



Kef

Picoforte 3 iPod speaker system

\$699

I reckon Jesus would forgive me if I 'forgot' to return this testing unit. Or maybe not. I'm tempted though, because the Picoforte 3 is an exceptional iPod speaker system. It really stands out, and that's not just because it has two separate speakers, unlike many of its self-contained peers.

Kef is an English-born company that has been making high-quality loudspeakers for 35 years. Indeed, Kef's silver icon is stamped onto this system as a seal of its quality construction.

Gorgeous looking, the Picoforte comprises two separate egg-shaped speakers, a small dock and a relatively powerful amplifier, all in a stunning piano-black finish (the system is also available in white). Everything about the Picoforte is immaculate and nicely put together, including the box packaging, which has an outside compartment to hold the cables and remote. As for putting it together, it was a doddle, though had I got stuck the simple manual with its clear diagrams would have led the way.

The Kef's components are beautifully built and have a reassuring feel and weight to them, yet the whole system isn't particularly large and wouldn't hog your desk space. The eggs have removable magnetic grilles, which just smacks of hi-fi. These speakers can be angled or even wall mounted should you desire. This really takes the Picoforte out of the realm of desktop speakers into the world of small room entertainment system. Even more so because you can run it into your TV to watch video from your iPod or even your laptop using the

3.5mm minijack adapter at the front.

Now for the really important part: how it sounds. I started off with Duffy's 'Hanging On Too Long' and immediately thought: "Wow". You could really hear the intro blooming. The stereo separation was just great, and I could distinguish a clear left and right channel, which is not something you can say about many iPod speakers. This stunning machine really captured the full range of sound, which was further illustrated when I booted up Damien Rice's 'Cold Water'. There was a real sense of scale and I could feel the music washing over me. It was more like listening to proper bookshelf hi-fi speakers than an iPod dock.

As for the bass, I set my iPod to Massive Attack's 'Karmacoma'. The speakers didn't go really low, but the bass that was there was perfectly acceptable, especially when you remember that this is an iPod speaker system.

The Kef gets a big thumbs up. It displayed real hi-fi virtues and fabulous good looks, all at a ridiculously inexpensive price.

■ JESKA INNES

BOOM FOR YOU ROOM

Some overseas reviews have lamented the lack of bass in the Picoforte 3. But remember that nearly all iPod docks lack this oomph unless there's a separate subwoofer. Should you wish to ramp up your bass, the Picoforte has a line level connection for a sub. Kef offers its own options in the PSW1000.2 (\$599) and the stylish PSW2500 (\$999), but any good powered sub will work with the Picoforte.

DETAILS

SPECIFICATIONS:

SPEAKERS: Two-way bass reflex

FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 60Hz-55kHz

POWER OUTPUT: 100dB

DIMENSIONS: 245 x 125 x 150mm (H/W/D)

WEIGHT: 2kg

FINISHES: High gloss black and high gloss white

PICOFORTE DOCK AND AMP MODULE

INPUT: 3.5mm minijack

OUTPUT: Line level

VIDEO OUTPUT: S-Video or composite

AUDIO OUTPUT: 2 x 35W

WEIGHT: 0.75kg

DIMENSIONS: 29 x 101 x 85mm (H/W/D)

CONTACT:
www.easternhifi.co.nz

PROS

- ✦ Hi-fi sound
- ✦ How can it cost so little?
- ✦ Total babe
- ✦ Quality through and through

CONS

- ✦ I'm drawing a blank

VERDICT

A little hi-fi system that just happens to use the iPod as its source