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INTERNATIONAL DISTRIBUTORS & CONSULTANTS FOR SPECIALISED  
HIGH-END AUDIO AND HOME CINEMA SYSTEMS



## **PRESS RELEASE**

# **THE WORLD'S BEST IPOD DOCK IS BORN!**

*Krell's KID turns the iPod into a genuine high-end  
audio component!*



### **Krell KID iPod dock**

Krell has succeeded in bringing true high-end sound to iPod playback by developing the KID – the world's best iPod dock. The KID – or 'Krell Interface Dock' – is the first device to perfect the interface between the music stored on an iPod and a high-quality hi-fi system, allowing Apple's ubiquitous pocket player to be considered an audio source component of genuine high-end ability for the very first time.

## The challenge (what's up dock?)

Ever since Apple's first iPod drove the 'MP3 player' concept into mainstream public consciousness, the traditional hi-fi industry has been debating whether it embodies the biggest threat to high-performance audio, or its greatest opportunity. The challenge for those specialist hi-fi manufacturers who are keen to embrace the technology has been to find ways of effectively integrating the iPod into high-quality hi-fi systems, maximising the sound quality that is available when the iPod is used as a source component.

Many solutions are available. The simplest and most cost-effective is to buy a purpose-made interconnect cable to link between an iPod's headphone output and an amp, but this method is compromised in terms of both performance and functionality. Another route is to buy a purpose made dock, designed to integrate an iPod with an external amp and speakers - these can provide improved performance and often improve functionality by adding remote control and so on, but the available sound quality is usually some way behind what can be achieved with a good-quality CD player... until now.

The Krell KID is the first dock that enables an iPod to act as a hi-fi source component of genuine high-end quality. It's been a long time coming; Dan D'Agostino, Krell's CEO and Chief Designer, is a long-standing fan of iPod devices and has been working on the concept for years. His company is arguably the world's most famous manufacturer of high-end components, and to build an iPod dock that meets Krell's exemplary standards was indeed a massive challenge - but finally, it's here!

## Unmistakably Krell

Both inside and out, the KID is unmistakably a Krell product. Its circuits are built from the highest quality components, endowed with Krell's technical know-how and painstaking approach to audio engineering. Among the highlights for audiophiles are balanced differential Class A circuitry and an ultra-low-noise, custom-taper volume control, which help to distinguish this exceptional iPod dock from lesser products on the market.

Perhaps the KID's greatest distinguishing feature, however, is the iPod interface itself. The KID is the first product of its kind to utilise the fully differential output of the internal DAC for iPod devices - unaltered or modified - to deliver the greatest sonic performance possible from this portable medium.

## Top tech

Here's a brief description of how it works. First, the KID's custom-made, self-locating cradle holds the iPod device. Then, the balanced differential signal from the internal DAC is opto-isolated between the device and the

255-step custom-taper volume control, ensuring the lowest possible noise or interference.

The top-quality, digitally controlled analogue bass and treble controls allow custom-equalisation of the source material, helping to level out any sonic inconsistencies between the tracks stored on an iPod. A 3.5mm stereo connector located on the KID's front panel is also direct-wired to the volume control, for connecting additional audio sources.

Balanced differential Class A circuitry is maintained throughout the signal path and fed to the balanced (XLR) and single-ended (RCA phono) outputs. Composite and S-Video outputs are offered as a video pass-through for stored video programming. The KID can be operated via RS-232 protocol in multi-room installations, and also via the supplied, full-function remote control.

## Come to Papa

The KID is designed to act as the interface between an iPod and a high-performance hi-fi system. It maximises the quality of the audio signal obtained from the iPod and provides preamplification and volume control; there is no provision for power amplification on board, so this needs to be provided externally.

On its own, therefore, the KID is ideal for those who wish to integrate their iPod into an existing hi-fi system. But what if you want to build a dedicated iPod system around the KID? That's where the forthcoming Papa Dock steps in...

Available this spring, the Papa Dock is a neat, attractive way of adding power amplification to the KID. The KID sits inside the Papa - a dock within a dock, if you like - and the Papa delivers 150 watts of power per channel to the speakers of your choosing. The result is a fully integrated, beautifully built and reasonably compact solution to filling a room with true, high-end sound from your iPod!

## Can the iPod *really* be a high-end source component?

The iPod has transformed the way in which many millions of people listen to music. It enables you can carry an entire music collection in your pocket, along with other assorted media, and play/view favourite tracks, movie files and images with a few swift finger movements. For music fans that like to get 'out and about' it's a godsend; but for music in the home, its sound quality is way behind that of good-quality hi-fi separates - a decent CD player, for example.

But the quality issue is not so much with the iPod itself as the way you choose to integrate it into a home, loudspeaker-based system. Most cables, docks and integrated iPod systems are not up to the standard of decent hi-fi separates; with the right treatment, however, there's no reason why the iPod - as a digital storage mechanism - can't become a high-quality audio source in its own right.

A further issue is the 'quality' of music stored on an iPod (or, for that matter, any other portable media player). If the music is 'compressed', with a bit-rate on the low side, it's going to have a deeply negative impact on sound quality. However, the higher the bit-rate, the better the sound quality – if you encode music using, say, AAC at 256kbps or above, it can be considered not *too* far from 'CD quality'. Lower bit-rates mean you can store more music on an iPod, but with increasing storage capacities and falling prices, that is becoming less of an issue all the time.

If you're 'ripping' music from a CD to store on an iPod, you have a choice: do you lower the bit-rate to reduce the file size, or increase it to raise the sound quality? The best thing to do from a quality point of view is to encode without compression – then, the track is stored at a quality level that, for all intents and purposes, is identical to the original CD. So, for the best sound quality, choose uncompressed WAV or AIFF; if you want to reduce the file size to store more music but maintain a high level of quality, the next best bet is a 'lossless' compression format like Apple Lossless or FLAC; 'lossy' formats like AAC and MP3 will let you store yet more music, but the quality takes a significant hit so keep the bit-rate as high as possible if you don't want your music to sound like a dull, pale approximation of its former self.

Of course, if you're downloading music from the internet, you're in the hands of the supplier, but you should obviously pick the highest quality you can.

It's always worth remembering that the bit-rate is just one of the things that govern the sound quality of digital music. Many factors from the original recording session onwards play their part; even with CD, the sound quality between discs is hugely variable, so to view tracks stored on an iPod as inevitably inferior is incorrect.

So, in terms of the stored tracks themselves, there is no reason why music on an iPod should be considered inherently inferior to that on a CD; in other words, if the music is stored without lossy compression, a hard-disk component like an iPod has as much potential to act as a genuine, high-end audio source as a CD player. But – and it's a big but – the interface you use between your iPod and your amp has a major influence on how much of that potential quality is realised. With the Krell KID, the quality of this interface is greater than ever before, and for the first time, music stored on an iPod without lossy compression – using uncompressed WAV, for example – can be delivered with true high-end sound quality.

*The KID is Krell's take on what an iPod dock should do: retrieve the music signal, handle it with respect and reproduce it with levels of sound quality that will delight the most critical listener.*

## A quote from Dan D'Agostino, Krell's CEO and Chief Designer, about why he developed an iPod dock

"Friends used to come to my house with music on their iPods, and were keen to hear it on my big system. I realised that there wasn't a product on

the market that would enable us to do this without losing a lot of sound quality. So I thought to myself, why not create a product that would let people play music stored on an iPod-device through a high-quality system, in a way that really does the system justice – the first iPod docking solution for audio enthusiasts, if you like?

“The iPod is really just a hard drive; if you download an MP3 track and play it through a hi-fi system the sound is not great, but it can be made better with a higher quality docking solution. So, we took the iPod’s dual-differential output, ran it through a Krell current gain stage and a high-quality output stage, and added some tone controls, which can often help with compressed music. What’s more, if you store music in uncompressed form – and with an 80GB hard drive you can record a lot of CDs without compression – it sounds just like a CD.”

## Key features

- Opto-isolated connections
- Balanced-differential, Class A circuitry
- 255-step, custom-taper volume control
- 3.5mm stereo input
- Custom-built, self-locating, top-loading cradle
- Digitally controlled analogue bass and treble controls
- Audio outputs: balanced (XLR) and single-ended (RCA phono)
- Video outputs: composite and S-Video
- RS-232 system control
- Remote control
- Exemplary build quality and superior finish
- Dimensions: 33x7x27.7cm (WxHxD)

## Price and availability

### **Krell KID iPod dock**

£1,350

Available now

### **Krell Papa Dock (optional power amplification for Krell KID)**

£2,790

Available April 2008

## More about Krell

Perhaps the world's most famous high-end hi-fi brand, Krell's name is legendary among hi-fi's cognoscenti. For many its beautifully built stereo amps are the best that money can buy, delivering the ideal blend of awesome power, intricate detail and iron-fisted control, yet the Connecticut-based company's wide-ranging portfolio also takes in DVD and SACD players, home cinema processors, multichannel power amplifiers and a range of loudspeakers. If you're looking for a single brand to represent the apex of audio in the home, park your ears here.

## More about Absolute Sounds – the UK distributor for Krell products

Absolute Sounds is the UK's premier importer of high-quality hi-fi and home cinema equipment. The company was formed in 1978 by Ricardo Franassovici, who left a successful career in the music industry to become one of the world's leading hi-fi entrepreneurs. Ricardo's burning desire has always been to give UK-based music fans the opportunity to experience audio at the highest level, cherry-picking the very best components from around the globe to deliver a 'hi-fi boutique' overflowing with highly covetable, high-performance products. Like the finest watches and most prestigious motorcars, these brands deliver finely tuned, supremely engineered products that simply ooze desirability.

*If you are seeking the world's best hi-fi and home cinema equipment, Absolute Sounds is your first port of call.*

## Consumer contact (suitable for publication)

Distributor: Absolute Sounds  
Telephone: 020 8971 3909  
Distributor's website: [www.absolutesounds.com](http://www.absolutesounds.com)  
Manufacturer's website: [www.krellonline.com](http://www.krellonline.com)

## Contact for media enquiries (please do not publish)

For more information, high-resolution images and review samples of products distributed by Absolute Sounds, including Krell disc players, amps and speakers, please contact:

**Tim Bowern**  
**Andy Giles Associates**  
Telephone: 020 8654 8945  
Mobile: 07854 966071  
E-mail: [tim@andygilesassociates.co.uk](mailto:tim@andygilesassociates.co.uk)  
Website: [www.andygilesassociates.co.uk](http://www.andygilesassociates.co.uk)