

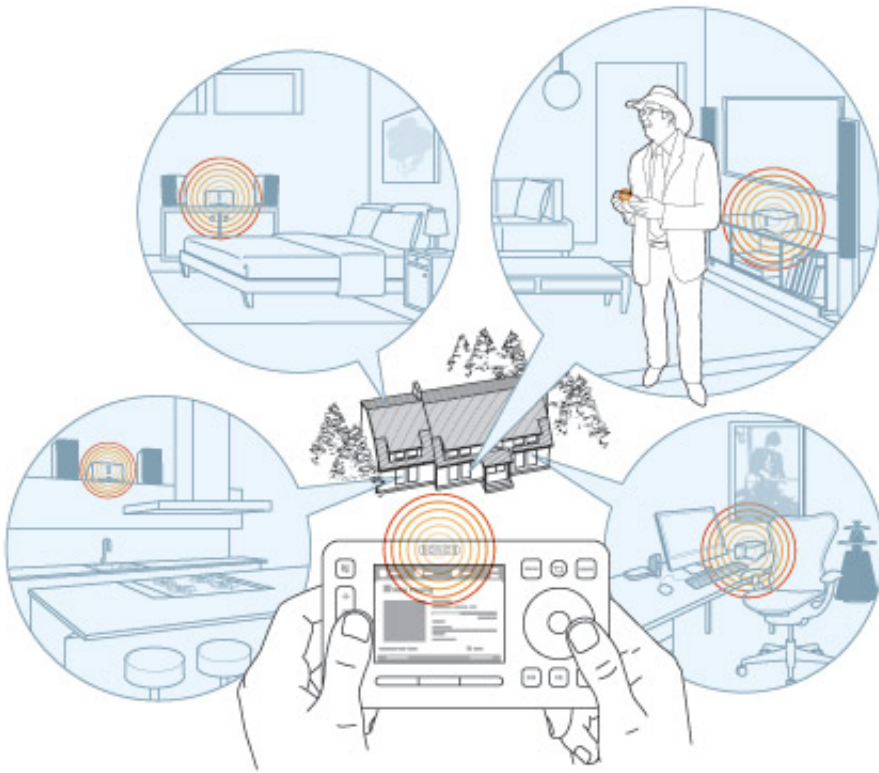
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The One Device that Will Solve Your Home Audio Needs

The Sonos Music System multi-room audio suite will change the way you listen to music. But only if you take it out of your closet.

By: Barry Sonnenfeld



You can't imagine how many of my friends are amazed when I show them what the Sonos multiroom music system actually does. Like me, usually they've heard about it, but they don't get why I need a box to connect my iPod to an AV system. It turns out that Sonos (\$999 for two-room system with controller; sonos.com) is the most misunderstood electronic device I've ever tested. In fact, it sat in my closet for six months before I ran out of things to do one weekend and decided to check it out. Now I own Sonos systems in both my homes, as well as in my offices. Along with my BlackBerry and Lenovo, it may be one of the electronic devices I can't do without.

Sonos connects to your existing stereo equipment (or you can add speakers to a Sonos receiver with a built-in amplifier and use it as a stand-alone system) and lets you stream music wirelessly throughout the house. You can install up to 32 units, creating what Sonos refers to as zones. Each can

access music on your computer or MP3 player, but better than that, Sonos can play music from Web sites like Last.fm or Pandora, satellite and Internet radio, or — the way I use it most — a Rhapsody or Napster music subscription. Zones can be combined or discrete, so I can listen to my recently discovered reggae tribute to the Rolling Stones in every room or to nonstop Neil Young in my home office while Chloe (the kid) listens to the Sirius top 20 in her bedroom. For our annual New Year's Eve party in Telluride, Colorado, we queued up enough music for more hours of dancing than the limited amount of oxygen 10,000 feet of altitude allows for. While the adults wheezed their way through Cannibal & the Headhunters, the kids were listening to Kanye West in the den.

Recently Sonos added some major upgrades. Along with the somewhat cumbersome \$400 controller, now you can operate your system via a free software app on your Apple iPhone or iPod Touch. It's much faster, since it uses a touch screen instead of the old-fashioned scroll wheel. The other big addition is access to more than 15,000 free radio stations throughout the world. When Sweetie (the wife) and I were especially fearful of a McCain/Palin victory, we would listen to stations from Cape Town and Vancouver, two of our top choices for relocation.

With all of these options and our Rhapsody subscription (\$13 a month; \$15 if you want to download any of the five million songs to an MP3 player), Sweetie and I are always finding new music to listen to. Sweetie will come home

after hearing a singer interviewed on NPR in the car (by the way, just type "Diane Rehm" into the Sonos controller and you can start listening to her show on the next available radio station), and 30 seconds later we'll be listening to the singer throughout the house while I shake martinis and Sweetie sautés bay scallops. And if we hate it, we just dial in another recent discovery: a reggae tribute album to Bob Dylan.

Barry Sonnenfeld is a television producer and the director of Men in Black and Get Shorty.

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