

iPOD DOCKING STATIONS

## Yamaha TSX-70

# Small box, big heart

Every time I walk into an electronic shop, I am astounded by the sheer amount of iPod docks that are available. You can spend anything from R500 to a small fortune on a dock – and often the only aspects guiding your decision will be the available budget, and whether it will look good in your house.

Luckily for me, I will be able to make a more informed decision than most when it comes to choosing who gets my money for an iPod dock: I've borrowed a TSX-70, one of Yamaha's new range of iPod-compatible miniature hi-fi systems.

The unit is compact and retro in design, and fits quite neatly on my bedside table. The two front speakers are nestled behind a fine black mesh grille, and encased in a piano black front panel with three small dials and a hidden display, which is illuminated in orange when the device is switched on.

All of the control buttons have been moved

to the top of the unit, leaving the front fascia very clean and, in my opinion, quite handsome.

The side and rear panels are wrapped in what I can best describe as a type of resin, but with the texture of home-made paper. A degree of customization is offered, in that this resin finish can be ordered in a variety of colours.

The amber display shows the time only, but the illumination is soft and unobtrusive, ensuring that it didn't disturb me while I was asleep.

Another important consideration when it comes to these bedside units is that they need to be easy to use, as most interaction will occur when you are either very tired and want to go to bed, or very, very tired and don't want to get out of bed.

Setting the alarm is so easy that it can be done in the dark, although I sometimes found it a bit too simplistic. You see, you cannot set an alarm volume or an iPod track that is



## Vital Stats

**Inputs** ..... iPod dock, stereo mini jack  
**Tuner** ..... FM stereo  
**Drivers** ..... 2x 40 mm full-range drivers, 1x 55 mm woofer, 1x SR-Bass unit  
**Output** ..... 16 watts total (6 ohm, 1 kHz, 10% THD)  
**Dimensions (WxHxD)** ..... 210x109x134 mm  
**Weight** ..... 1,4 kg

### VERDICT

A stylish desktop or bedside docking system with loads of features and a surprisingly convincing and punchy delivery. Not enough power for big rooms, though.

**PRICE** ..... R2 880

**SUPPLIED BY** ..... Balanced Audio  
 011-314-0760

**WEBSITE** ..... [www.balancedaudio.co.za](http://www.balancedaudio.co.za)

different from the current settings.

This means that you have to first queue the right song on your iPod, and set the volume to the desired level, before you set the actual alarm. The process becomes even more problematic if, like me, you go to bed later than your partner and setting your alarm is the equivalent of setting off the alarm.

When you eventually do get the wake-up call, you'll be happy to know that the Yamaha goes about its waking-up task with subtle intelligence.

You have the option of either being woken up by the radio, a track on your iPod, or a series of old-school alarm beeps. The beeps are terribly intrusive, and opting for the radio is too risky (you could be unlucky and have an advert jingle stuck in your head all day), so I naturally chose the iPod as the wake-up source.

The clever part is that three minutes before the time your alarm has actually been set for, the dock will start to play the selected

source – but very, very softly at first. During the three minutes that follow, it will then progressively nudge up the volume until the preset volume has been reached and a single beep is chimed.

I found that this allowed me to wake up more gradually and generally in a better mood, than when having to cope with the jarring experience of an instant, instantly loud alarm.

Although the unit is designed for bedside use, the sound quality is admirable and uncompromised. The Yamaha also didn't break a sweat when used in a bigger room as a general-purpose audio source for background music.

Tonal range was quite astonishing, thanks to the integrated subwoofer, which adds substance to the overall delivery. An extended

stereo mode makes for a more spacious, open soundstage, but the DSP music extender sounded too artificial.

The TSX-70 was able deliver a sound that was clear and punchy, but did start sounding a little ragged around the edges when played at loud volumes. I wouldn't recommend it as a primary music source in larger rooms, but the overall performance exceeded expectations for a unit in this league.

The Yamaha comes with a small but useful remote control handset that makes accessing the most important functions more convenient, while also including transport buttons for the iPod.

I do have an issue with the docking mechanism, though. I tried an iPod Nano, a Touch and 4th Generation Classic – but only the bigger Classic slotted snugly into the

dock. The others (especially the Nano) were not easy to slot onto the connector, and tended to slide about in the process.

Yamaha doesn't supply separate adapters for different iPods – those need to be bought from an Apple supplier, at an exorbitant cost. I would have expected Yamaha to supply compatible adapters as part of the package.

That aside, I enjoyed the Yamaha so much that I've ended up buying it. The preemptive alarm is the feature that sold me, together with the styling and the decent sound.

The Yamaha TSX-70 is a top-class desktop or bedside system, but the price is on the steep side, especially considering the number of cheaper dock-based systems on the market. But then, class and quality never come cheaply!

**Adam Schoeman**



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