

<http://www.pocket-lint.com/review/3474/creative-zen-mozaic-mp3-player>

Creative Zen Mozaic MP3 player

One to consider or just too gimmicky?

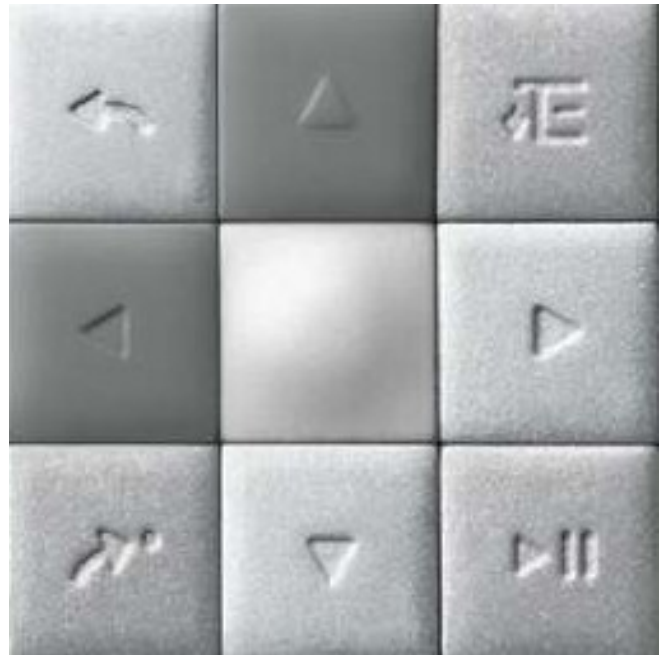
by Chris Hall published on 22 September 2008

The Creative Zen range has done well for itself, delivering what is considered among many to be one of the best sound offerings from an MP3 player. The Zen Mozaic is a twist on Creative's range, designed to make a design statement and move away from the normal featureless plastic/metal players with some sort of circular control (naming no names, you know who you are...). But is this brave move a step in the right direction? We take a closer look.

Measuring 79.5 x 40 x 12.8mm, this player is thicker than many rivals, but still small enough to slip in a pocket; it is also light enough for you to barely notice it is there. The mainstay of the "mosaic" design are the buttons, with interesting colourways reflecting inspiration from your bathroom. Yes, this is where music players and Topps Tiles come together.

Whilst it looks pretty good, the overall effect is rather plastic and flimsy. The buttons have just a little too much movement to give the quality feel you might expect, which is a shame, because it otherwise looks pretty good. We found that slipping the player into one of the rubber accessory covers overcame this problem, but added to the overall size.

These tiled buttons give you your controls: four directional buttons for menu navigation, or volume control, or to skip through tracks. An enter button lets you select your highlighted option whilst you also get a back button to jump back through menus and a dedicated menu button to open up more options, like a menu from the menu. Confused? Yes, there are a lot of options and you can spend some time opening and closing various menus until you find what you are looking for. This is not helped by a sometimes indistinct button pressing action - we found the up arrow was particularly unresponsive. You also get a play/pause button, so once you have found what



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you want, you'll have to actually press this, rather than the enter button.

The front houses the 1.8in LCD colour screen, that is big enough to do most things you want, mostly navigate the menus. Whilst it is full colour, it again lacks that quality look that the iPod does so well, and doesn't compare against similar spec devices such as the Sansa Fuze. Things are a little blocky and it is difficult to get excited about it.

You do get a good level of menu customisation though, so if you never want to have photos or videos, you can simply remove those options, ditto all the extras, like the organiser. As a result of having a poor screen, photo viewing is not a lot of fun and the same could be said for video playback, which is jerky, blocky and tiny.

It is in these extras that things start to get a little crazy, moving away from the music player that the Zen Mozaic should be. You get a voice recorder and you can allocate a portion of the memory to act as a file store, saving the need for a separate USB stick. A nice idea, but will anyone actually use it? The FM radio is a commendable inclusion however, and has an auto-tune with 32 presets available, which worked really well.

There is another button lurking on the front that we haven't mentioned yet. The inclusion of a speaker on the rear of the device warrants, it seems, a dedicated button on the front. This allows you to turn on or off the speaker for those back-of-the-bus moments. The speaker, it has to be said, is actually very good for one so small. You'll also find that if your headphones get pulled out, then the speaker will turn on, which can lead to some humorous accidental music sharing incidents...

However, all these irritations are firmly pushed to one side by the sound quality which is, once again, pretty good when paired up with some good quality headphones. The supplied headphones leave a lot to be desired being both

At a glance

What is it?

MP3 player

Good

Sound quality, value for money, plenty of features, built-in speaker

Bad

Fiddly controls and menus, poor screen quality

Verdict

Whilst we liked the sound performance, the indistinct keys and fiddly menus ultimately hamper this MP3 player

Price 50 (2GB), &#pound;60 (4GB), &#pound;80 (8GB), &#pound;120 (16GB)

Our score

7/10

Your score

7/10

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uncomfortable and lacking the sort of bass delivery this player will give you. To adjust your music there is a basic equaliser (which we left turned off) and the normal bass boost.

File support will be criticised by some, but MP3, WMA, WAV, and Audible will cater for the vast majority. Photos need to be JPEGs and video Motion JPEG, although you really shouldn't bother, the supplied software handles transcoding. You can expect around 30 hours of music playback from a single charge.

VERDICT

For those that like accessories fret not as Creative have created a microcosm around the Mozaic, from the silicone skin covers, to the carabiner slip case, to the sports armband. You can also slot it into the TravelSound speakers, that have their own internal battery and sound pretty good for their size.

The quirky design, whilst bold, will deter some. The screen is nothing to get excited about either, but the range of extra functions might appeal to some. What you do get, however, is a very capable player which represents good value for money. We tested the 4GB version, but 2, 8 and 16GB versions are also available in black, silver and pink colours, hinting at the target market.

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