

iPOD SPEAKER DOCK

➤ AktiMate Minis

The AktiMate Mini iPod speakers have everything going for them — simplicity, heritage and performance. They're even Australian, though blessed with the benefits of tweakage from UK expertise of some heritage.

Simplicity first. The AktiMates are weighty 30cm-high active speakers (we're not quite sure about the 'Mini' tag, unless manufacturer Epoz is planning something monumental for 2009). Their amplification is built into the left speaker, so they require no external amplifier. You just connect the left speaker to the right, plug in the mains lead and put your iPod in the top dock, having chosen the correct iPod tray from the selection provided. *Et fini*. No stack of separates, no trailing iPod dock, no ugly flashing mini system console. Just a pair of piano-gloss speakers (white or black, red to come), one mains lead, one speaker cable. It's an impressively simple set-up. Consider the youth of today heading off to college. Computer, iPod, AktiMates; they're done.

The speed with which the system leaps into life is marvellous — it allows your iPod to recall its exact song position, and your finger has barely left the power button before the song restarts with a gentle fade.

You can expand on their simplicity by using the two auxiliary inputs — one RCA phono pair and a stereo minijack. They play simultaneously, so you can listen to, say, iPod and computer audio at the same time. There's also a composite video output (for iPod video

to a screen) and an RCA stereo pair for audio out (to a subwoofer, suggests Epoz, though heaven knows why you'd need one; or you could run a second pair of AktiMates off this output). There's also a USB power socket to recharge a non-Apple MP3 player.

Thanks to company/family connections, some of the speaker technology here originates from Epos, including the 25mm metal-dome tweeter and 13cm polypropylene woofer, while the internal 40W amplification was tuned up by none other than Mike Creek of Creek Audio, whose wisdom in cracking amp circuits is proven here yet again. These are exceptional speakers at this \$650 price, dynamic as all hell, firing on all cylinders, capable of slamming beats and rich phat electronic bass reproduction, yet still layered through with subtleties for all genres of music.

Everything sounds pacy, energetic and alive. We enjoyed them best at near-field distance, but driving medium rooms is no problem; there's plenty of low end. Indeed one suspects the AktiMates' balance is tuned slightly to impress with the full-on beats and driving rhythms some might consider the mainstay of youthful iPod users. But their full, massive yet open sound is genuine hi-fi, where most docks are quite certainly not.

Some say an iPod looks odd sticking out of the top. We don't care — this is a blinder of a product. More info: www.aktimate.com

