Google has fixed its recent history of terrible speakers with the Pixel 8 Pro

I carried around a Pixel 7 Pro as my primary phone for several months and enjoyed many aspects of it — but the audio that came from its speakers was thin and feeble compared to flagships from Apple, Samsung, and others. And this wasn't a new flaw in the Pixel line by any stretch: it's something Google has overlooked over multiple years now.

I'd argue that things really went off the tracks starting with the Pixel 5, when Google replaced the conventional earpiece speaker with an over-engineered, under-display alternative that used vibrations to produce sound. The result was something that was *passable* for voice calls but underwhelming for anything else. It was a noticeable downgrade coming from perfectly adequate stereo speakers that Google had included on the Pixel 4 and 4 XL.

The weird speaker experiment was short-lived; Google reverted back to a more traditional setup with the Pixel 6. But for whatever reason, the fullness of the sound produced by those speakers never returned to the sort of quality that I'd expect from any company's flagship phone. It was, at best, fine. Some people turned to EQing them using an Android tool called Wavelet to balance things out a little better. But no one *should* have to do that.

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Holowaty Krales / The Verge

I'm not someone who's frequently listening to smartphone speakers, mind you. I review earbuds, after all, so that's how most of my music listening happens. And I'm quick to throw a glare at anyone blasting their phone's speaker in public. But at the same time, there's something inside me that gets deeply disappointed when I turn on a new phone only to be met with tinny audio. I want it to be good for those times I use it when hanging on the couch or lying in bed.

But mercifully, it would seem that someone on the Pixel hardware team *finally* made a case for fixing this situation with the Pixel 8 lineup. If you're the engineer who said "we can't keep settling like this," please accept my thanks. I can't speak for the smaller phone, which I haven't used much yet, but there's genuinely a world of difference between the drivers on the Pixel 8 Pro and its predecessor.

You can now listen to music from the loudspeakers and have a pleasant experience doing so. Watching videos on YouTube, I don't notice the same ear-piercing quality to vocal frequencies that were present on the 7 Pro. Google didn't mention any speaker improvements during its keynote, but believe me, they're there. Maybe part of it has to do with the fact that the 8 Pro no longer has a curved display (and the thinner side rails that went with it). But whatever changes were made, they've brought the 8 Pro back up to par. Well done, Google. Considering the $100 price increase, I would've been pretty irked if the streak of mediocre speakers had continued.

I don't know that the 8 Pro is *quite* at the level of an iPhone 15 Pro Max; however you feel about Apple or iPhones, there's no denying how good the company is at extracting good sound (and even some noticeable separation) from mobile devices. That's been the case for years. But Google's speakers are now right up there with the Galaxy S23 Ultra in fullness and tone. Something that's been a downside for a few years running is

now back in the pros column. Let’s try not to regress again this time.

https://www.theverge.com/2023/10/11/23913099/google-pixel-8-improved-speaker-quality