

BBC MUSIC BUYER'S GUIDE

How to shop within your price range

This month: **Active loudspeakers**

ENTRY LEVEL

Epoz AktiMate Mini £350

Originally designed for studio work, 'active' loudspeakers (with built-in amps) are becoming alternatives to 'passive' cabinets. They differ on two fronts: as well as active speakers having an onboard amp and being mains powered, sometimes one master speaker houses the amp and connects via cable to a 'slave' speaker. In higher-end units both speakers are mains powered and each has one or two amps. Entry-level models aren't too expensive – the Audioengine A5 (£225) is a good starter if you want to connect an MP3 player, but the Epoz AktiMate Mini is recommended as it has an iPod dock. www.redboxav.com



MID-RANGE Epoz AktiMate Maxi £600

All active speakers aren't bound to speaker stands or sturdy shelves, with some models designed for the desktop and hooking up to a PC. In the case of our entry-level choice the odd cabinet arrives with added extras like iPod docks. But our mid-range recommendation goes one better by also featuring FM and internet radio. Last month we awarded the Epoz AktiMate Maxi five stars for its 'rich fluent audio'. But it also scored because you could access a host of web stations via a Wi-Fi connection. This is a great set-up for the digital audio and internet savvy music listener. www.redboxav.com



HIGH-END AVI ADM 9.1 £1,125

Most active speakers will boast RCA inputs (different coloured jacks) to connect up to a CD player, and even outputs to add a subwoofer for boosting lower-end frequencies. The advantage of owning these speakers is that there's no cumbersome separate amp. The onboard amp (or amps) can power the tweeter and mid-bass drivers directly for superior performance. Manufacturers can adapt the amps to suit each driver's characteristics and once you reach the higher end there is more choice of models. The Dynaudio Focus 110A (£1,700) and PMC DB1S-All (£2,060) are worth investigating but the AVI ADM 9.1 wins for having a DAC (digital-to-analogue) convertor built into its system. www.avihifi.co.uk

