

## **Portable Sound Systems for Entertainers**

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Since I was a child, I've had a fascination with sound systems. I made frequent trips to Radio Shack to get the latest gadget for making fun recordings. Sound is a critical element in all programs. If people cannot hear your voice clearly, their enjoyment of any program will go down and so will their view of you as a performer (unless you're a mime). Quality background music and sound effects add a great deal to any program. As the performer, it is your responsibility to make sure you have good audio at every program. This includes both your voice amplification as well as any soundtrack or background music.

A couple of years ago, I wrote an article about the many advantages of using the iPod as your sound source. If you missed it, the article is available online at [www.cimbura.com/magicians\\_ipod.php](http://www.cimbura.com/magicians_ipod.php) I will assume that you are using one in this article. I will briefly compare several portable sound systems. I have direct experience using these systems.

Often the venue will provide you with a "house" or built-in sound system that you can connect to by using a direct box with your iPod (see previous article). When you arrive onsite, you should evaluate the quality and reliability of their system. The sound systems reviewed here are simple enough that in most situations you can setup and use your own as your primary system or as a backup system if the sound system at the venue should go bad.

Working with a wireless microphone is a requirement for most performers today. Jugglers, magicians, and other performers need the ability to have their hands free and walk around freely...even into the audience. Some of the systems reviewed include a wireless mic, others would require purchase of a separate wireless mic system which is beyond the scope of this article to recommend.

### ***Danelectro Honeytone N-10 Guitar Mini-Amplifier***



This is the smallest, simplest, and least expensive unit. It is available for around \$20 and is a great choice for a battery powered (9v) speaker for the iPod as background music. It can be used for crowds up to 50 people in a small room where you do not need voice amplification. One place it is available is at:

<[www.guitarcenter.com/Danelectro-Honeytone-N-10-Guitar-Mini-Amp-481850-i1398410.gc](http://www.guitarcenter.com/Danelectro-Honeytone-N-10-Guitar-Mini-Amp-481850-i1398410.gc)>

### ***Apollo Portable Wireless 25w PA System***



This is the first all-in-one (wireless mic, amp, and battery powered) system I purchased. I used it for several years and it worked well. One model has a cassette tape recorder built-in for recording your program. Today it sells for around \$330-\$450 depending on the model. Considering other options available today, I believe it is overpriced. Here are some sources:

<[www.shoplet.com/office/db/g14707.html](http://www.shoplet.com/office/db/g14707.html)> or  
<[store.myofficesource.com/apopa5000.html](http://store.myofficesource.com/apopa5000.html)>

### ***Fender Passport 150 Portable PA System***



This is the second system I used and continue to use when the venue is larger, not conducive to good sound (like a gymnasium), or outdoors. It requires purchase of a separate wireless microphone system to connect to it. It sells for about \$500 plus the cost of tri-pod stands and a wireless mic system. It is more expensive and larger but also reaches a larger group. Here's one source:

<[www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B000UNX5I6](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B000UNX5I6)>

### ***Nady WA 120 Portable PA System with Wireless Omni-Lavalier Mic***



The Nady system is the first inexpensive all-in-one unit I found. After the input on my Apollo system went bad, it was cheaper to purchase this unit than it would be to try to repair or replace my Apollo PA. The Nady system inputs are 1/4" phono plugs. It uses standard size batteries that you must purchase separately. It sells for around \$100-\$160 depending on the source. It's a decent system, but ultimately the GTDAudio system is a better value.

To connect your iPod or similar music player to this unit or the Honeyton mini-amp, you'll need:

- 6-Ft. Shielded Cable, 1/8" Stereo Plug to 1/8" Stereo Plug \$7.49 (Radio Shack Model: 42-2387)
- 1/8" Stereo Jack to 1/4" Mono Plug Adapter \$4.39 (Radio Shack Model: 274-348)

It is available at:

<[www.dak.com/reviews/3010story.cfm?Ref=G&PM=PA2&type=GSrch&Srh=portable\\_public\\_address\\_system](http://www.dak.com/reviews/3010story.cfm?Ref=G&PM=PA2&type=GSrch&Srh=portable_public_address_system)> or <[www.instrumentpro.com/P-NADWA120HT.html](http://www.instrumentpro.com/P-NADWA120HT.html)>

### ***GTDAudio SH-120B Rechargeable Portable Wireless Amplifier***



After using this system, I've found it to be a very good performer. It is more compact than the Nady with at least the same quality. It also comes with a carrying case and all three mics (headset, lav, and handheld). The In and Out jacks are 1/8" mini stereo. A custom rechargeable battery is included with the unit.

To connect your iPod or similar music player to the GTDAudio system, you'll need a 6-Ft. Shielded Cable, 1/8" Stereo Plug to 1/8" Stereo Plug \$7.49 (Radio Shack Model: 42-2387)

The GTDAudio system is available from Brian Foshée at B. Happie Entertainment <[www.bhappie.com/sound](http://www.bhappie.com/sound)> 1-888-867-4282 for \$159 plus shipping. If you split the cost of purchasing two units with a friend (or want a backup unit), it's even less expensive. Brian includes a helpful tip sheet that makes using the system easier. For comparison, a similar unit is available at <[www.hisonic.net/SH120B.htm](http://www.hisonic.net/SH120B.htm)> for a higher cost.

### ***Final Recommendations and Tips***

For most performers, I would highly recommend getting an iPod, Honeytone mini-amp, and the GTDAudio system. That would allow you to get through most performing situations with a great audio system that can act as a backup for a built-in house sound system or as your primary audio.

Here are a few sound system tips that could be of value:

- Put heavy-duty Velcro on the back of your iPod and connect it directly to your table so it doesn't fall on the floor and you can clearly adjust the sound track and volume.
- Be sure the output from your iPod is set to about 50% when you set the master volume on your amp. A higher volume will often cause distortion.
- Sometimes you can get buzz on your sound system due to a video projector or other equipment on the same circuit. Carry an extension cord and grounding adapter and attempt to run from a different wall plug or operate the unit off battery power.
- Carry a backup set of cables and adapters in case they should go bad through regular wear and tear. Also carry spare batteries and replace them before critical performances.

Enjoy performing and have fun with better sound and music!

Tim Cimbura is an award winning speaker, entertainer, and technology expert who shares an inspiring message entitled "Child at Heart". <[www.childatheart.com](http://www.childatheart.com)>