

# Hi-Tech Hi-Fi

## Latest Systems Blend Beauty and Function

By Adam Lovinus



The digital renaissance is changing the face of home entertainment faster than ever before. Computers have taken a place alongside stereos and televisions as essential home entertainment devices. The whole-house audio concept — the ability to adjust sound and access digital media from anywhere in the home — has become the dominant trend in home entertainment.

“Our clients want to access their iPod, satellite radio, HD radio, internet radio and other digital music from most rooms,” says James Bark, president of HiTech Homes in Brookfield. “In order to do this in a simple and organized way, we offer touch-screen control. This allows complete access to all your sources and the ability to see your music over an easy to view interface.”

While ease-of-use and high-quality sound are vital considerations, the unique aesthetic of a room has to be taken into account as well. Many want a system that is entirely invisible, so as to not add dissonance to the established design of their space. “We offer many high-end solutions for clients,” Bark says. “If the client does not want to see speakers, they can be camouflaged in ceilings, walls or outdoor environments.”

With that in mind, here’s a quick look at what’s new in home audio, some subtle, and some decidedly not.

### KEF's HHT-5005.2

Large speaker cabinets can clutter the overall look of a room. The KHT-5005.2 surround sound system gives you all the sound at half the size. The four satellite speakers stand 17 inches tall and weigh less than five pounds. A big 250-watt sub provides the oomph of something twice its size, and a unique cabinet design that stacks tweeter on top of woofer offers unexpected clarity. [www.kef.com](http://www.kef.com).

### Scandyna Micropod SE

If you prefer equipment that makes a visual statement, these toy-like Scandynas are an excellent choice. The cartoonish design of the Micropod SE iPod speakers, with boldly-colored plastic coatings and Sputnik-like shape, demands attention even in a silent room. But they’re not just a fashion statement; the design cuts down cabinet vibration and distortion, letting the high-efficiency digital amplifiers ring loud and true. [www.podspeakers.com](http://www.podspeakers.com).



### Orb Audio Speakers

Orb Audio does everything right in their critically acclaimed Orb satellite/sub-woofer combo speakers. Even at the entry level, this system provides audiophile-level reproduction, while the deliciously subtle form-factor — in a wide variety of slick metallic skins — makes a great fashion statement. Best of all, the system is modular so you can start with a basic system, such as the Classic One, and add on to it as your needs require. Prices start at a very reasonable \$549 for the Classic One, and the company offers a free 30-day trial period. Order directly from [www.orbaudio.com](http://www.orbaudio.com).



### Apple TV

Apple TV lets you download and view digital content such as high definition video and music on your television screen. Especially if you’re the owner of a large music collection, you’ll appreciate how easy it is to navigate your music files using Apple’s clean, clear interface, which allows you to browse by artist, genre and even album covers. The console is equipped with the same synchronization functions found in Mac OS X and iPod, and can stream content from up to five different digital devices. This is the epitome of compatible home entertainment. Remote, Apple’s free iPhone application, allows you to use your iPhone for remote control of your iTunes library over your wireless network, and is available for download at [www.apple.com/appletv](http://www.apple.com/appletv).



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### iPort

iPort frees your digital music collection from the constraints of headphones by interfacing your iPod with any home stereo. The most basic iPort system charges the iPod, outputs AV and connects to wireless Internet. Add-

ons offer more advanced options that enable you to control the docked iPod with the various infrared remotes, touch screens and keypads used to control your other home entertainment equipment. [www.iportmusic.com](http://www.iportmusic.com).



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