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LG FA163DAB Micro Hi-Fi - First Look

Can this budget player produce a big sound?

by Stuart Miles published on 4 July 2008

LG's update to the FA162 sees audio expert Mark Levinson brought in as chief sound advisor to improve the quality of the audio, but has the move worked? We were given a chance to sample the player at the UK launch in London with Mark Levinson himself.

The new player called the FA163DAB will be a UK-specific model, although come in different skews for other territories, and feature FM/DAB radio, CD player and iPod dock on top, as well as the ability to burn tracks straight from a CD to a USB-enabled MP3 player.

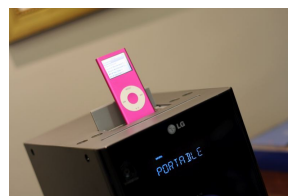
The black box is void of most buttons on the front instead insisting on a touch-enabled circle on the front that lights up and responds to your finger presses.

In our brief play the touch controls came across as a bit fiddly and unfortunately require a bit of pressure to use. It's okay for the play/pause buttons, but to change the volume without using the accompanying remote you have to move your finger in a circle motion while pressing hard. Due to a lack of weight to the device, it's budget after all, the whole system wobbles, which is kinda cheap.

As for the design, it's the typical black gloss and metal that LG has rolled out across its Hi-Fi range.

For both the system and the speakers the front and sides are black gloss while the top is aluminium (real not fake, as one spokesman told us).

The top of the system sports a toaster slot drive CD player, the iPod dock and a couple of extra buttons while the rest are hidden under a flap at the bottom of the main system.



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The two speakers, which are separate from the main unit offer 160W of sound and both feature a subwoofer, rather than in a separate box, for extra oomph.

So what's it sound like and has Levinson's input made a difference? Well the good news is that it has. We listened to a series of tracks via the iPod dock, a PC that had been connected to the system via the Line-in and a CD and were suitably impressed.

To make an iPod sound as good as it did (a second-gen pink iPod nano no less) is a feat worth commending.

Once the other journalists at the launch had left the room we also got to work listening to a reference CD that Levinson himself has created with tracks like Fields of Gold by Eva Cassidy and Ancient by Jeanne Newhall. Both sounded impressive, but even more so for coming out of a system that costs £200.

VERDICT

It would be good to hear the LG FA163 working with a more dynamic range of music rather than just classical or female vocal artists, however on a first listen, the sound is, it seems, worth shouting about.

So what's likely to be the catch that stops you parting with your cash straight away? That clunky volume touch interface.

Luckily you'll be able to check out how it responds to your touch controls in the shop. If you can cope with it then the sound will amaze.

As Levinson told us himself: "The only thing wrong with the system is the price".

At a glance

What is it?

Budget Hi-Fi tuned by Mark Levinson

Good

Sound

Bad

Touch controls

Verdict

If you can cope with annoying touch interface then the sound will amaze

Price £200

Your score

?/10