

# PRODUCT REVIEW

## Edifier Breathe iF600

EDITOR RATING *very good*

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Any iPod/iPhone speaker dock that costs more than \$300 should offer laudable audio performance. No excuses. Extra features are nice, but if the [speakers](#) distort, they hardly matter. Thankfully, the Edifier Breathe iF600 (\$349.95 list) makes up for its lack of extra features with an eye-catching design and quality, powerful audio output. You may be tempted to try to get more for your money with feature-heavy docks in this price range, but you're better off either spending more money on say, the [Bowers & Wilkins Zeppelin Air](#) (\$599.95, 4 stars), which combines top-notch audio with extra features like wireless streaming, or staying in this price range and focusing on audio quality. If you choose the latter approach, the Edifier Breathe is worth a listen.



### Design

Measuring 10.1 by 16.5 by 9.6 inches (HWD), the Edifier is clad in black speaker grille cloth across its entire front face. In that way, it's similar to the Zeppelin Air, but smaller, and shaped less like a Zeppelin and more like Darth Vader's helmet. The lower trim of the front panel is raised in a sort of cutaway wave-shaped line, revealing the lower panel that houses the 30-watt down-firing subwoofer. The docking area for your iPod or iPhone sits at the top of the curved contour and a subtle green indicator lights up just below the docking area when the dock has power. (Interesting note: there's no Power button, so the dock and that green light are always on when the power adapter is plugged in...not exactly eco-friendly.) The back panel is also curved, but it's covered in a smooth gray matte finish. There are Volume, Playback, and Track Forward/Backward controls just below the docking area on the front face, and the power adapter connector and a 3.5mm Aux input are located at the bottom of the rear panel.

The included remote control is well-designed. It's circular, comfortable to hold, and carries a substantial weight without being too heavy. The remote features full iPod menu navigation and Playback controls, plus Volume controls and Mute and Source buttons (for switching between Docked iPods and the Aux input).

### Performance

Last year, I tested the also-good-looking [Edifier Luna5 Encore](#) (\$299.99, 3.5 stars), but I wasn't blown away by its audio performance at high volumes. The Edifier Breathe offers a more solid audio experience. First off, it's more powerful, with a built-in subwoofer. The speakers do not distort at maximum volume, even on tracks with seriously deep bass, like The Knife's "Silent Shout." If there is a fault here, it's that the bass might be a tad *too* intense for some listeners' tastes—and unfortunately, you can't adjust the low-end frequencies or the treble. So, while audiophiles seeking a more flat response system may be disappointed, this is an ideal system for parties and playing loud pop music. That doesn't mean the Breathe doesn't have a more subtle side, however. At moderate volumes, the bass is still clearly articulated and quite present, making kick drums in rock and percussion in classical music, like John Adams's "The Chairman Dances" stand out. The mids and highs are clean, and there doesn't seem to be a genre of music that doesn't shine in some regard on the Breathe. It seems Edifier has put a significant amount of money and research into making better sounding speakers, and the effort has paid off.

That said, \$350 is a lot to pay for an iPod dock that lacks adjustable EQ, streaming capabilities, radio, and video output to watch videos on your HDTV. If you're looking for a system with more features, the Editors' Choice [Altec Lansing Octiv 650](#) (\$199.95, 4 stars) is considerably less expensive, offers strong bass, video out, and comes with adjustable EQ via a free, downloadable app. And, as mentioned before, if your budget is truly flexible, the Zeppelin Air not only sounds better, but streams wirelessly via Apple's AirPlay. However, for \$350, The Edifier Breathe iF600 gets the most important thing—the sound—right, and the included remote is far better than average. It may have a silly name, but the Breathe is worth your attention if you're looking in this price range for a well-designed, solid-sounding dock for your iPod or iPhone.



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