

# Oh, Just One More Thing...

By Al Gordon

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2008

## ⇒ And now, for your listening pleasure...

Getting high-quality computer speakers at a relatively affordable price is always a challenge. Until now.

(I should note that I started the product testing for this piece before the bottom dropped out of the economy. So these items are markedly less "affordable" than they were earlier this year.)

There are an endless number of pretty good speakers for \$100 or less. Then there are a few \$400 systems from such companies as Bose that are somewhat disappointing - better than mainstream systems but not so much better that the extra expense seems worthwhile.

The past year, however, has seen the arrival of two alternatives to meet the needs of discerning listeners without being totally outrageous.



France's Focal-JMLab has introduced the **Focal XS system** (above - \$600), a sleek silver and black three-piece system (two satellite speakers and a subwoofer) that matches the styling of Apple's current generation iMac computers and - just in case you didn't get the idea - includes an iPod dock in the right-hand speaker. It has its own onboard audio circuitry, bypassing the noise of PC or Mac circuit boards, and plugs into your computer via USB.