

B&W Zeppelin Mini iPod Speaker (Playback 28)

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A Compact Treat for the Eyes and Ears

March 3rd, 2010 -- by Chris Martens

Source: Playback



Zeppelin Mini vs. B&W Zeppelin (\$599)

- There is a discernible family resemblance between the sonic character of the Zeppelin Mini and that of the full-sized Zeppelin, though at the end of the day the larger unit produces a more robust, more full-bodied, and slightly more refined sound. Not surprisingly, the big Zeppelin also makes a better system for whole-room applications.
- The big Zeppelin provides pass-through video functions, where the Zeppelin Mini does not.
- The Zeppelin Mini can stream digital audio files where the full-size Zeppelin does not.
- The Zeppelin Mini's

docking pedestal can rotate 90 degrees to support landscape screen viewing, where the Zeppelin's dock positions iPods vertically, only.

- Though both units are quite beautiful, the big Zeppelin is the more radical-looking design and a product that is more than twice the size of the Zeppelin Mini (which potentially makes the big Zeppelin too large for some desktop applications). By comparison, the Zeppelin Mini is the perfect size for desktop use.

Zeppelin Mini vs. Focal XS 2.1-channel iPod system (\$599)

- The Focal XS is one the best sounding iPod systems we have heard and as such it enjoys a sonic edge over the Zeppelin Mini, whether viewed as a desktop system or as a whole-room system. In fact, as iPod systems go, the XS rig is one of the best for use as whole-room hi-fi system.
- The tradeoff, however, is that the Focal XS system is a three-piece rig (two desktop speakers, one of which incorporates an iPod dock plus USB audio and analog audio inputs, with an under-desk subwoofer. For obvious reasons, the XS system is considerably bigger and somewhat more complex (but as a result also more flexible) than the simple and elegant Zeppelin Mini.
- Significantly, both systems can stream digital audio via USB from PC or Macs, which greatly increases their usefulness.
- Both systems are beautifully designed, though in different ways. The Zeppelin Mini appeals more as a singular, sculptural object, while the XS system draws its design cues from Apple's popular iMac desktop computers.
- The XS system dock cannot be swiveled as can the Zeppelin Mini's, but the Focal design is clever nevertheless as its dock is an integral part of one the desktop speaker stands. What is more, the Focal remote is, by design, magnetic so that it can be attached to the XS speaker stands when not in use.

BOTTOM LINE:

B&W's beautiful and compact Zeppelin Mini is a pleasing desktop iPod/computer audio system that represents a treat both for the eyes and ears. Sonically, the system's performances hinges on its surprisingly sophisticated and nuanced midrange capabilities, which are augmented with DSP-enhanced highs and lows. The Mini will appeal specifically to listeners who want a desktop-centric system, rather than a system designed to serve as a larger-scale whole-room entertainment system (for larger rooms, B&W's full-sized Zeppelin would be a better solution).

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B&W Zeppelin Mini iPod/desktop speaker system

Driver complement: two 3-inch full-range drivers with DSP-driven EQ system

Amplifier Power: 2 x 18 Wpc

Inputs: 30-pin iPod/iPhone docking connector mounted on a swiveling pedestal (to allow landscape screen viewing); USB 2.0 connector for iPod syncing, streaming audio from PC/Mac, and for software updates; auxiliary stereo analog audio input (via 3.5mm mini-jack)

Other: remote control

Dimensions (H x W x D): 6.8" x 12.6" x 4"

Weight: 5.51 lbs.

Warranty: Two years, parts and labor

Price: \$399.95

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