

Want to liberate your iPod from its 'phones and help it shout louder? These

GROOVY DOCKERS

will help your tiny music centre fill whole rooms with music. Mind the neighbours!

THE CONTENDERS

ALTEC LANSING INMOTION IM7 \$399

APPLE IPOD HI-FI \$549

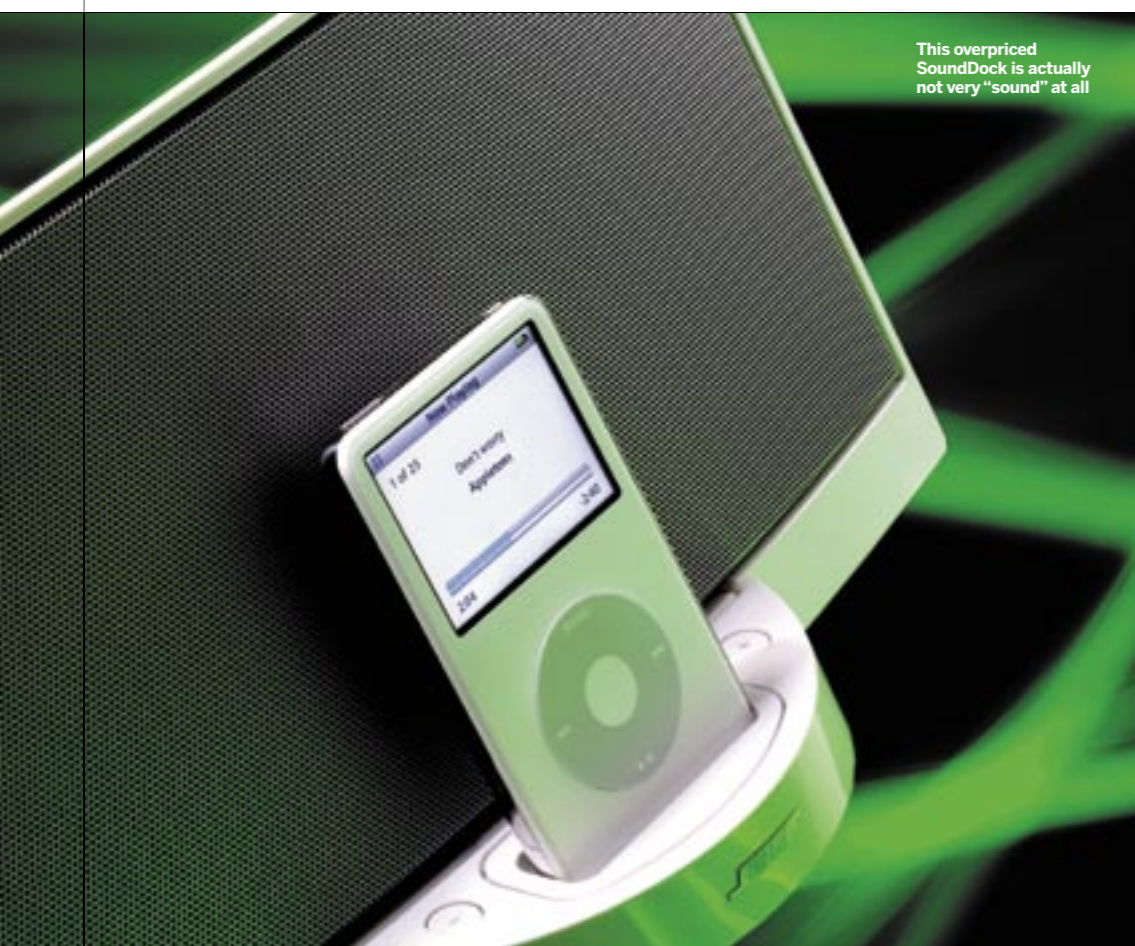
BOSE SOUNDDOCK \$499

KENSINGTON SX2000 \$190

KLIPSCH IGROOVE \$399

WHAT YOU SHOULD LOOK FOR

Convenience and sound quality are essential. You want sizzling sonics without having to faff around with bass and treble levels or placement. A good dock should also look as tasty as the iPod it carries.



This overpriced SoundDock is actually not very "sound" at all

BOSE SOUNDDOCK \$499

www.bose.com.au

COMPACT AND WELL put together, this won plenty of plaudits on launch, but now it's struggling against newer rivals.

Stick in your 'Pod and you'll be rewarded with some fairly solid results. There's just enough bass and treble here, but tracks such as The Arcade Fire's *Tunnels* sound a tad flat compared to the Klipsch and Altec Lansing models. A bit more dynamism would be welcome.

That isn't the only niggle. There's no stereo line input, so there's no way to hook up an iPod Shuffle, let alone players from Apple's rivals. Its once cutting-edge looks now seem a bit passé too, frankly.

The Bose name will attract many, but this offers audio performance that's no better than workmanlike. For the princely sum of \$499, you're entitled to expect more.

T3 ★★★★★



This slimmed-down dock looks like it's been run over by a steamroller

KENSINGTON SX2000 \$190

www.apple.com.au

THIS DOCK GOES for less than half the of the second-cheapest model on test, but it's no dollar-shop piddler. Audio quality is very impressive for the price. The speakers are too close together to provide much stereo separation, but you don't really buy this sort of dock for orchestral-sized sound fields.

Its rendition of Led Zeppelin's pulsating, relentless *Achilles' Last Stand* is certainly engaging enough. The bass doesn't make you feel like you're standing in the midst of the final battle for Troy, but this means you can crank up the volume without fear of distortion.

There are two, ahem, "dock-ups" here, though. Given how light and compact its design is, it's ridiculous that Kensington has restricted this to mains rather than battery power. The lack of a remote control is also pretty criminal. This is a good budget option, but no more.

T3 ★★★★★



This Apple product has some core problems

APPLE IPOD HI-FI \$549

www.apple.com.au

WHILE THE WHITE breezeblock design might divide opinion, there's no debating that this behemoth feels like a solid, high class product. It's just a shame that it doesn't perform like one.

You can power it using batteries, which makes it convenient to use on the move. There's also plenty of power packed into the box, but compared to the Altec (p60), it's unleashed in an unfocused way, especially with guitar-heavy music. The Kings of Leon's *King of the Rodeo*, for instance, is a jumbled, woolly mess, with treble detail vanishing into a bassy morass. It's simply not what we'd expect given Apple's pedigree.

With acoustic music or something more spare or electronic, results improve, but not enough to make this a worthy purchase. A minimalist design and a couple of feather-touch controls do not a killer speaker dock make.

T3 ★★★★★



This Klipsch soundsch fantaschtic. Sorry, we've been drinking

KLIPSCH IGROOVE \$399

www.apple.com.au

THIS DOCK DELIVERS when it comes to the crunch. Songs such as Radiohead's tremulous melancholy-fest *Fake Plastic Trees* are detailed across the whole sonic range, with bass and treble well balanced.

There isn't as much of a low-end kick as you get with the Altec Lansing, Bose or Apple docks, but this impresses with its versatility. Rather than excelling with some and bombing with others, this is set up to work well with all types of music.

In fact the only flies in the ointment are the lack of a battery option and the slightly questionable silver-grey finish. Now we're all for departing from the classic (yawn), iconic (zzzz) iPod white used by the other models here. However, this ends up looking more like something your gran would buy from Target than a fashionable addition to your home.

However, good sound always trumps good looks. Just ask Radiohead.

T3 ★★★★★





Did you know?

Otis Redding's *Sitting on the (iPod) Dock of the Bay* topped the charts in 1968



Take the tube...

ALTEC LANSING INMOTION IM7

\$399

www.innovision.com.au

THIS DOCK'S MACHINED cylindrical shape suggests rugged, industrial power – and that's exactly what you get when you slip an iPod into its drawer.

Audio is lively and punchy and as a result it suits high energy material best. Bel Biv DeVoe's *Poison* sounds superb, thanks to strong clarity throughout and a bassline that kicks like a Brazilian striker on steroids.

The dock also handles softer, more acoustic stuff, although if your taste runs more to the James Blunt end of the market you might occasionally notice a slight lack of crispness to his tuneless whimpering.

Load this up with batteries and you can use it on the go. You can also link your photo or video iPod up to a telly via its S-Video output. With performance and features like that, this is an obvious choice.



The Altec Lansing pumps out quality audio and has features to spare. Top of the docks!

T3 ★★★★★

THE GROUP TEST FACTS & FIGURES



| MAKE/MODEL | APPLE IPOD HI-FI | BOSE SOUNDDOCK | KENSINGTON SX2000 | KLIPSCH IGROOVE | ALTEC LANSING INMOTION IM7 |
|-----------------|---|---|--|--|--|
| PRICE | \$549 | \$499 | \$190 | \$399 | \$399 |
| WEBSITE | www.apple.com.au | www.bose.com.au | www.apple.com.au | www.apple.com.au | www.innovision.com.au |
| LOVE | High quality design and build. | Decent audio quality. Smallest model here. | It sounds pretty decent and it's cheap! | Distinguished, well-balanced sound quality. | Banging bass. Solid design. Portability. |
| HATE | Mixed sonic results. Inflated price tag. | No extra connections. Not worth \$499. | Lacks powerful bass. No remote or battery option. | Silver-grey plastic finish. | Lack of crispness at times. The nano looks a bit odd inside it. |
| RATING | ★★★★★ | ★★★★★ | ★★★★★ | ★★★★★ | ★★★★★ |
| OVERALL | A reasonable effort from Apple, but there are much better docks around. | This doesn't quite have enough in the locker to justify its high price tag. | Kensington's dock offers pleasing performance at a temptingly low price. | A virtuoso performer that's only slightly let down by its tacky looks. | The best all-round dock, offering both flexibility and good performance. |
| CONNECTIONS | Stereo line input | - | Stereo line input | Stereo line input | Stereo line input, S-Video out, composite video out |
| REMOTE | ■ | ■ | - | ■ | ■ |
| BATTERIES | 6 x D | - | - | - | 8 x D |
| DOCKS WITH | All iPods (Shuffle via line in) | All iPods except Shuffle | All iPods (Shuffle via line in) | All iPods (Shuffle via line in) | All iPods (Shuffle via line in) |
| DIMENSIONS (MM) | 432 x 168 x 175 | 303 x 169 x 165 | 410 x 180 x 100 | 406 x 203 x 165 | 425 x 160 x 160 |