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Intempo Rebel music sampling system

Beware the PopCatcher

by Paul Lester published on 4 August 2008

There are a number of ways to build a collection of digital audio files for playback on a computer or portable device, but grabbing your favourite tunes from a radio station has never been particularly easy.

Intempo's Rebel looks to solve this problem by saving music from radio stations for you while eliminating chatter and saving everything as individual tracks in 192kbps MP3 format.

You can access one of three modes from a simple set of controls atop the device, enabling the clock display, the FM radio or MP3 playback, which becomes active when the device has had chance to save some tunes. It takes 12-36 hours of being tuned-in to a single station to start saving songs and the longer you leave it the more efficient it becomes at eliminating DJ banter to produce cleaner tracks.

Up to 40 songs can be stored on the internal memory and when this limit is used up it'll begin rewriting the selection, so you'll have a continuously updated collection of music on-board.

Once music has been saved you can either listen to it from the Rebel itself or transfer it to a storage medium, namely a USB drive or memory card, via the multi-card reader or full-sized USB port provided. You can also transfer it directly to MP3 players, mobile phones (though you'll need to enable the USB storage mode on your phone before this works) or an iPod. In the case of the latter you need to transfer a collection of 'empty' tracks via iTunes which will then be overwritten with the contents of the Intempo when you plug the player in; full instructions on how to do this are supplied on the CD.

After leaving the Intempo going for a few days we had mixed feelings about the results. The actual



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transfer of music works extremely well and each of the tracks was quickly copied, recognised and played back successfully on all of the devices we tested.

If you're expecting flawless results in terms of song integrity you can think again though. While we were quite impressed by the quality of the audio, the nature of most radio stations is such that you'll often miss the beginning or end of a song while the DJ is rabbiting away and obscuring the track. It's not an ideal scenario but since there's no real way around this, so we can't really blame the Rebel for not doing its job properly.

In addition to standard FM radio you can also connect external devices via the line-in, such as an MP3 player or portable internet radio, to save tracks in the same way. This is a nice optional extra to have and would substantially increase the range of radio stations you could scan.

VERDICT

With the wide selection of digital music available from various sources today it's quite possible that the Intempo rolled up about 5 years too late. However there's is a distinct charm to the device and you are of course getting access to a massive range of music for free, even if it is a bit random.

For those who want a varied range of tunes without the chatter to listen to daily on an PC, MP3 player or through the device itself though, it works pretty well and should appeal to a niche audience.

At a glance

What is it?

FM radio that records tracks to MP3

Good

Easy to set up and use, effective song transfer, good quality recordings

Bad

Tracks often incomplete, can take up to 36 hours to fill

Verdict

The Rebel does a good job and allows you to build a massive collection of music, even if the tracks are rarely recorded in entirety

Price £69.99

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10