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Hercules i-XPS 250 iPod speakers

Can Hercules win out in an already crowded market?

by Stuart Miles published on 27 April 2007

Hercules, better known for its Thrustmaster graphics cards and gaming accessories, has taken the brave move of launching an iPod speaker dock. So can the £69 speaker set compete with the plethora of offerings already on the market? We get listening to find out.

Called the i-XPS 250, the speaker set, not to be confused with Dell's XPS gaming range, is a 2.1 speaker system that allows you to connect your iPod or other MP3 player and share the music with friends etc.

Housed in a single box and available in black, the unit offers 25W RMS output and comes with the usual range of adapters for connecting the speaker system to iPod 30GB, 60GB, 80GB, iPod nano 2GB, 4GB, 8GB and iPod mini devices.

As with most iPod speaker sets the unit acts as a charging unit as well and slotting your iPod into the speaker means you'll always have a charged player whether you're playing it or not.

Sound is controlled completely via the speaker set avoiding unnecessary conflict between the two units and those "sans" iPod can connect their player of choice - including the shuffle via a 3.5mm jack at the back.

Hercules using their soundboard technology has also included a bass amplification system, which combined with speaker's 3D effect supposedly "produces a truly enveloping/cocooning sound for a comfortable listening experience" in practice it's anything but, with the 3D effects button doing little to improve the overall noise.

That 3D effect button is all the control you'll get over your sound and the speakers lack even treble or bass controls either on the unit or the included remote control - you only get volume,



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forwards, backwards, play and on/off.

Sound can be cranked up enough to enjoy at a quiet soirÉe, however don't expect it to blow your socks off and although no match for the likes of the Bose or Monitor Audio speaker sets (to be honest at a quarter of the price we wouldn't expect it to) we've tested in the past, the sound is still rather flat and lacklustre.

VERDICT

It's not that the offering from Hercules is terribly bad, it's just that we weren't that impressed with the performance and design of the unit to want to get excited about it.

This is a case of "you get what you pay for" and the price reflects that. If the budget is tight then this will suffice, but it won't blow you away.

At a glance

What is it?

iPod speaker set

Good

Cheap, produces okay sound

Bad

3D effects button doesn't offer 3D effects, no bass or treble control

Verdict

If that budget is tight then this will suffice, but it won't blow you away

Price £60

Our score

6/10

Your score

?/10