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iRiver E100 MP3 player

Will this replace your iPod?

by Stephen Patrick published on 23 April 2008

It has long been thought that if anyone was likely to knock the Apple iPod off the MP3 top-spot that it would be iRiver. After all, the company has released more players in the last 4 years than just about any other company.

That said, the iRiver E100 has clearly been designed as a rival to the Creative Zen, with audio and enhanced video playback. In terms of size, it's the same depth as a Zen but slightly narrower and longer. So, it comes as something of a shock to find the player generally feels bulky in the hand. It needs this depth to fit the 2.4-inch (QVGA) screen that is the main focus of the player.

The look is simple but the plastic used gives it a rather cheap and dull effect. It is available in a range of colours, including pink, brown and green. Beneath the screen you'll find a four-way directional pad and enter button. With function lock and volume controls moved to the side of the player. It may not look or work as slickly as the iPod but it's easy to navigate.

MP3 players often fail due to an overcomplicated menu system. However, this isn't the case here, as we found it easy to get to grips with. Controls are simple and accessing the settings to set it up the way you like is easy too. It's not the fastest software to respond and we found it would occasionally hang for a second but for ease of use, it's great.

When being used for video playback, it's satisfactory but isn't as crisp as the Creative Zen, or even the iPod nano. Images were bright but there was a degree of pixilation to test files. The same files running on a Zen simply look better with sharper contrast.

Where this player excels is in the sound department. It supports all the current popular



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flavours of file format and the bundled headphones are decent. We were impressed with the overall tone of music.

For those who like to listen to their music with others, you'll find small stereo speaker on the back of the device. The sound lacks bass but it's loud and certainly better quality than you'll hear from a mobile phone on the back of a bus. Other features include FM radio and a built-in microphone for recording voice messages. This latter feature can save WMA files in three different quality formats.

Our test unit came with 4GB, which for £80 (inc. VAT) is a reasonable price but with the 8GB version only £100, we'd opt for that version if your budget allows. When it comes to adding more memory, you'll find a microSD slot on the top of the unit.

Transferring files is as easy as plugging in the mini-USB cable, which is also used for charging the player and dragging files over. Sure, you can use Windows Media Player but we found simply dragging files over the easiest method.

VERDICT

The iRiver E100 has a number of great features - it's easy to set-up and use and the overall sound quality is great and as a music player it's as good as any Creative or Apple player. However, when it comes to video, the screen simply isn't as crisp as we'd like.

At a glance

What is it?

Flash-based MP3 player

Good

Great audio playback, easy to use

Bad

Poor screen, plastic look to it

Verdict

While not the most expensive of MP3 players, the E100 has a satisfactory screen for the price and a sound quality well above average

Price £100

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10