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Motorola Moto U9 mobile phone

Can this music phone bring you the noise?

by Stuart Miles published on 29 February 2008

Motorola love the Razr. Ever since it launched the thin handset that looked like an extra from Tron it can't get the design out of its head, so is the U9 just more of the same, or something worth taking note of? We take a closer look.

The Moto U9 is a pebble shaped clamshell phone that comes with a glossy finish on the top and a rubbery plastic finish on the back. Buttons, limited to the sides are kept to a minimum and the thin design could easily be mistaken for a compact in a makeup bag rather than a mobile phone.

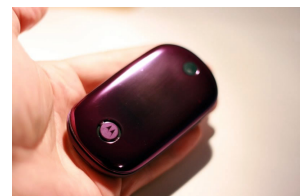
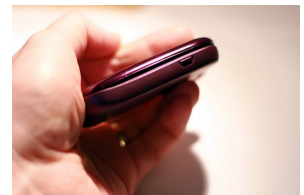
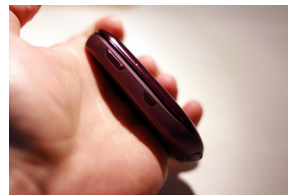
Open the handset up and it reveals a large but flat keypad made from just one piece of material. The keypad is thankfully unadventurous and features a standard d-pad. Trying to express the phone's music player there is also a dedicated music button.

On the top of the clamshell's inside is a 2.0-inch QVGA, 262K TFT screen that seems rather dwarfed by the size of the casing.

Back on the front and the metallic gloss finish (in our review unit a pink/purple colour) hides a 1.45-inch 128 x 160, 65K OLED which is used to display either a clock for the time, menus, or for accessing tracks on the phone's music player.

To access and control the music you get touch-sensitive buttons for pause/play, fastforward and reverse at the bottom of the screen. All sounds amazing until you see that there is no way of turning the music player on or off when the phone is closed. You can change the ring choice from ring to vibrate to silent but not access the music player other than control it once you've opened the phone to turn it on.

The Moto U9 offers Microsoft Windows Media Player 11 support and plays Windows WMAv10



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plus Janus DRM, MP3, AAC, AAC+, AAC+ enhanced files, however only comes with a pathetic 25MB of on-board memory.

You can expand this to 4GB via microSD, but you don't get anything in the box. Compare this to Nokia, Samsung and Sony Ericsson's music phones and it's very poor indeed.

Transferring files to and from the phone has to be done via Bluetooth as Motorola haven't included a cable to do it in the box. Again another pretty cheap move and while the phone does support Bluetooth 2.0 you'll have to factor in the time when transferring your songs over.

On the upside, the process is drag and drop so you don't need additional software installed and will therefore also work with an Apple mac.

When it comes to sound performance the handset performs well on headphones (no option of using your own though), but the external speaker is a bit on the tinny side.

Back inside and the Moto U9 features the company's newer operating system complete with its "spinner" feature that basically means applications have been assigned to the d-pad up/down/left/right keys.

The interface is a vast improvement both graphically and from a usability point of view to previous interfaces, but while other manufacturers are now moving on to more intuitive graphical approaches this interface is a far cry away. Think Nokia or Sony Ericsson around 5 years ago and you'll get the picture.

The phone also comes with a now almost defacto for the industry 2 megapixel camera with video mode but with virtually zero memory on-board as mentioned above you'll have to invest in a memory card from day one.

VERDICT

Motorola say that the "MOTO U9 combines the

At a glance

What is it?

Mobile phone

Good

Style from the outside looks good

Bad

25MB of internal memory, keypad uncomfortable to use, no dedicated music button on the outside

Verdict

In reality it's more of the same with little to write home about

Price price dependant on contract

Our score

5/10

Your score

?/10

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surprising with the familiar with the next popular spin on Motorola's classic clamshell design".

In reality it's more of the same with little to write home about. The design, while somewhat appealing on the outside, is flawed by the lack of a dedicated music button; inside and the keypad is uncomfortable to use.

The lack of any real memory is in the current market unforgivable. Even basic entry-level phones come with more normally.

The whole process leaves the Moto U9 confused. It's not forward-thinking enough to break away from the now old and boring Razr design, while as a music- or fashion-focused phone it fails to perform. There is just nothing compelling here to recommend.