

# **iPod speakers: New offerings cute, compact, colorful**

April 9 2009, By Eric Benderoff

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So many iPod speaker systems are available that finding the "best" could take a year. But you can sort speaker systems by style or function, so today's theme is cute and portable.

I offer three iPod speaker options, ranging from "Wow, what a deal" to "A shame that costs so much."

iHome \_ Let's start with the great deal: the iHome iH15 LED Color-Changing Speaker System. The retail price is \$60, but I found it at Amazon.com for \$43. This speaker changes colors. No, it's not a "mood" player that changes colors to match the nature of a song like a '70s groovy mood ring (happy, nervous, sad or stressed). It alternates between five colors at different paces. You can change colors rapidly, slowly or keep it on the color of your choice.

My kids loved the iHome iH15, thinking the changing colors livened up their dancing. Plus, it can double as a night light for a kid's room. (You can keep the colors on even with the music off.)

The sound is great for such an affordable unit; it has a subwoofer and two speakers.

The iHome iH15 does not have a remote control, which is a minor drawback. That may sound picky, but remotes are handy if you're in a home office, the phone rings and the speaker is on a shelf across the room.

iBoo -- This cute little ghost -- available for \$80 at Amazon.com in red, white or blue -- can kick out the tunes. The iBoo looks harmless, but it rocks. It's a more affordable version of Speakal's iPig and iPanda line of music players. I favorably reviewed the iPig last year.

In a side-by-side comparison with the iH15, the iBoo was clearly better. The music was warmer, with more clarity at louder levels. At lower levels, though, you may not detect a noticeable difference.

The iBoo comes with a remote to navigate your iPod's menu to find specific songs, artists and playlists. Like most other iPod speaker systems (and those reviewed here), an auxiliary input is included to attach other portable players.

To control the iBoo without the remote, you touch the sides (where ears would go if this weren't a ghost) to increase or lower volume. At the top, there are touch controls for back, forward and pause.

The fun touch controls are more robust than the iHome's controls, which offer only on/off, volume and color-changing buttons.

Is the iBoo worth twice the price of the iHome iH15? Yes, but you'll still be happy if you go with the cheaper model.

eFizz -- I like the eFizz Travel, but it is too expensive and doesn't sound as good as either of the above units. It sells for \$118 at Amazon.

Yet it's a likable player. The design is elegant, and it's made for road warriors. The speaker is small, light (2 pounds) and fits easily into an overnight bag.

Made by a Swiss company called Ewoo, the eFizz includes a remote control and, when fully charged, it will play for up to 20 hours. I used it

for several hours during a spring garden cleanup, then several more inside my house, and it never ran out of juice.

That means you can toss it into a suitcase and don't need to bring the power brick.

As for sound, the eFizz is a little tinny but acceptable for such a compact speaker system. The two other units, while better in terms of sound, won't travel as well.

Still, with the variety of iPod speakers available, you could probably find a more affordable travel option.

If you've got a favorite speaker system, share your thoughts.

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Citation: iPod speakers: New offerings cute, compact, colorful (2009, April 9) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-04-ipod-speakers-cute-compact.html>

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