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Focal XS review - Impressive sound in stylish surroundings

By [admin](#) • Jan 7th, 2009 • Category: [Lead Story](#)

Over the last few weeks I have had the pleasure of testing and listening to my iPod through the Focal XS Multimedia Sound System, a great sound experience for me, and at times probably a bit too loud for my neighbours. Having listened to quite a few sound systems through the years I have to admit that I have been impressed with the Focal XS system.

I have mostly used it with my iPod Touch docked in the iPod docking station of the sound system, but it also comes with mini-jack analog input and USB access through its integrated USB soundcard, giving you the flexibility of adding other sound sources.

Design and style

Focal XS Multimedia Sound System pride themselves on delivering the 'spirit of sound' and a quality product for audiophiles around the world that like to get the best possible sound out of their digital sound system. As much as sound is important, the esthetics of the system is also essential. Just like the iPod is more than a MP3 player through its design and visual exterior, the Focal XS multimedia sound system does in my opinion deliver a visual design that is worthy of the iPod and should satisfy the most critical of Apple fan out there.



The iPod dock is nicely integrated into the base of one of the two satellite units of the system, which has their design inspiration from the iMac with the speaker unit sitting on top of a metallic arm leading up from the base. Place them next to your flatscreen tv or next to your Mac/computer and you will see that they compliment each other visually.



The visual appeal of the Focal XS Multimedia Sound System is among the more complimentary i have come across, but in the end for all audiophiles and music/sound appreciators it comes down to the sound experience, and the Focal XS does not disapoint.

Sound quality and experience

The two satellite 2-way shielded multimedia speakers are supported by the active bass-reflex subwoofer giving you a full and realistic sound image. Being old enough to have grown up with vinyl analog sound i appreciate a full sound picture that one so often loose out on with digital sound. The Focal XS are among the best systems i have listened to, and with some hi-res quality mp3 files i have to admit i found myself turning the volume up higher and higher, enjoying a crisp and clear sound with both power and finesse.

As i am not a sound expert i will not be able to judge that experience on anything other than what my ears could hear and years of listening to music, and for me this was truly an enjoyable experience. According to the people behind the Focal XS Multimedia Sound System, the sound gets better with time as the speakers continue to improve on clarity and dynamics over a couple of hundred hours of playing time. This is due to both mechanical (speaker suspension) and electrical (amplifier and crossover capacitor) factors. As of the time i am writing this i have been playing them for about 15 hours, and already well impressed with the sound quality across a wide range of music styles and volumes.

Technical data on the Focal XS Multimedia Sound System

The Focal XS Multimedia Sound System is a high end multimedia solution with integrated USB soundcard, iPod docking station for listening and charging your iPod with iTunes synchronization mode. The active amplifier delivers 2×30W for the satellite speakers and 70W for the subwoofer.

The spesifications of the Focal XS Satellittel speakers:

- 2-way shielded multimedia speaker
- 3" paper cone midbass
- 3/4" mylar dome tweeter
- 150Hz - 20kHz frequency response (+/- 3dB)
- 2×30W nom. power
- 104dB SPL/1m max sound pressure level
- Dimensions are 125/8 x 39/16 x 57/8 (320×90x150mm)
- Weighs about 2.2lbs (1kg)

The Focal XS subwoofer spesifications:

- Active bass-reflex subwoofer
- 61/2" (16.5cm) paper cone woofer drivers
- Frequency response (+/- 3dB) of 39Hz - 150Hz
- 70W nom power
- Max sound pressure level at 105 dB SPL/1m
- Dimensions are 101/4×91/16×149/16" (260×230x370mm)
- The unit weighs 18.5lbs (8.4kg)

Functionality

One of the many great features of the Focal XS multimedia sound system is that it not only allow you to dock, charge, and listen to your iPod/iPhone while docked, but there is also a button for syncing your iPod/iPhone to iTunes when the Focal XS is connected to your laptop/computer. I have not come across many other systems that allows you to do that, and it is great not to have to connect through another dock or cable to sync your iPod/iPhone with iTunes.

The remote control is also functional and easy to use, and it can be attached to the base of the satellite speakers when not in use through a magnet connection, ensuring that it does not get lost between other remotes and magazines lying around.

For you iPhone users out there you will be glad to hear that the Focal XS multimedia sound system is reported to allow for use with the iPhone without having to switch to flight mode, something that i have received quite a few questions about from other iPod/iPhone owners when it comes to a variety of other sound systems with iPod dock. Once we get a chance to test with an iPhone we will be able to confirm these reports.

Summary and Republic score

What better way to round off this review than to turn the Focal XS sound system on as the iPod is playing Andrea Bocelli, turning the volume up real high, and enjoying the crisp and clear sound and power from this high-end sound system.

That is what the Focal XS Multimedia Sound System is, a high-end system that delivers quality and style in plenty, even for the audiophiles out there. For iPod owners out there, this system is up there with the B&W Zeppelin and the Geneva Lab Model L, and i did not expect anything less either from the renowned sound people from Focal.

With a price point at £399/\$599 the Focal XS is charging for the quality that it delivers, but it is all well worth it if you are tired of only having adequate quality from your sound system. With the knowledge that it is an experience that will just improve with time i will look forward to enjoying the sound of the Focal XS Multimedia Sound System for a long time, and can without a doubt recommend that you try it too.

We give the Focal XS Multimedia Sound System a **Republic Rating of 9 out of 10** - Focal has delivered a high quality and stylish sound experience.

If you want to get your hands on the Focal XS multimedia sound system you might want to get in touch with Focal through their website - focal-xs.com - and they will be able to advise you on who stocks the system in your area.

★★★★★ (2 votes, average: 5 out of 5)