

## Focal XS Satellite Multimedia Speakers

Focal's XS powered monitoring system features USB connectivity, and even an iPod dock; it's a "consumer" product with truly pro-applicable features.

The reality of today's ever-blurring line between consumer and pro audio means some of us listen to our work through nontraditional studio monitors. Focal's XS Multimedia Audio System is a great example of a product that fills a niche somewhere in that middle ground.

### Features

This powered iPod docking system includes a pair of unique brushed metal and black speakers, a compact but sturdy 6.5-inch subwoofer, a wireless remote control (that magnetically "clips" onto the speaker arm), USB cable, power supply cord and 1/8-inch dual mini cable.

Inside the sub resides a 70-watt amp, a Burr Brown DAC and dual 30-watt amps for the satellites, which plug in via mesh covered cables attached to each one. The sub also features a volume control. Lowering the sub also removes bass from the satellites; unfortunately, they don't provide specs on the frequencies. The frequency response for the complete system is spec'd at 39-20 kHz. The right side speaker base houses power and volume controls on top, a dock for your iPod (with eight different adapters), a 1/8-inch mini Aux input on the rear along with a USB connector and a Sync/Audio switch.

The sleek-looking two-way satellite speakers reside in small enclosures atop metal arms that elevate them 8 inches above your desk, anchored to gloss black bases. Each features a 3-inch paper cone driver for the mids and a 0.75-inch Mylar tweeter for the highs.

### In Use

I first heard this compact system at The Mastering Palace in New York. Owner/engineer Dave Kutch had them on his desktop, along with several other sets of high-end Focal systems in his room. With their great sound, I felt they would make a perfect setup for my secondary DAW, a Pro Tools 9/Intel system that I use for basic composition, sound design, programming and music listening.

Sometimes plans work out. Plugging my PT9 output into the 1/8-inch mini jack and the USB into my computer, I was up and running in minutes. I like the fact

that the tweeters lined up perfectly with my ears. I docked my

iPhone, and by pressing the Sync/Audio button, charged it and synced it. (Note: You must choose either Sync mode or Audio mode. You cannot listen to your iPod/iPhone while syncing/charging.) With this Sync button, you can also listen to your iPhone/iPod's music, or go back to your iTunes/Aux (PT9) setup. I love this versatility. Aside from my own material, I put on mixes by Seal, Sade, Led Zeppelin, Bob Marley and the London Symphony. I sat back and simply enjoyed the sonic experience.

My only complaint with this system is its limited "tweakability." I would love to have a software "panel" with system EQ/crossovers and a volume, so that I have some idea of reference levels and frequencies. It also can get a little mushy in the low mids when you turn up the sub too high; it takes a little time to find the right balance for your room. But for what the XS is, it's very effective for pro use.

### Summary

At \$599, the Focal XS is not cheap. However, at the risk of sounding cliché, you truly get what you pay for. The combination of excellent sound, a powerful sub, USB D/A conversion, iPod Docking/charging, wireless remote, an Aux input and sleek design make them easily worth the money. It's a flexible setup for anyone seeking a good secondary consumer/pro speaker system.

**Price:** \$599

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