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## GEAR4 ProControl AV iPod dock

The solution for connecting your iPod?

by Paul Lester published on 11 December 2008

There are bags of iPod accessories out there but a dock is arguably one of the most useful, allowing you to plant your iPod in place to synchronise it with iTunes, charge it when not in use and send your tunes to a beefy stereo system. Some, like Gear4's ProControl AV, allow you to output video content to a television as well, and with the increasing abundance of digital video in the form of podcasts and YouTube clips it's a necessary feature in the modern market.

Gear4 gets off to a good start with a tidy black design that keeps an iPod video, nano, touch or mini snug through a range of removable adaptors. A Mini-USB port on the back allows you to connect it to a computer with the supplied cable to synchronise tunes, and an AV Composite connection, with a cable and Scart connector supplied in the box, sends media elsewhere.

It comes with a remote that offers a good degree of control to help operate your player from afar, including volume, repeat and a directional pad to navigate the menus. Like many such devices we did find this a little unresponsive and it needs to be pointed directly at the IR receiver unless you want to repeatedly mash the buttons for a response.

An inherent drawback of these sorts of devices is that video is often encoded specifically for an iPod's relatively small screen in the most efficient way in order to save space. For this reason you'll find video clips are pretty blocky and of poor quality on a larger screen like a television, something that becomes particularly apparent on 40-inch sizes and upwards. This isn't Gear4's fault and unless someone is savvy enough to build some sort of upscaler into such a device it's something you'll have to live with. What we did notice was that photo playback in the case of relatively high resolution images still left something to be desired; results seemed



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unnecessarily pixellated and colour reproduction didn't appear to be that accurate.

Audio quality is pretty good provided you keep the iPod's volume at a reasonable level to avoid distortion and the device synchronises and charges as you'd expect.

In the light of a raft of alternative solutions in this market we were a little underwhelmed by Gear4's latest effort, which doesn't really offer anything new. It's certainly capable, but considering the high asking price would struggle to recommend it over some far cheaper competitors.

## VERDICT

The ProControl AV certainly looks nice and would fit in well with a modern and stylish home cinema setup, but with issues over quality, inherent problems with low-resolution video playback and an unresponsive remote, it seems like you're paying a lot of money for a device that (partly through no fault of its own) is hardly an inspiring way to enjoy media from your portable player on a big screen.

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## At a glance

### What is it?

An iPod dock that can handle video

### Good

Tidy, solid design, cables and adaptor supplied

### Bad

Questionable performance in some areas, unresponsive remote, expensive

### Verdict

The ProControl AV is capable but you're paying a lot of money for a product whose only real highlight is a tidy design

**Price** £49.99

**Our score**

**6/10**

**Your score**

**?/10**