2023: next-gen soundbars, headphones and earbuds

By [Hamish Hector](#) last updated 6 January 2023

The best audio gadgets we've seen so far at CES 2023



(Image credit: JBL)



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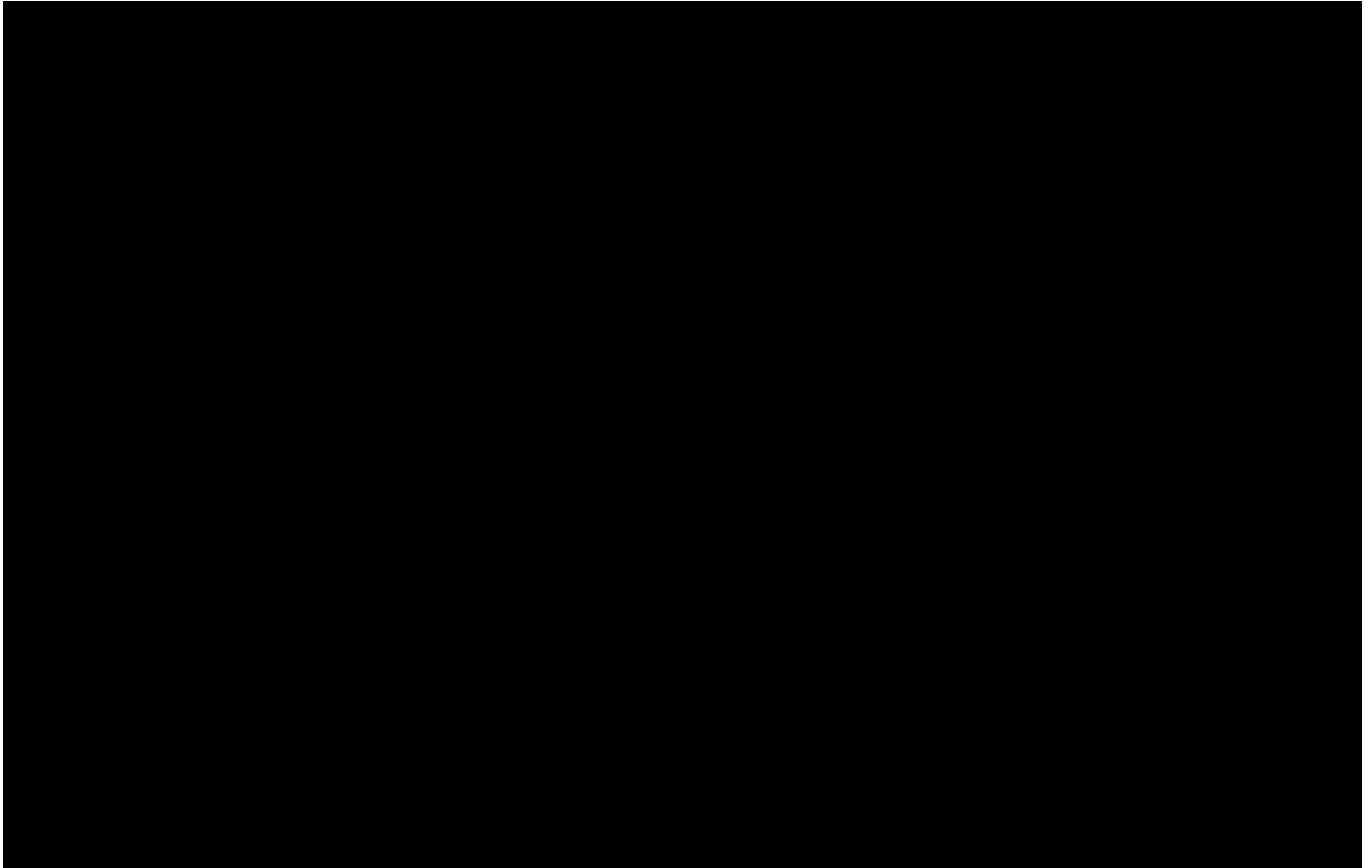
Following a few years of uncertainty and virtual-only conferences, [CES 2023](#) is taking the tech show back to its full in-person glory. It's already treated to us to a while heap of tech announcements, including a look at some of this year's best audio gadgets – and we've rounded up the best ones we've seen so far.

CES 2023 proper begins on Thursday, January 5, and over the course of the event, the likes of LG, Sonos, Sony, and others will be showing off their latest audio tech. The treats they have on display will be vying for a spot on our [best headphones](#), [best soundbars](#), and [best wireless earbuds](#) lists when they launch later this year. By following the announcements as they happen you can decide if they're worth waiting for, or if you'd rather grab last year's model right way.

With the show's media previews now in full swing, we've rounded up the most exciting audio tech announcements we've seen at CES 2023 so far – along with a taste of what else you can expect to see as the show fully kicks off.

Speakers and turntables

If you're looking for ways to improve your speaker or home audio setup, then CES 2023 is the place to find inspiration as we're being treated to a variety of sound systems during the show.



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The Acer Halo Swing (Image credit: Acer)

A case in point is the **Acer Halo Swing** (above), a glowing portable smart speaker that uses Google Assistant. We'll have to listen to this device's performance for ourselves to judge it properly, but Acer's promise of 360-degree audio and subwoofer-boosted bass line is certainly enticing. It also comes with a 10-hour battery life and an IPX5 water resistance rating – which means it should survive a slight drizzle, even if you won't want this thing too close to the pool.

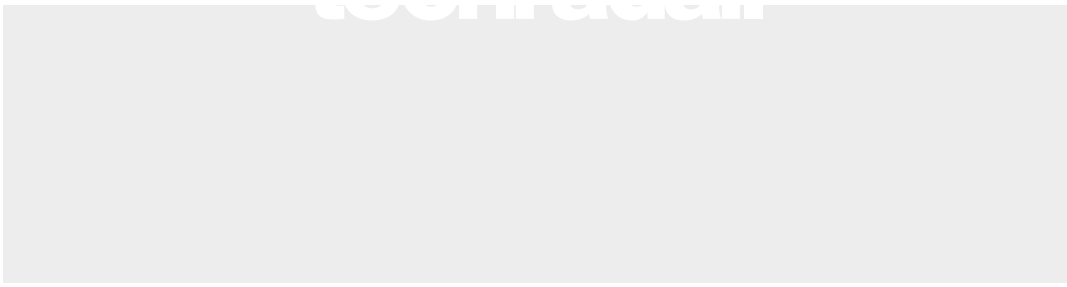


The JBL Spinner BT turntable (Image credit: JBL)

Elsewhere, in turntable-land [JBL has announced its first Bluetooth turntable](#), which delivers aptX wireless streaming so you can stream your vinyl to wireless speakers, soundbars, or headphones in 24-bit hi-res audio. The **JBL Spinner BT** (above) looks rather fancy with its black-and-orange color scheme and is one of the most affordable turntables of its kind, with a price tag of £399 / £375 (around AU\$660). It'll be available from the third quarter of 2023.

If you're looking for something more vintage-looking the **JBL TT350 Classic** is a direct drive turntable with a heavy die-cast aluminum platter and curved aluminum tonearm, which comes with a "high-quality" Audio-Technica moving magnet cartridge in a removable headshell – and all for just \$1,000 / £925 (around AU\$1,630).





A Focal Vestia No 3 speaker pair (Image credit: Focal)

So far, CES has been a traditional hi-fi lover's dream and that trend is continued by Focal with its new [Vesta and Hestia-inspired range](#) of speakers. These classic-looking old-school speakers have a gloriously understated design, with leather-effect and wood finishes meant to suit any living space, and sonically we expect they'll perform very well – provided you [set the speakers up properly to get the best sound](#).

US and Australian prices are yet to be finalized, but the **Vestia N°1** (a compact bookshelf model) is £799 per pair, which is around \$960 or AU\$1,400. Meanwhile, the **Vestia N°2** (a "first step" three-way floor-standing model) comes in at £1,799 per pair (around \$2,160 or AU\$3,160); the **Vestia N°3** (the next-level three-way floor-standing model) is £2,399 per pair; the **Vestia N°4** (a 3-way floor-standing model which adds two 21cm woofers) is £2,599 per pair; and the **Vestia CC** (the two-way center channel model for surround sound setups) is going for £449 (around \$530 / AU\$790).



The Sound Burger is back... again (Image credit: Audio-Technica)

Or if that's not old-school enough, CES 2023 saw Audio-Technica [re-release its iconic Sound Burger turntable](#). Last November Audio-Technica released a limited-edition version of its Sound Burger portable turntable – four decades after its original debut – but the retro red gadget sold out in a matter of days worldwide.

Thanks to the overwhelming response, and chorus of fans who could not purchase the limited-edition model, the company has announced that the product will return in the spring of 2023. So if you missed out on its first return you have another shot. The new model will be much more accessible according to Audio-Technica. However, it confirmed that “the new model coming in the spring will not feature the 60th anniversary numbered badge, color, and packaging of the limited-edition version.”

The Sound Burger can wirelessly connect to Bluetooth headphones or speakers for up to 12 hours of record listening – though it does come with an RCA audio cable for wired connections too – and it offers belt-driven playback of 33-1/3 and 45 RPM records. It’s not yet clear exactly how much the re-rereleased Sound Burger will cost, but the limited edition model was \$199 / £200 (around AU\$300) so expect something about that price.

Soundbars

Upgrading your soundbar can bring some major improvements to your home entertainment setup, and CES 2023 is already delivering several gadgets that could be just what you need.

The image shows the TechRadar logo in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font, centered on a light gray rectangular background.

The LG SC95 soundbar in front of an LG TV (Image credit: LG)

LG has announced its **brand-new SC9 and SE6 soundbar models** which boast **Dolby Atmos** and **IMAX Enhanced audio** that will allow the soundbar’s multidirectional speakers to create an immersive soundstage.

What’s more, LG is boasting its 2023 will be more impressive than ever thanks to their new Triple Sound Technology; using AI and various speaker tricks, the soundbar can optimize its

audio for the space it's in and add in virtual mid-layers that help you better lose yourself in the action.

We'll have to preview these soundbars for ourselves to know if they live up to the hype, but we're definitely excited by what LG has revealed.

With conferences from TCL, Samsung, Sony, and several other home entertainment brands also on the cards, we'll likely be introduced to several other soundbar options over the coming days, so be sure to check back for our thoughts and the latest news.

The image shows the TechRadar logo in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font, centered on a light gray rectangular background.

(Image credit: Samsung)

Samsung is also getting in on the soundbar action with its new suite of Q-Symphony-supporting Dolby Atmos soundbars. Its latest flagship, the **Samsung HW-Q990C**, is an 11.1.4-channel speaker setup (the bar comes with an additional two rear speakers and a wireless subwoofer) that use Q-Symphony 3.0 to leverage up to 22 total audio channels (when paired to some of the [best Samsung TVs](#)) to deliver the best audio performance possible. The end result, according to Samsung, is sound that's "more detailed and three-dimensional" than anything users have experienced from their home entertainment setup before.

The HW-Q990C also relies on its SpaceFit Sound Pro and Adaptive Sound 2.0 features to create a more realistic soundstage and optimize its performance based on the content that's being played respectively.

The South Korean tech giant also showed off the **HW-S800B soundbar** – a 3.1.2-channel soundbar setup that includes an ultra-slim bar and a subwoofer – which boasts many of the same features as the HW-Q990C in a smaller and slightly less sonically capable package.

Last but not least Samsung unveiled the gaming-focused **HW-G60C soundbar** that's designed to be used with a PC. Alongside Dolby Atmos-audio this speaker sports echo-canceling microphones that can isolate users' voices for in-game chat as well as RGB lighting so you bask in its neon glow while you demonstrate your gaming prowess.

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(Image credit: JBL)

Not to be outdone, JBL has also unveiled its Dolby Atmos soundbar offerings for 2023 with three new models.

Its most premium model is the **Bar 1300X** soundbar an 11.1.4 speaker setup that uses six upfiring drivers, DTS:X, and Harman MultiBeam to produce enhanced spatial audio than more-budget friendly options. You'll also get a 12-inch subwoofer to power up the bass tones of the content you're enjoying and, just like the other two JBL soundbars announced at CES this year, you'll get two detachable rear speakers as well – the ends of the soundbar can be removed to position the wireless units wherever you please.

JBL's other soundbars the 7.1.4-channel **Bar 1000** and 5.1.2-channel **Bar 700** come with 10-inch subwoofers and pack four and two up-firing drivers respectively. They both support many of the same features as the Bar 1300X (though the Bar 700 lacks MultiBeam) just in a less driver-packed system.

All three soundbars will launch on February 19 with the Bar 1300X costing \$1,699.95 (around £1,400 / AU\$2,500), the Bar 1000 costing \$899.95 (about £745 / AU\$1,300), and the Bar 700 setting you back \$599.95 (about £500 / AU\$875).

Headphones and Earbuds

CES 2023 won't just be home to booming speakers; earbuds and headphones will also likely get their time in the spotlight during this year's event.

JBL often comes to CES with several announcements up its sleeve and that's been the case again in 2023. Its **JBL Tour Pro 2** wireless earbuds, which have a touchscreen on their charging case and are interesting if sonically flawed AirPods Pro rival, will now be launched in the US for \$249.95.

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The JBL Tour Pro 2 earbuds (Image credit: TechRadar)

They're also far from the only earbuds that JBL has announced at CES. Its mid-range Tune series have seen three new arrivals, which all bring different designs and will be available from June 2023 for \$100.

The **JBL Tune Buds** are noise-cancelling stemless buds with 12 hours of playback. If you'd prefer some noise-canceling ANC earbuds with a stick design, there's the new **JBL Tune Beam**. Alternatively, there are the **JBL Tune Flex** open earbuds with a stick design, which will take on the [Apple AirPods 3](#).

The image shows the TechRadar logo in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font, centered on a light gray rectangular background.



The JBL Tune Flex earbuds (Image credit: JBL)

If you're on a budget and don't mind missing out on noise-canceling tech, there are also three new additions to the JBL Vibe series that'll be available from February 2023. Fans of stemless designs will be able to pick up the **JBL Vibe Buds**, which promise eight hours of playback. The **JBL Vibe Beam** deliver noise isolation with a stick design, while the **JBL Vibe Flex** are equivalent for those who prefer open earbuds.

Or if you're looking for something that's not from JBL you might like the **OnePlus Buds Pro 2 earbuds**. This gadget isn't being shown off at CES but it has only just been announced and makes for an ideal companion to the brand-new **OnePlus 11 smartphone**. Until we have a chance to hear the OnePlus Buds Pro 2 ourselves we'll have to reserve judgment, but on paper, things look very good indeed.



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The Sennheiser Conversation Clear Plus earbuds (Image credit: Sennheiser)

If you have difficulty hearing in crowded places then you might find that Sennheiser's new earbuds are just what you need. The aptly named **Conversation Clear Plus** buds feature both active noise cancellation and advanced speech enhancement which allow the gadget to filter out or amplify specific sounds. In Relax mode they'll tune everything out, while in Communication mode the buds can filter out unwanted noise while boosting the clarity of

nearby voices. They also function as typical wireless earbuds offering nine hours of use on a single charge or up to 27 thanks to the charging case, and while we haven't given these earbuds a listen we expect they'll perform well given our experience with Sennheiser's other audio products.

The only downside is that Sennheiser's new earbuds will cost you about \$850 / £750 (around AU\$1,250) – that's significantly more than anything on our best wireless earbuds list. We imagine it's because Sennheiser wants to position these buds as a cheaper alternative to typical hearing aids, but it's yet to be seen if the audio-enhancing features of the Conversation Clear Plus can achieve what's expected of such devices. If you want to try them out for yourselves they're up for preorder now and will launch on January 20.

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(Image credit: Audio-Technica)

Audio-Technica isn't just releasing its classic products (see the Sound Burger turntable above) it's also launching all-new gadgets like the ATH-M50xSTS and ATH-M50xSTS-USB streaming headsets.

These cans are designed to meet the specific needs of live-streaming content creators – they're outfitted with the same 45mm drivers that feature in the [ATH-M50x headphones](#) (which we gave a four-star review) and a cardioid condenser capsule on a flexible arm to capture audio. They'll also come packaged with two interchangeable earpads; there are the M50x earpads that focus on audio quality and sound isolation, and the mesh and leatherette earpads that boast better breathability and comfort.

All-in-one devices can't always match the performance of distinct devices – so you might want to check out one of the [best microphones](#) if you're after the highest-quality recordings – but they can offer a more versatile package that may be a better fit for your streaming

setup. US and Australia pricing hasn't been announced yet, but they've [launched in the UK](#) with the ATH-M50xSTS retailing at £169 (around \$200 / AU\$300) and the ATH-M50xSTS-USB selling for £199 (about \$235 / AU\$350).

Hi-Fi accessories

If you already have a solid speaker setup you might instead prefer gadgets like **Amp Genie**. It's intended to make it much easier to sync up an audio source with your receiver of choice including Yamaha, Denon, and Sonos devices. There's always a slew of CES gadgets designed to solve annoying issues with your other devices, so be sure to follow the announcements and our coverage to see if 2023 is the year your audio tech becomes hassle-free.

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The Naim NSC222 and NAP 250 will enhance your home's audio setup (Image credit: Naim)

Alternatively, you could opt for one of the [new products from Hi-Fi veteran Naim](#) which is releasing three components for its Classic range to celebrate its 50th anniversary. The **NSC 222 streaming preamplifier** lets you seamlessly pair [Spotify](#), [Tidal](#), or even one of the [best turntables](#) with your speaker setup; the **NAP 250 power amplifier** is a great partner for the NSC 222, delivering 100W per channel for better performance and power; and lastly, the **NPX 300 power supply** can be added to the setup to reduce the noise floor for cleaner power from your audio system. The Naim Audio NSC 222, NAP 250, and NPX 300 are available to order now, with a suggested retail price of \$8,999 / £5,700 (around AU\$13,000) each

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Hamish is a Staff Writer for TechRadar and you'll see his name appearing on articles across nearly every topic on the site from smart home deals to speaker reviews to graphics card news and everything in between. He uses his broad range of knowledge to help explain the latest gadgets and if they're a must-buy or a fad fueled by hype. Though his specialty is writing about everything going on in the world of virtual reality and augmented reality.

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