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## Samsung YP-P3 MP3 player

### Can this challenge the iPod touch?

by Chris Hall published on 19 March 2009

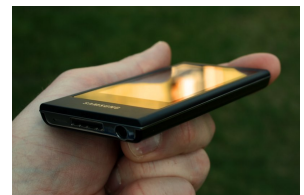
Samsung are pushing hard to win over users of their MP3 players and the last year has thrown up some interesting offerings. The P3, or YP-P3 to use the full title, is the latest in this line, but now bringing full touchscreen controls into the game. We check it out to see what is on offer.

First up you'd be forgiven for thinking the P3 is a phone - the 3-inch, 480 x 272, 16:9 screen certainly brings to mind the likes of the Tocco. The body is solidly constructed with a brushed aluminium back and a solid feel - it doesn't twist or creak. Attention has been given to the details which you are going to need if you are lining yourself up against something like the Apple iPod touch.

In terms of hard buttons you'll find a power switch which doubles as a screen lock and a volume control on the top, nestled alongside a small internal speaker. The bottom of the player features the 3.5mm headphone jack and the proprietary connector for hooking up to your PC via the included USB cable. The mic is also found lurking on the bottom.

The screen itself is all touch-enabled, with an additional touch area across the bottom that fires up a mini player, meaning you can be browsing your photos, and dive in and skip on a track without having to back out and enter the music section itself. It makes it easy to make changes on the fly without have to dive into the menus.

When in the video player, this touch area will double as a volume control, so you can slide the volume up and down on the screen rather than using the buttons on the top. There is also a Quick Tray at the top, that can be accessed when not on the home page, giving shortcuts back home, to select the output option, make a Bluetooth connection or lock the screen.



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The lock button (or on-screen option) is slow to respond and as a result is incredibly irritating, as you spend your time locking and unlocking the thing because it takes a little longer than you think it should.

Touch is reasonably responsive. We say reasonably because like other touch devices, it is easy to select something, get a haptic buzz to tell you you have touched, but not actually trigger the event you wanted. You need to be firmer than you might first think, a good firm press of the icon or menu option you want and you'll be on your way.

Given the screen space available it is surprising then that some of the buttons are so small: tap an icon and you enter a menu - usually the bottom left corner gives you the back icon to revert to the home screen or back a step. This back icon is one you'll use frequently and we found it to be too small, especially if you tried to use your thumb in a one-handed navigation style.

Held in one hand and using the forefinger of your other hand gives better results, but we were occasionally frustrated by what seemed like a wasted opportunity here and this is the main point where it falls behind the usability of the iPod touch.

The home page is set over three screens with a collection of icons and widgets, meaning you can have less-used features hiding over another page, rather than buried in a menu that you never open. Everything can be moved around, dragging icons to new locations so you can actually get to what you want quickly and comfortably. The widgets too can be added or removed, so if you don't want that butterfly idly flying around you can get rid of it.

Some of the widgets are nothing more than a bit of decoration with no real purpose, but it does mean you can have that custom look and feel and break away from the formal grid that your icons have to stick to. Our favourite widget is the slideshow,

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## At a glance

### What is it?

Touchscreen MP3 player

### Good

Customisable, good file format support, Bluetooth, BBC iPlayer compatible

### Bad

No Wi-Fi, screen lock is irritatingly slow

### Verdict

Plenty of features packed into a solidly constructed body with plenty of format support, the P3 should appeal to many who want a little more from their MP3 player

**Price** 110 (8GB)

**Our score**

**8/10**

**Your score**

**?/10**

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which will just leaf through your images right there on the homepage. The overall result is impressive, it's fun, you aren't stuck to the same boring static screen, you can make the player your own, which we really like.

It's a shame that the menus aren't quite as interesting as you might want them to be until you make a few select presses. You can navigate by the usual artist, album, genre and so on, but the P3 also supports cover art so you can opt for a cover view meaning you can swipe through your albums with your finger and find the one you want. It isn't as slick as Cover Flow, but is a nice attempt.

That screen lends itself natively to watching movies on the move, and supporting the BBC's iPlayer, users in the UK will be able to download and sideload Eastenders for watching on the train to work. The colours are bright, bold, and the screen is nice and sharp so watching it is a pleasure, if you can handle watching video files in such a small format. However, with the sharpness that the glossy screen provides, it does suffer in daylight with reflections, something to bear in mind, but often unavoidable on this type of device.

Other interesting features include FM radio, Datacast player, picture viewer with slideshow function, as well as a text browser. You also have an address book, alarms, voice recorder, games (although our model didn't have any games loaded). A subway map application is useful, and provides some notable landmarks with brief descriptions, ideal for those long evenings in foreign cities at boring conferences.

On a hardware front you have Bluetooth included, meaning that you can connect to a Bluetooth headset, or use the P3 as a handsfree speakerphone with your mobile, or transfer files. Unfortunately you don't get Wi-Fi, so you don't get a direct connection to the Internet.

Sound quality from Samsung players is generally pretty good, with the biggest boost coming from upgrading the headphones over the rather lack-lustre hard plastic bundled options. You get the normal array of Samsung technology, such as DNSe, which claims to improve the sound offering. What will please users is the range of file formats supported, which on the audio front include MP3, WMA, OGG, AAC and FLAC, whilst video support gives you WMV, MPEG4, H.264.

The internal speaker is average for a player of this size, but thankfully you can opt to disable it, so if you pull out the headphones, it won't broadcast your music to everyone. You can also set different volumes for the speaker and headphones, so you could have your speaker full blast for your mates, but only at 50% for your headphones, which is a great option.

The battery claims 30 hours of music playback, or 5 hours of video. Unfortunately you can't listen to it whilst you charge it from your PC.

## VERDICT

Samsung's premise with the P3 was to create a player for the "most demanding consumers". In some senses that's what the P3 is. It is certainly well constructed and the interface is, for the most part, a pleasure to use. We like the customisability too and there are plenty of features packed into the player.

However with the number of features on offer here, it feels more like a mobile phone, but without calling functions, which as we've mentioned numerous times above, bring it up against the iPod touch. It's a shame then that it doesn't go one step further and give you Wi-Fi to complete the package, connecting things up and providing a true alternative to Apple's offering.

The Samsung YP-P3 is available in 4, 8, 16, 32GB models, and a choice of silver or black.