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Subject: Build or buy....which is cheaper?

Posted by [sjaguar13](#) on Sun, 14 Sep 2003 02:15:35 GMT

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I'm looking to get a bunch of speaker cabinets. Would it be better to build them or just buy them?

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Subject: Re: Build or buy....which is cheaper?

Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Sun, 14 Sep 2003 06:47:32 GMT

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I suppose it depends on who builds them, and with what process. By "process," I mean the methods used, such as assembly-line or job-shop, and with or without labor-intensive finishes. You can build good cabinets yourself for very little money. Wood stock is not very expensive. Sometimes finish woods are expensive but what generally costs the most is the labor to build the cabinets and the loudspeaker components to populate them.

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Subject: Re: Build or buy....which is cheaper?

Posted by [wunhuanglo](#) on Sun, 14 Sep 2003 07:59:23 GMT

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I had read some years ago that with "typical consumer speakers" (like the stuff sold at Best Buy) the target component of the retail price was in cardboard boxes and shipping costs. I wasn't overly surprised when I recently made an inquiry to Bill Martinelli about reproducing a pair of cabinets that even with the kind of one-off craftsmanship that goes into his stuff, shipping expenses would have been about 40% of the total cost. Might be that the biggest business opportunities in audio are in shipping speakers, not building them.

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Subject: Re: Build or buy....which is cheaper?

Posted by [Wayne Parham](#) on Sun, 14 Sep 2003 08:35:27 GMT

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Shipping is expensive enough when using a common courier like UPS but when the speakers are large and have to be sent via LTL trucking, the prices can get really expensive. A few years back, it was not uncommon for me to spend \$500 to ship a pair of \$600 speakers. So the cost of purchase was \$1200 and the cost of shipping added \$500 to that. I've since then found some

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better LTL rates, sometimes cheaper than common courier. But still, either way, the shipping cost is high enough that it is significant.

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Subject: Re: Build or buy....which is cheaper?

Posted by [sjaguar13](#) on Sun, 14 Sep 2003 19:11:06 GMT

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I looked at [www.SpeakerHole.com](http://www.SpeakerHole.com) That's where I got my PA cabinets, guitar cabinet, and a bass cabinet. They're exactly what I'm lookingn for, cheap but not horrible. Shipping is around \$80 per speaker. I found a dealer who sells some used ones on eBay, usually a package deal where you get a pair of two different model speakers. Am I going to be able to build them for cheaper than that?

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Subject: Re: Build or buy....which is cheaper?

Posted by [ToFo](#) on Sun, 14 Sep 2003 20:43:24 GMT

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So many variables can be at play here that I can't really answer the question about cheapest. What I can do is turn you on to something I have done with great success. I realized that custom hi-end car audio and pro/dj sound was the only type of custom cabinet that was available in almost every city in the US. This is huge for the non building DIY guy. You do have to find someone good though. When you see an insane car system, ignore the urge to hurl and focus on the trick custom work. If you see a great custom guitar cab or system in a club, compliment the sound guy and ask questions. In either case, when you see great work ask where it was created. Don't let the boomin' system sound put you off, the car install guys know how to make a strong box. They don't need to know beans about making it sound good(though they generally do, despite what it popular) That's your job to have a good design. You must have correct architectural drawings to scale. Have explicit notes on joinery, glueing, router work, recesses, ports etc. and make it clear that ANY amount of payment beyond the deposit (if they even want one)is contingent on following the plans accurately. Give them a couple of weeks, and tip them if it's nice. You will have a willing and cheap(especially compared to added shipping costs)source of boxes at your whim and just across town. Start with something cheap but difficult to asses the talent and if anybody gives you grief there are plenty more car guys around. In most shops people just drive around back and talk to the guys near quitting time or on lunch.(be quick at lunch) I have never met an installer that didn't take side work, especially in the off season after Christmas rush.To sum up: this isn't always cheap, but you to approve/revise before you pay for it. You can pay for nicer materials and construction instead of shipping and you can get pretty tricky with the designs, these guys have seen some weird shaped trunks, believe me. At a car shop there is an end to what the tools they have will do and the PA places are scarce but more well equipped. You

don't want to pay for the shops that architectural designers use, but they can make anything you can draw, out of anything you can afford.P.S. If you want special material (ten ply marine birch ply) bring it with youGood luck,Thomas

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Subject: Re: Build or buy....which is cheaper?  
Posted by [wunhuanglo](#) on Sun, 14 Sep 2003 23:37:37 GMT  
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You can't buy the materials for the per-box prices I see on the web site. But from what you say about shipping, you're talking 3X the price of the box. On that basis you can invest \$100 to \$120 in material per box. I think that with that kind of budget (\$200 to \$250 per pair) you can build substantially better cabinetsOTOH, if you have to buy tools too, obviously the pre-made cabinet is the better buy. Have you looked at Parts Express? They now sell pre-made cabinets that many people have said are very nice for the money.

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Subject: Re: Build or buy....which is cheaper?  
Posted by [sjaguar13](#) on Mon, 15 Sep 2003 01:38:21 GMT  
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The guitar cabinet from the SpeakerHole site is \$95, but with \$62 shipping. \$157 total. Buying two speakers makes shipping \$117. I'd save \$7 buying two together rather than buying one, then buying another one later. I need at least 7 different speakers, so I'd be saving on shipping a little if I combine them. Would it be possible to put together a 4 12 guitar cabinet for around \$130 or so about the same quality as the one from SpeakerHole? The cheaperst speaker I can find is from SpeakerHole for \$17.90.paper cone, accordion (cloth) surround, 30 oz. magnet, 2" voice coil, 8ohms, 100 watts rms, 200 watts peak, 93db, 45-5000hz I'm looking at about \$100.60 for just the 4 speakers shipped. I highly doubt I can build a box that's carpeted, with handles, and all electronic stuff inside for \$30. I'm thinking I should just buy them. It seems like the only way it would be worth building is if I needed something good, or I was going to make them in bulk, about 100 or so (or I had a vendor's license, but I would still probably have to buy in bulk). Anyone else think I should just buy them?

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Subject: Re: How many in a bunch?  
Posted by [BillEpstein](#) on Mon, 15 Sep 2003 07:00:02 GMT

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MDF is \$18/sheet in the mid-West. Birch ply is \$40. Takes 2 sheets for a pair of 4 cu ft cabinets. You can cut it with a \$39 SkilSAw. Screw it together with a \$59 B&D screwgun. Pint of Elmers \$4. Roll of R-13 \$8. Terminals \$3. No freight. Big fun. Do the math.

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Subject: Re: How many in a bunch?

Posted by [sjaguar13](#) on Mon, 15 Sep 2003 13:26:40 GMT

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What about the speakers? Can I get any cheaper than \$30, and if I can, where? All I can find is cheap ones online that come out sort of expensive with shipping, or car audio speakers.

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Subject: Re: How many in a bunch?

Posted by [Bill Martinelli](#) on Mon, 15 Sep 2003 14:35:20 GMT

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Wayne sells any of the Eminence drivers you would need. Buy just the raw drivers and make up your own crossovers and wiring, Or buy the kits Wayne sells. The kits include a crossover, Termianals and wiring. Everything you need except a cabinet which you build yourself. Eminence makes very good drivers and none other compare for the price. Build a Pi design or just use the components. I would say if find Pi kits of Eminence drivers too costly you have bigger problems than shipping. Shipping is a killer. Cost 675 to ship a big pair of corner horns in a crate from coast to coast. That was almosty 20% of the speakers, and its costly. Good luck, Have some fun. Bill

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