The name ‘Fjord’ might suggest Scandinavian design, although slightly higher at 185mm than it is wide or deep (170mm each). And in terms of style, the Tangent Fjord would be our pick of all the fine Superdocks. The silver base accentuates the gloss-black front in an obviously Scandinavian way, thanks to design input from Jacob Jansen, and we were not in the least surprised to find said Jensen behind several decades of B&O products, and also the Steinway-Lyngdorf Model D music system, one of the world’s most stunning stereo speaker designs.

**Equipment**

So what’s on offer from the Fjord? In terms of conventional hi-fi, this is the most complete system here, thanks to its inclusion of a slot-loading CD player in addition to the top iPod/iPhone dock, and FM radio. (There is also a DAB+ variant of the Fjord available for a small premium, which takes the price to $1199.) While there are no streaming or internet goodies built in here, the recent upgrade to Apple’s iOS allows streaming from your PC/Mac-based iTunes direct to your iPhone/iPod touch anyway, and that solution works better than most direct streaming models, especially in terms of control. As noted under the Conran Audio review, good design should be about more than a nice box, and again here the benefits spill into ease of use. The Fjord can be easily wall-mounted, although not too high, since the onboard controls are all touch-sensitive keys located on the top of the unit. And these we absolutely loved — the controls are entirely flush and invisible until back-illuminated. And masterfully, only the controls you need are illuminated at any given time, which proves a huge boon. So for example, when you’re setting an alarm, everything disappears except a Select key and the ones intended for up and down. It saves a lot of time, and is further assisted by the use of words rather than icons, except a few widely-recognised symbols for eject, play, etc.

There is also an auxiliary minijack input at the rear, and a 10-key remote control, which we suspect Mr Jensen delegated to a junior design team, it being less impressive, although an aesthetic match for the main unit.

**Performance**

Slide a CD smoothly into the Tangent and it instantly impresses with a spacious sound that belies its dimensions. As with the Arcam rCube, stereo imaging is assisted by the speakers firing from the sides of the cube — bass as well as treble in this case, since it uses just a pair of three-inch full-range drivers. This does limit the bass emerging (you won’t be shaking up any neighbours), but you can still feel the thud of a bass drum, and from 100Hz upwards this is a high-quality system suitable for any small or medium-sized rooms — home office, bedroom (twin alarms), small lounges. The sonic balance can be adjusted by rather too many EQ options — there’s loudness on/off, bass/treble controls, and a set of EQ options, all of which can be paled on top of each other if you’re not careful. This was one occasion where we did opt for the ‘Pop’ EQ option, which seemed best at nudging up the bass without causing deleterious side-effects.

The radio section worked great — a telescopic rod antenna extends from the top, though it can’t be rotated to improve reception, nor replaced by an external aerial. The Conran’s raCube stands proud. It’s not the lightest portable in the world at 5kg, but it’s surely one of the most hi-fi ways on earth to carry your tunes around — though we suspect Arcam intends the raCube’s portability to be less ‘on-the-shoulder ghettoblaster-style street use’ and more a bonus of easy relocation — out to the patio or off to the holiday home. It’s not cheap, and we didn’t enjoy the sound quite as much as some others, but as portable hi-fi goes, it cuts a unique path.

**Conclusion**

We enjoyed the Fjord greatly. It is perhaps not inexpensive given its conventionality of sources, but it’s certainly a high-quality piece of equipment, beautifully designed.

**Tangent Fjord**

Price: $1099
Dimensions (whd): 170 x 170 x 185mm
Weight: 3.5kg
- **Scandinavian design**
- **CD player as well as dock**
- **DAC**
- **Remote included**
- **Overkill on EQ options**

**Contact:** Syntec International
Tel: 1800 648 628
Web: www.syntec.com.au

**Final Verdict**

With such SuperDock joys, which hero would we choose to save us?

The good news is that sonically, there’s not a duffer in the contest. We reckon you could take home any of the docks here and you’d get sound either as good as you were expecting, or substantially better. So how to choose? We can run through the horses-for-courses arguments first.

Want portability coupled with quality? Arcam’s raCube stands proud. It’s not the lightest portable in the world at 5kg, but it’s surely one of the most hi-fi ways on earth to carry your tunes around — though we suspect Arcam intends the raCube’s portability to be less ‘on-the-shoulder ghettoblaster-style street use’ and more a bonus of easy relocation — out to the patio or off to the holiday home. It’s not cheap, and we didn’t enjoy the sound quite as much as some others, but as portable hi-fi goes, it cuts a unique path. The B&O — well, it’s crazy, innit. Looks like a bicycle, sounds like rather a bass beast for our tastes. And costs a fair bit, though perhaps less than you’d expect from the company. Still it does an iPod, which is pretty darned cool, and has undeniably cachet. We reckon you’ll already have decided if this is the dock for you.
We test this hugely powerful subwoofer!

MK SOUND SB1250

REVIEWED

SHOW REPORT BRISTOL 2012

THE ITALIAN JOB

Single-ended Class-A valve design improved by user bias calibration

Manley Chinook Phono Preamp

Usher Audio S-520 Bookshelf Speakers

Unison Research S6 Integrated Amplifier

D'Agostino Momentum Monobloc Power Amps

B.M.C. BCCD1 & DAC1 CD Player & DAC/Pre

MK Sound SB1250 Subwoofer