

Driven by services like iTunes and Rhapsody, high-performance audio is moving from the living room to the desktop. *by Robert Archer*

SOUND

for Small Spaces



Unless your name is Robinson Crusoe and you've been living on an island removed from society, you know how popular the iPod has become.

What may not be as obvious, however, is that, as a result, millions of consumers are using their iTunes software for more than just file management for those iPods. Indeed, growing numbers of music listeners are employing their iTunes-equipped computers as source devices, feeding larger audio systems.

Consumers are accomplishing the task of computer-based listening in a number of ways:

- 1. DACs & Integrated Amplifiers.** Digital-to-Analog Converters (DACs) enable high-fidelity music listening. They can be packaged with integrated amps. Many feature USB inputs for computer integration.
- 2. Compact Audio Systems.** Think Bose's Wave Radio. Many of these products incorporate AM/FM tuners, 3.5-mm mini-pin inputs for iPod and computer audio playback, disc drives that play CDs and DVDs and options for satellite radio.
- 3. Active Speakers.** Crossing over from the pro sound world, these special speakers include crossover, amplification and local interface features all inside a single enclosure.

Included on the following pages is a run-up of some popular devices in each of these three categories.

The iPod-playing Zeppelin from B&W lets you place portable, stylish, high-fidelity music anywhere in your home.

CATEGORY: D/A CONVERTERS

Over the past few years, enthusiast audio manufacturers have been slowly adapting to the digital market by re-inventing a favorite product within the tweaky audio world: D/A converters.

Unlike the D/A converters of yesteryear, these products offer USB inputs and are more likely to be used with a computer than a disc player or transport.

Wadia Digital u Upgrade Wadia's USB-based u Upgrade input provides digital storage as well as file upgrades for optimal sound quality. The u Upgrade is engineered to outfit the company's DACs (or, as Wadia calls them, "decoding computers") to step up the depth and sampling frequency of a user's files to 24-bit, 96-kHz as well as to eliminate any jitter issues. www.wadia.com

