Among Android and software update announcements the Google I/O conference reveals a piece of hardware Amazon might find very familiar-- Home, a cylindrical speaker featuring voice-controlled smarts.



Similar in shape to an oversized salt shaker, the Home performs more or less the same functions as the Echo. It uses a set of far-field microphones to continuously listen to users and answer questions, control music, control some connected devices and even stream media from a smartphone or tablet to a Google Cast.

Powering such voice-controlled smarts is Assistant, a self-explanatory piece of cloud-powered Google software also first announced at I/O. Also available on Android smartphones, Assistant searches the internet to adjust itself to users' schedules, and can even provide images and other information for improved search results.

Google claims the actual speaker provides "strong bass and clear highs," but it does not provide audio specifications. It does requires plugging into the wall, something the search giant insists allows for a more powerful device.

Launch dates for the Home speaker are not available as yet.

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