



>>IN-CAR iPhone SOLUTION

Belkin TuneBase FM with Hands-Free



£56 Want an integrated car system for your iPhone without buying a Merc? Belkin has the very thing!

There's no substitute for a manufacturer-fitted iPod/iPhone system for your car; built-in holders, 30-pin dock connectors, track info and album artwork on the dash – the works. Sadly, though, proper integration remains the preserve of luxury brands or at least high-end models in manufacturers' lines, but Belkin has the answer for the rest of us.

Though you can use this system with any iPod, it's designed for the iPhone, and the beauty is that it pretty much does everything you want. Of course, it charges your iPhone, so you arrive with a fully-charged device. (It even boasts a USB port on the stalk, so you can still plug in, say, your sat-nav as well as charging your iPhone.)

Its main feature, though, is an FM transmitter, broadcasting your

iPhone's music to your car's stereo. It's smart, scanning the airwaves to pick one that's clear of interference. The frequency is then displayed on the (rotatable) screen, and you just have to tune your car's stereo to that frequency. (Nice touch: RDS-capable stereos display the station name as 'TuneBase.')

FM's a bit clunky for this, and on long journeys you may find you have to rescan and retune a few times; audio quality's pretty clean, and there's a 3.5mm jack for optional direct connection. A large button – with a handy chin that lets you grip

“The beauty of the Belkin TuneBase FM is that it pretty much does everything you could want it to”

and press it easily – lets you play/pause, skip and backtrack with the same clicks you'd be used to on the iPhone headset, and it even lets you do Voice Control on an iPhone 3GS. It can struggle to pick up your voice clearly enough, especially at motorway speeds, but it can work.

Lastly, it lets you do hands-free calling, pausing any playing music when a call comes in, and channelling the audio through your car's speakers. Callers reported reasonable audio quality, though it was a little quiet.

Depending on where your cigarette lighter socket is, the (very versatile) stalk might get in the way, but you might be lucky enough for it to position your iPhone at a handy enough height for it to be useful for GPS apps such as Sygic (see our iPhone app reviews on p98).

Christopher Phin

CONTACTS

Manufacturer: Belkin
www.belkin.com

Latest price on TechRadar
www.techradar.com/628966

SPECIFICATIONS

Frequency: 88.1MHz-107.9MHz

Features: speakerphone, ClearScan, charge USB device, 3.5mm jack

PROS & CONS

- ➕ ClearScan and RDS
- ➕ Great design and build quality
- ➕ Can charge other USB device
- ➖ FM can be crackly and drop out

VERDICT



“As a cheap way of tying your iPhone into your car's system, it can't be beat.”