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Celleden STB-2812 Bluetooth speaker

Wireless marvel?

by Chris Hall published on 2 January 2009

With the number of Bluetooth speakers around, you'd think that it was a massive hardship using either (a) headphones or (b) the handset itself to listen to music and make calls. Celleden want to tempt you with their "Compact Stereo System", the STB-2812, a Bluetooth speaker which also supports calling functions. But is this any different to the host of other options?

The description on the packaging is a little misleading if you take "stereo system" in the conventional sense. Yes, it is stereo, but lacks anything on the system end: it sounds like a complete package, but you'll need to supply the brains yourself. Furthermore this is only a Bluetooth speaker, as unlike even some of the cheapest offerings out there, you don't get an aux input, so if you want to use a non-Bluetooth source you are stuffed, which instantly limits its appeal.

However, the design is pretty interesting and that will probably play a part in the appeal of this type of speaker. The twin 2W 1-inch drivers spring neatly out from the brushed aluminium-fronted body at the press of a button on the top. Pushing them back in again turns the unit off, so easy to grab and run. The centre of the front features a couple of backlit LED bars that flash to relate the status.

Controls range along the top of the device, with a multi-function button, the speaker spring and volume controls, each with various functions. Press and hold volume up or down and you can skip tracks, a tap of the MFB gives you pause or allows you to answer an incoming call.

It's a bit of a shame that the button you press to bring out the speakers doesn't do anything else. You'd think it would power on the device too, but it doesn't. This at least stops it being powered on if it gets knocked whilst in transit, but a single



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press to do everything would have been sweet.

Celleden seem to be keen to point out the power options for this speaker as you can load four AA batteries into the back or run it via the Mini-USB socket on the back. The supplied cable will plug straight into your PC, or into a 5V mains powerpack that you also get. There is no internal battery, but you do get a low power indicator from the front light bar when the batteries start to fade. You'll get about 15 hours from a set of batteries, so worth considering rechargeables if away from power often.

Music playback isn't that bad considering that this is a portable unit. At mid-range volume quality is reasonable for both bass and treble, but as you start to push the volume up you'll find a lot of distortion coming in. Whilst a generally acceptable balance is struck, the overall result is fairly muffled, so there is little clarity to music, and those looking to play bass-intensive tracks will be let down - this speaker is best for general pop, but nothing that pushes to the extremes in any way. It is certainly better than your mobile phone speaker and most laptops. However, the lack of an external wired input does limit the deployment of this particular speaker.

As is often the case with Bluetooth speakers it will also act as a speakerphone, so an incoming call will cut out the music. A press of the MFB will answer the call and an internal mic will transmit your voice. There doesn't, however, seem to be any sort of echo-cancellation, so in our tests, callers couldn't hear what we were saying and experienced a great deal of feedback. This can be controlled by lowering the volume, but then you may as well be using the handset - which we often had to resort to.

VERDICT

If you are looking for a straight-up Bluetooth speaker, then the Celleden STB-2812 is a neat looking and well-constructed unit, which offers reasonable playback at modest volumes. This will

At a glance

What is it?

Bluetooth speaker

Good

Reasonable sound quality, good build quality

Bad

No wired input options, lack of echo-cancellation makes speakerphone experience poor

Verdict

A slick design and solid construction is complemented with reasonable music performance, but seriously lacking in supporting acts

Price £49.99

Our score

5/10

Your score

?/10

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probably appeal most to those on the move who want to liberate their music on their phone, or another Bluetooth-equipped music device.

As an all-encompassing solution, however, it does seem a little disappointing. With no internal battery, you are left having to source your own to be truly portable. The lack of the 3.5mm jack means you get very few options. We wouldn't recommend the speakerphone functions either, which reduces the appeal overall.