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Sony 6GB Network walkman (NW-A1000)

Sony's new range of MP3 players is the company's best yet, but can the A1000 live up to the new hype or has the electronics giant got it all wrong?

by Stuart Miles published on 23 December 2005

Sony's new range of MP3 players is the company's best yet, showing that when it wants to, the company can be just as creative as it was with the original Walkman range 25 year ago. So does the new 6Gb Network Walkman or (NW-A1000) live up to the new hype or has the electronics giant got it all wrong? Open the box and the words "Every moment has its music" glares out at you. It's marketing spiel at its best and it embodies the idea that this is a product to excited about. Out of the box and the NW-A1000 is thin, compact and shiny. The highly polished casing gives nothing away and Sony as with its other players in the range uses the OLED screen that disappears when not in use. The player is available in a range of colours including purple, and on the whole the minimalist design of the NW-A1000 has a lot going for it on the style front. While the top half is for the (almost invisible when off) screen, the bottom is for the controlling buttons and they allow you to access the menu and songs either via the d-pad or an option and back button. The sides feature a Volume, Hold and Link buttons. The Link button isn't, as you would expect, a button that forces the device to link to a computer, but an interesting way of surfing through your music collection on the 6Gb player. Pressing the button searches for tracks by artists that belong to the similar genre to the artist of the current playing track. It's surprising what the player throws up and certainly brings new life in how you will see your music collection. Sprucing up your music collection is just one of the great things about the NW-A1000. Rather than offer one shuffle mode, the unit has three: Favourite, Intelligent, and Year. Year is the most worthy of note because it randomly selects a year



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based on the music in your collection and then only plays tracks from that year according to the data in its ID tag. Hold your hand over the screen as it randomly selects it and it is like playing those games where a radio station plays you 10 tracks from a certain year and you've got to guess what year it is. The NW-A1000 also tracks the songs you play so you can build a history, as well as offering you a top-100 playlist based on what you listen to the most. If that isn't enough, you can also search alphabetically and shoot straight to any letter without having to scroll through thousands of tracks. But it is not all good, good, good. Where the NW-A1000 fails against other MP3 players on the market, is in its support for images or album art. We say support, but what we actually mean is that there isn't any. The OLED screen may allow Sony to offer a far superior battery life over most of its competitors, but the trade-off is its inability to view anything else other than text relating to songs. While virtually every other MP3 manufacturer now services those wanting to view images, Sony has yet to bring its picture viewing technology from its cameras to its MP3 player range effectively and the NW-A1000 is another unit that follows suit.

VERDICT

With a long battery life, good sound via the included headphones, a slim body and innovative search features the NW-A1000 has a lot going for it. However the lack of picture support could be an issue if you are looking for a MP3 player with this functionality to show off that holiday you've just been on. On the whole, another sharp shooter from Sony.

At a glance

What is it?

MP3 player

Good

Styling, innovative search features

Bad

No picture support, must use Sony Connect

Verdict

On the whole, another sharp shooter from Sony

Price £169

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10