

MICRO MUSIC MACHINES

FIVE COMPACT HI-FI SYSTEMS THAT SOLVE THE AGE-OLD PROBLEM: NEED LARGE SOUND, BUT HAVE SMALL SPACE

BEST FOR ALL-ROUND QUALITY



WITH ALL THE FEATURES YOU NEED IN A SMART PACKAGE, THE ONE PACKS MORE HI-FI BANG FOR YOUR BUCK THAN ANY OTHER MICRO SYSTEM

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO ONE £349 + SPEAKERS £120

www.cambridgeaudio.com

MAYBE IT'S BEGINNER'S luck, but Cambridge Audio's first micro hi-fi is a real gem, with a solid set of features: CD, FM/DAB, iPod connectivity (with optional dock) and MP3/WMA playback from memory cards or USB hard drives.

We paired it with with Sirocco S30 bookshelf speakers. These 30W-per channel boomers amply showed off the One's impressive audio, and looked pretty good whilst so doing.

Navigating your whole MP3 collection on the dual-line LCD display can be tiresome and low-grade tracks can sound crusty. Even worse, the remote is ugly, but these are minor quibbles and this system still rocks the way we like it.

LOVE Decent connectivity and great sound
HATE Limited LCD screen. Poor remote

T3 ★★★★★

OVERALL The best micro hi-fi system you'll find at this price. It's quite literally the One that you'll want

POWER 60W

INPUTS 2x phono, 1 x 3.5mm, USB, SD card

OUTPUTS Tape, subwoofer, headphones

FORMATS SUPPORTED MP3, WMA, DAB

ACCESSORISE



CAMBRIDGE AUDIO DACMAGIC, £200, WWW.CAMBRIDGEAUDIO.COM ADD SPARKLE TO YOUR DIGITAL AUDIO WITH THIS BUDGET DIGITAL TO ANALOGUE CONVERTER



BEST FOR BARGAIN HUNTERS

ONKYO CS 325 £200

eu.onkyo.com

ONKYO'S IS THE smallest of the five micro systems on test, and also the cheapest. With 19W of not-so-raw power, it's not going to fill larger rooms with music, but it does a job in more compact and bijou apartments.

Although you do get an iPod dock, which is more than Teac can be bothered to supply with its £500 model, there's no network streaming, no memory card slots and not a USB input in sight here. As a result, set-up and use is about as straightforward as it gets, although feature vultures may be underwhelmed. The single-line LCD display is hardly likely to placate them, either.

Still, the Onkyo CS 325 is cheap, UK-tuned, sounds perfectly passable and has a pair of phono inputs for adding audio sources. There's precious little in the way of nifty features to keep us here, so on to the next one, then.

LOVE Bargain price tag. Sounds good enough
HATE The feature list runs out quicker than the free booze at a special party for parched alcoholics

T3 ★★★★★

OVERALL Market-stall looks and minimal features, but it'd be churlish to complain much at this price

POWER 38W per channel
INPUTS 2x phono, iPod dock
OUTPUTS Headphones
FORMATS SUPPORTED MP3, DAB

ACCESSORISE

I2I STREAM, £69, WWW.I2IGEAR.COM A FOXILY CLEVER DEVICE THAT CAN BEAM MUSIC DIRECTLY FROM YOUR IPOD OR PC TO HEADPHONES, HI-FI OR POWERED SPEAKERS

SONY GIGAJUKE NAS-SC55PKE £729

www.sony.co.uk

THIS ISN'T JUST A hi-fi system, it's a fully-fledged music server. The Sony Gigajuke range serves up MP3 – oh, and ATRAC – without the need for a computer. It'll also top up your MP3 player or PSP with tunes. A nice touch.

Once ripped, music can be pumped to four zone players, or streamed to and from DLNA-equipped computers. The flip-up, 4.3-inch screen makes it easy to control and the internet radio and playlist-composing x-DJ tool are bonuses. However, none of these things are as easy as ripping, playing and controlling tunes on a PC.

Frankly, three-quarters of a grand for a glorified computer streaming system – with, we might add, just 80GB of storage – is criminal. You might as well just plug your iPod into your hi-fi and save yourself the bother and the 730 notes.

LOVE Decent audio quality. Internet radio
HATE Pricey, hefty and not especially easy on the eye

T3 ★★★★★

OVERALL This system is competent at what it does, but it seems both unnecessary and overpriced

POWER 40W per channel
INPUTS 2x phono, ethernet, Wi-Fi, USB, DLNA
OUTPUTS Headphones,
FORMATS SUPPORTED MP3, WMA, ATRAC, PCM



THE KNOWLEDGE

UK tuning
 A "UK-tuned" sound system is EQed to a sound that hi-fi manufacturers deem popular with UK listeners. Consider, however, that Katy Perry is popular with UK listeners...

BEST FOR MUSIC STREAMING

ACCESSORISE

TOSHIBA 500GB HARD DRIVE, £120, WWW.TOSHIBA.CO.UK BOOST THE GIGAJUKE'S 80GB MEMORY WITH AN EXTRA HALF-TERABYTE OF MUSICAL CAPACITY

BEST FOR WEALTHY AUDIOPHILES



TEAC REFERENCE 380

£499 + SPEAKERS £350

www.teac.co.uk

AIMED AT DISCERNING music buffs, this "UK-tuned" system costs £850 when combined with the Mission 790 speakers we tested it with.

Your not inconsiderable outlay gets you internet radio and PC streaming via Wi-Fi and ethernet, DAB+ as well as vanilla DAB and FM, USB input and the option of an iPod dock, if you fancy shelling out another 25 quid.

The standalone amp has independent bass and treble controls, with inputs for vinyl and two other phono sources round the back. Sound quality is as good as you'd expect for the dollars, with warm, rich bass and expansive mids.

If you have the money, there are worse ways to spend it than on this – 85 copies of *Mamma Mia* on DVD, for instance.

LOVE Audiophile sound. Internet radio. Connectivity
HATE Eighties throwback design. Big ol' price

T3 ★★★★★

OVERALL Superb sound and handy, streaming-type goings on. If only it wasn't so hugely pricey...

POWER 90W

INPUTS 3x phono, line in, USB, ethernet, Wi-Fi, optional iPod dock (£25)

OUTPUTS 2x phono, headphones

FORMATS SUPPORTED DAB+, DAB, MP3, WMA

ACCESSORISE

MISSION 79 SERIES STANDS, £150, WWW.MISSION.CO.UK DECREASE REVERBERATION, IMPROVE SOUND QUALITY AND HIDE UNSIGHTLY CABLES WITH CONSIDERABLE APLOMB

YAMAHA M430 £350

www.yamaha-uk.com

IF SPACE IS a commodity you lack, you'll like the Yamaha M430, which will happily squeeze on to any empty bookshelf space.

Despite its shrunken dimensions, it's still equipped with the usual bundle of features: DAB/FM tuner, CD, MP3/WMA playback and an integrated iPod dock that sits atop the main unit. The accompanying speakers can belt out 25W of power a piece. Sound quality is lacking the X factor, but the speakers' 11cm bass drivers provide some unexpected oomph and there's the option to add a subwoofer. Bass and treble levels can be independently tweaked.

The best feature of the M430 is the iPod dock, which will charge your iPod even as it plays a relaxing selection of Norwegian death metal tracks. All in all, the M430 is a good, middle-of-the-road, end-of-the-bookshelf stereo.

LOVE Top-mounted iPod dock. Beefy bass. Cheap
HATE Limited connectivity and features

T3 ★★★★★

OVERALL Like a hi-fi equivalent of that bloke who hosts *The Krypton Factor*, this is dull but inoffensive

POWER 50W

INPUTS iPod dock, line input

OUTPUTS Optical digital out, analogue out, subwoofer, headphones

FORMATS SUPPORTED MP3, WMA (via CD), DAB

BEST FOR OVERALL SMALLNESS



ACCESSORISE



SENNHEISER RS 140, £160, WWW.SENNHEISER.CO.UK WIRELESS CANS THAT WILL LAST A FULL DAY ON ONE CHARGE. INDEPENDENT BALANCE CONTROLS ARE A NICE TOUCH, TOO