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Motorola EQ5 portable wireless speaker

Bluetooth music and chat on the move

by Chris Hall published on 12 September 2008

Motorola have always been fans of the Moto accessory and over the summer they launched a range of speakers to keep you noisy on the move. The EQ5 is the middle of the EQ range, offering stereo speakers in a compact format. The EQ5 is a fairly flat slab (116 x 65 x 15 mm), with similar lines to their E8 phone; we think it looks pretty good, slim enough to easily slip into a bag to take on your travels and at 100g won't weigh you down too much either.

The front of the device is split between the two speaker grills and a central control area, sporting the ubiquitous Moto badge. On the face of the device you'll find volume, a play/pause button and forward and back controls. On the top you get a call button to take advantage of the EQ5 as a speaker phone and on the bottom a solid on/off switch. Around the back is wire kickstand.

Also lurking on front is an LED - you know you always have to have one - which gives you an interpretation of status via the medium of colour and flash. That's right, there are 14, yes, 14 different LED flash/colour combinations to let you know what's going on. Let's see if you can guess them: "long green pulse"? That's "Music streaming (with handsfree connection active)". Another: "Three yellow flashes"? You guessed it "Stopped music player". How anyone is supposed to remember what they all mean in beyond us, but let's move on.

Pairing is simple as is often the case with modern Bluetooth devices and as you'd expect the unit then becomes both your handsfree device and speaker for music. The buttons on the front then come into play, allowing you to control your music, which means you don't have to be fiddling around with your phone.



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The top-mounted call button also avoids phone-fiddling as it will let you answer incoming calls as well as access voice-dialling, depending on your handset features. When a call comes in, the music pauses which is nice and convenient. So far so good: but how does it sound?

Well, you don't expect too much from something this size and you don't really get much. Unfortunately it is rather tinny and lacks clarity in either treble or bass. However, lurking in the manual you'll find reference to SRS WOW HD which comes enabled as standard - turn it off and things sound much worse, so it must be doing something. But still, this is a pocketable speaker and you don't expect miracles.

Maximum volume of course is a mash of distortion but you would probably be too embarrassed to play it that loud anyway - kept to realistic levels the sound quality is ample for background music on your travels or in the garden.

Away from music you'll find that used as a speaker phone the performance is fairly good. In our tests those we were talking to could tell it was a speaker phone, but could still hear everything clearly. Sitting under the hood is a host of technology - noise-reduction and echo-cancellation - to help keep things clear and it certainly works. We found that incoming callers were also clear.

You'll also find a 3.5mm input jack so you can hook-up other music sources, your iPod or MP3 player, with a supplied cable. As with the Bluetooth option, when a call comes in the music pauses so you can take your call. Sound quality is marginally better through a wired connection (we used a Creative Zen Mozaic), avoiding the occasional drop out typical of Bluetooth speakers.

Charging is via a Micro-USB on the side of the device from the supplied mains powerpack (or PC if you prefer) and an built-in Li-ion battery gives

At a glance

What is it?

Bluetooth speakers

Good

Design, size, weight, controls

Bad

Sound quality, incessant LED flashing

Verdict

The real strength of the EQ5 is in its design, but kids looking to share their music will find cheaper options out there

Price £69.99

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10

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you a cited 8 hours of playback which we found to be a fairly accurate average.

VERDICT

The real strength of the EQ5 is in its design. It feels well-built in the hand as you'd expect for something costing a penny under £70. Sound quality from this type of small speaker is never very good, but at least in this set-up you do get stereo and plenty of controls.

We've been impressed with some of Motorola's in-car speakers in the past and the experience with handsfree devices shines through here, but kids looking to share their music will find cheaper options.