

Bowers & Wilkins Zeppelin Air

Review

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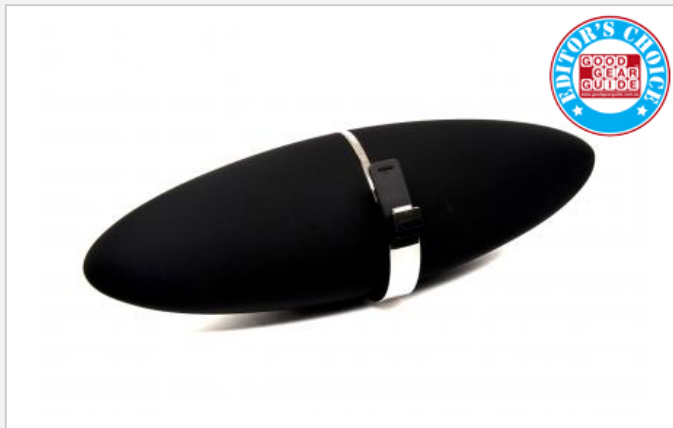
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Price (RRP): \$ 799.00 (AUD)

Expert Rating: ★★★★★ 4.25 / 5.0 - PCWorld

User Rating: ★★★★★ [Be first to review »](#)

✓ **Pros:**

- Excellent sound quality for a medium-sized room
- AirPlay works very easily
- Great design

✗ **Cons:**

- It's so expensive
- Setup for AirPlay could confuse newbies, especially because there is no LCD screen

B&W Zeppelin Air review: A high-end iPod dock with AirPlay wireless music streaming

Bowers & Wilkins' Zeppelin Air iPod dock sounds excellent, looks very stylish and works easily once you've got it set up (an initially confusing process). The only concern we have is with its high price tag, which will deter plenty of prospective buyers.

B&W Zeppelin Air iPod dock: Design and features

The Zeppelin Air is near-identical to the [original B&W Zeppelin](#) — it's got the same zeppelin-esque shape (surprising, really) and iPod/iPhone dock on the front. A thin chrome accent runs down the centre at the front, providing a backdrop for the chrome power and volume controls. These are the only buttons on the entire face of the Zeppelin Air, and there's no LCD screen to tell you the current status or volume — obviously an aesthetic choice, but we would have liked a display to help guide us through the initial setup.

You can plug an iPod or iPhone directly into the B&W Zeppelin Air's iPod dock — we even balanced an iPad on there successfully, although it was a bit precarious — but the biggest reason to buy the Zeppelin Air is its support for Apple's AirPlay wireless music streaming standard over Wi-Fi 802.11b/g/n. With this, you can connect the Zeppelin Air to a Wi-Fi network and stream music from a PC or Mac running iTunes, or an iOS device like an [Apple iPhone](#) or [iPad](#). The back of the Zeppelin Air has an Ethernet port for connecting directly to a wired network, as well as composite video output (for playing iPad or iPhone movies on a TV), USB for firmware upgrades and a 3.5mm auxiliary audio input.



Review by
Campbell Simpson
Good Gear Guide
15 / 04 / 11

+ **Bottom Line:**

Bowers & Wilkins knows that the Zeppelin Air is a premium product. It's very pretty and sounds very good, and now has the advantage of Apple's AirPlay wireless music streaming system -- the only downside is its high price.

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B&W Zeppelin Air iPod dock: Performance and sound quality

Setting up the B&W Zeppelin Air to work with AirPlay is a simple process, but it's easy to make a mistake and users are advised to follow the included instructions rigidly. Using an iPhone, we connected to the Zeppelin Air's private Wi-Fi network, and opened a Web browser to browse to a presupplied IP address where we selected the name of our Wi-Fi network and entered the appropriate password. It's more complicated than just pressing a few buttons, but if you follow the directions everything works as you'd expect. We did make the rookie mistake of entering our Wi-Fi password incorrectly the first time — one of the hazards of testing plenty of [networking products](#) — which meant we had to reset the Zeppelin Air and start again from scratch.

Once we had the B&W Zeppelin Air on our Wi-Fi network, a small symbol appears in the corner of iTunes or the iOS iPod app — selecting it starts streaming whatever music is playing to the Zeppelin Air and lets you control the dock's volume directly. It works seamlessly and music is up and playing within a few seconds.

Sound quality is excellent at both low and high power levels, and retains its musical character no matter the volume. We didn't notice any difference in sound quality between AirPlay streaming and direct connection of our [iPhone 3GS](#) and [iPhone 4](#) — there's no obvious audio compression or loss of clarity when streaming. Bass is strong and upfront with the Zeppelin — it's not going to shake any floors, but it's definitely present and does a good job of providing a punchy backup to other frequencies. Treble is clear without being too harsh, although at *maximum* volume it did get a little ringing in our ears.

B&W Zeppelin Air iPod dock: Conclusion

B&W's Zeppelin Air is a great looking iPod dock. The design hasn't aged since the original Zeppelin's launch in 2007. Once you've got AirPlay set up, it's simple to use — we had songs streaming from an iPhone 4 and iTunes on a Macbook Pro within five minutes of unpacking the Zeppelin Air. Most users will need to follow the instructions to the letter though, and a missed keystroke means a few extra minutes of resetting and restarting the process.

And as you'd expect, the sound quality of the B&W Zeppelin Air is excellent. It's able to handle high volume levels without struggling, and the sound it produces has strong bass and treble without being too forward or fatiguing. All up, it's an excellent product and all that needs to be justified when you're buying is its high price tag.

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