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AktiMate High Fidelity Active Speaker System for iPod and MP3 Players

From Gary Altunian,

AktiMate High-Fidelity Powered Speaker System

Guide Rating - ★★★★★

The wildly popular Apple iPod and assorted MP3 music players have spawned a new product category that is almost as popular as the players themselves. Docking stations and stereo speaker systems to support the players are popping up everywhere, but many don't perform up to very high expectations, with a few exceptions. One notable exception is the new AktiMate High Fidelity Active Speaker System, a two-way speaker system that takes iPod and MP3 sound to a truly respectable level of high fidelity. The AktiMate is the adept design work of the Aussies, backed by UK-based Epos Speakers and built-in amps from Creek Audio

AktiMate Features

The AktiMate stereo speaker system consists of one active (powered) speaker with a built-in 40-watt amp and one passive speaker. 5.25-inch woofers built by the UK company Epos are accompanied by one-inch dome tweeters in each speaker and Creek Audio , a respected British amplifier manufacturer, builds the amp.

The active speaker features an iPod docking/charging port on the top of the cabinet and comes with multiple adapters that makes it compatible with all iPod models. A rear-panel USB input permits charging a separate iPod or MP3 player. Any MP3 or MP4 player can be connected to the Aktimate system via the 3.5mm input jack on the back of the active speaker. An AirPort Express wireless module can also be connected to stream audio wirelessly from your Mac or PC to the AktiMate system. Line level inputs permit connection of external analog components, such as a tuner, tape player or other analog source and one pair of RCA outputs are provided for a subwoofer or for daisy-chaining to another pair of AktiMate speakers. The active speaker has a volume control on the front panel that also serves as a power-standby switch. The system can be operated with an intuitive remote control, which also controls basic iPod functions. A composite video output can be connected to a video monitor for viewing photos stored on your iPod and the speakers are magnetically shielded so they can be placed close to a television. Each bookshelf speaker is slightly less than 12" high and they're available in gloss white or gloss black, and rumor has it that a gloss red version in the works.

Aktimate Audio Performance

The sound qualities of the AktiMate system could easily be compared with more expensive bookshelf speakers. It's hard not to notice its fine imaging and three-dimensional soundstage characteristics. Even while sitting off-axis, Valerie Joyce's "Fever" (Chesky Records) presents a strong center image with a broad soundstage. Diana Krall's "East of the

Sun, West of the Moon" from her Live In Paris CD (Verve Records) almost sounds like I'm listening to a surround sound system because of its broad soundstage – And this is from my iPod! As I listen to the system across the room from my desk while writing this review, I find it to be a powerful, impressive system, enjoyable to listen to for long periods.

You could add a subwoofer, but don't bother, the bass is not lean. The rear firing bass ports also reinforce bass response, especially when placed close to a wall. Midrange, especially vocals are clean and there's plenty of high frequency detail – good overall tonal balance at all volume levels.

Summary

My conclusion - First, it's a very good speaker system with balanced tonal quality that casual and critical listeners will enjoy. Second, when combined with its many other capabilities, it's a real winner. The AktiMate system would be a great choice for an office, bedroom, or as a main stereo system in a dorm room or apartment. In particular, the stereo RCA inputs and the optional AirPort Express add to its usability and appeal. The stereo inputs allow connection of external analog sources or you could connect it to the line-level outputs from your main system and enjoy those sources on the Aktimate. The addition of an AirPort wireless module means you can stream music content from your computer directly to the Aktimate system. At $699 it's a great value and you'll get high-fidelity performance from your iPod or MP3 player as well as other sources connected to the system.

Specifications - AktiMate Active Speaker System

- Power Output: 40 watts into 4 ohms
- THD: <0.05%
- Woofer: 5.25-inch mid/bass woofer with polypropylene cone
- Tweeter: 1-inch metal dome tweeter with neodymium magnet
- Frequency response: 50Hz-22kHz (+/- 1.5 dB)
- Inputs: One pair of stereo RCA inputs, one 3.5 mm input, Apple iPod docking port, USB port for charging
- Outputs: One pair of stereo RCA outputs (for daisy-chain connection to second pair of speakers or for a subwoofer)
- Composite video output
- Dimensions: 12"H x 7 ½" W x 8 ½"D
- Weight: 26.5 lbs.
- Price: $699.00