

HOME ENTERTAINMENT

THE FINEST IN AUDIO/VIDEO TECHNOLOGY AND DESIGN



2008



TECH PREVIEW THE HOTTEST TRENDS in AUDIO, VIDEO & GAMING



COOLEST MINISYSTEM EVER: MERIDIAN-FERRARI'S UNBELIEVABLE \$8,000 SYSTEM

APPLE TV DISSECTED: HOW DOES IT WORK—AND HOW DO IT'S PARTS FIT TOGETHER?

THE FIX FOR HDMI PROBLEMS: ONE COMPANY'S BATTLE TO BRING YOU A BETTER TV

GEORGE™
Brilliant sound. Ultimate control

GEORGE OF THE IPOD JUNGLE

In a cruelly competitive world of generic iPod speaker systems, can Chestnut Hill Sound's George climb to the top of the food chain?

The spectacular success of Apple's iPod has spawned a near-endless invention of accessories, from carrying cases to Nike's iPod pedometer. One of the newest is George, from Massachusetts-based start-up Chestnut Hill Sound. It's also one of the slickest. George has a sophisticated remote control that resembles the in-wall control pads used in the latest Niles and Russound multiroom systems, as well as two-way speakers and a built-in subwoofer—all rare features that make it a standout in the otherwise cluttered world of iPod clock radio-style speaker systems.

The center of the action is the remote control, which is really a removable control panel. Unlike a conventional infrared remote, it uses ZigBee two-way wireless technology to communicate with the speaker unit. Because it's two-way, it not only commands George and the iPod nested atop it from as far away as 30 feet, but its backlit display also gives you a readout of which tune is playing on the iPod, and lets you browse the iPod's contents by artist, genre, playlist, etc. Flick over to the AM/FM tuner and the remote tells you the frequency of the station you're hearing, and lets you scan four pages of six station presets each.

When it's not being cradled in the user's hand, the remote rests nicely between George's speaker grilles. You'll never wonder where the volume control is; if you can't figure out that it's the big knob right in the middle, then you probably weren't smart enough to plug George into an AC outlet in the first place. When you pull the remote off George's face, it reveals a mute button—a handy feature that makes it easy to gag George when the phone rings and you can't find the remote.

"The iPod's screen goes black once it's placed in the dock, but since George's remote essentially duplicates the information in the iPod's display, that's no problem (unless, of course, you want to watch video). I find it extremely intuitive to use the remote to select the music I want..."

George has two alarms built into it, each of which can trigger an alarm tone, the radio station of your choice, or a pre-programmed song on the iPod.

George's story isn't all about control—its performance is also well above average. Unlike most table radios, George contains real two-way speakers, each comprising a small woofer with a coaxially mounted tweeter. It also has a separate, downward-firing 4-inch

BY EDWARD B. DRISCOLL, JR. • PHOTOGRAPHY BY CORDERO STUDIOS

EXCERPT FROM ROBB REPORT HOME ENTERTAINMENT • SEPTEMBER 2007





A hatch atop George allows easy docking of your iPod, and plastic inserts let it seat all standard iPod and iPod Nano models. The iPod does not show song information when the unit is docked atop George. Other MP3 players can be plugged into George's back.

subwoofer. A knob on the back lets you adjust the subwoofer volume, a feature particularly useful if it will be placed in a bass-reinforcing area of a room, such as in the corner. You can also use the remote to tweak the tone to your personal taste. While George isn't the loudest music system in the world, it was designed for slightly greater output than you would get from a Bose Wave system.

A more significant goal of George's designers was to create a rich overall sound with a minimum of artificial electronic processing. There's not much in the way of stereo separation, but that's the nature of George's small chassis.

Also in the rear of George is a USB jack for updating the unit's firmware; a stereo headphone jack; a preamp output that lets George serve as the source for a full-blown hi-fi system; and an auxiliary input for connecting, say, a CD player or a satellite radio tuner. This last jack ensures that non-iPod MP3 players

can connect with George, though its remote will not control them.

Our review unit is white with two detachable light gray speaker grilles. It certainly looks handsome underneath a white or off-white iPod, and probably won't detract from your room decor. "Case covers" in cherry, dark brown walnut, and black oak, with color-coordinated speaker grilles, became available just



The removable control panel serves as a remote control. Bidirectional communication allows the panel to show the contents of your iPod, the tune you've selected, etc.



as I finished this review.

The only real difficulty I encounter with George is installing its lithium-ion battery, which hides behind a panel secured by a small Phillips-head screw. Chestnut Hill includes a screwdriver, but its soft plastic design makes it rather difficult to use, as it frequently slips off the screw head. You are better off using your own.

George ranks among the more costly of the iPod speaker systems available today, but given its great sound and the unmatched convenience of being able to select tunes from your easy chair, it could well be considered the king in the jungle of iPod systems. **HE**

DESCRIPTION

iPod speaker system/alarm clock station with detachable two-way wireless remote control and 24-preset AM/FM tuner

COMPONENTS

3.5-inch paper cone woofer, 1-inch coaxially mounted Mylar dome tweeter, 4-inch paper cone subwoofer

CONNECTIONS

Multipin iPod connector, 3.5mm stereo jacks for headphones, preamp output, and auxiliary input, spring clips for AM antenna, F-connector for FM antenna, USB jack for firmware updates

DIMENSIONS

14.25 x 5 x 8.6 inches

PRICE/CONTACT

PRICE: \$499 with remote charging stand. Case cover sets from \$29 to \$99.

CONTACT: 617.618.1800, chillsound.com