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## Philips GoGear SA2820 2GB MP3 player

Tiny player, but big on features?

by Chris Hall published on 29 August 2008

Philips have long had a firm standing in audio products, but can they keep pace with the likes of Apple, Creative and SanDisk to win that coveted space in your pocket? We check out the GoGear SA2820 to find out.

The GoGear SA2820 is the entry-point of the range from Philips, coming in 2GB (about 450 songs) and 4GB versions (under the moniker of SA2840 for the larger version) - size-wise - is certainly small, about half the size of a matchbox, measuring only 41 x 41 x 15mm. The front of the device houses a small 128 x 64 OLED screen which shines through a translucent plastic cover. This cover is also a four-way controller, more of which later.

Around the sides of the device you'll find the other control buttons, a multi-function power-play-pause-select button, back, volume, voice record button and hold slider. A 3.5mm jack on the top of the device provides space to connect the rather lack-lustre bundled headphones, or those of better quality, such as Philips' excellent SHE9850.

A Mini-USB connector hides under a cover at the side, which allows charging and the syncing of your tunes, using the supplied cable. Philips provide software which consists of a device manager, a small app that becomes part of your startup, although it does little other than provide a route for updating firmware as Windows recognises the device straight out of the box, so you don't need it. Windows Media Player is the suggested tool of choice beyond that.

From a design point of view, you can't help thinking that Philips have missed a trick. All sides are formed from plastic and front, back and sides are a different colour, so it feels like there is a lack of design cohesion - the size and shape are



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good, but if it was a slick metal box it could have been a classic, rather than just another player. The "oily" translucent front also causes issues as soon as you step out the door into bright sunshine because you can't see the display. When you can see the display, it will scroll your track info, etc, so you can see what you are listening to.

Control of the little square is unfortunately dissipated between the aforementioned buttons and that four-way screen, allowing navigation of the various levels of menus under the main headings of Music, Recordings, Folder view and Settings. Things are relatively simple and on a player of this size you don't expect too much. However, you have to press the play button to enter a menu, rather than just being able to press down on the screen and drop into that menu, which is a shame. However, once in a menu you can use that front control to go up and down menus, plus down a level and back a level using the left and right options.

The hold slider on the bottom of the player is unfortunately essential, as we found that the prominent four-way controller will skip back and forth through tracks in your pocket as you walk, which is irritating. Another minor gripe is the location of the headphone jack. Being placed on the top of the device it means that when held in the hand the cable is sticking out of the front, rather than towards you like in many other players. It also means that when you pull it from your pocket it is almost always upside down - but this is only a very minor point.

In terms of performance, for a player at this price, the performance is fairly good. We found that the sound was overly bass-heavy, which was only exacerbated by the equaliser: we found the best settings were "Off" or "Hip Hop" for general listening. The supplied headphones are not the worst we have seen but don't get the best from the player and, as a general rule, it is worth investing in some headphones that suit your ear shape and offer improved sound quality for all

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## At a glance

### What is it?

Diminutive MP3 player

### Good

Price, size

### Bad

Fiddly menus, difficult to see details in brighter conditions, too heavy on the bass, no radio

### Verdict

A compelling size, unfortunately let down by a number of small points

**Price** £30

**Our score**

**6/10**

**Your score**

**?/10**

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your listening requirements. The player also seems to be pretty slow to start and you have to go through various start-up screens before you actually get to the music.

There is a record function which will allow you to record WAV files through a small in-built microphone which could be used to record voicenotes on the move. Usefully you get a countdown on the screen as you record so you can see how long you have left, so you could use this to record interviews and the like. The player supports the normal MP3, WAV and WMA files, which some users might find limiting, but will cater for the majority.

## **VERDICT**

The price is compelling for this capacity of player from a named brand, and the sound quality is reasonable once you get away from the overly -bassy output. The size is also appealing and the display gives you just about enough information, but does suffer in bright conditions - the only thing you can see is your own ugly mug staring back. There is also no FM radio, which is a disappointment as this is a feature of other players of similar size and price, although the SA2825 model does feature one.

Overall we can't help but feel this is a little disappointing as a player.