

<http://www.pocket-lint.com/review/588/iriver-ifp-1000-series-mp3-audio>

IRiver iFP-1000 Series

by Chris Hall published on 12 September 2004

We tested the catchily named iFP-1090, a digital gadget featuring MP3 player, camera, voice recorder and FM tuner. So far so good - unfortunately, it only has a capacity of 256MB, so easily filled. Opening the box you'll find the main unit, headphones, manuals, the A-B USB cable, powerpack, funky strap, carry case and arm band. Charging the unit can be done via the USB cable, or through the powerpack, except ours had a German plug. The battery takes about 2.5-3 hours to charge (when flat), and claims to see about 35 hours of use, but this was not confirmed. One strange thing about the battery is that it is removable. Once it is removed, you can't do anything with it, so I don't see the point. So let's talk design. The main unit itself looks shocking. Firstly, its triangular (or rather Toblerone/prism shaped), black plastic, with the ends and buttons being silver/fake chrome effect plastic. It looks as though someone forgot to tell them that the 80s was 20 years ago and never really that cool. The fake silver plastic is awful. Sat on the desk next to my Sony Ericsson T610, also in silver and black, the iRiver device looks like the poor cousin. Aside from the design, the full colour screen is actually very good - and used to navigate through the menus and view the pictures from the 0.3 mega-pixel camera, taking up to a 640x480 images, but don't expect miracles, it's no substitute for a real camera. The advantage here is that you can easily extract the images should you want to use them. The device comes with software, the iRiver Music Manager, which seemed to work better than Media Player for moving files around. Control of the unit is down to a combination of buttons, basically a joystick and three function buttons. Moving through the menu involves using the joystick and pressing the buttons - the instructions are not much of an insight, but it is logical and soon falls into place. There is also a Hold switch, so no problems with the joystick catching in your pocket. I said earlier that the screen was something of a redeeming feature. Yes it is. 260000 colours certainly look good - it is bright



...cont.

and clear. On the MP3 playing screen, the display will tell you a wealth on information, including the file type - it supports MP3, .wma, .ogg and .asf. You can also go into file and folder browsing, which makes it really easy to find what you want. Using the provided software you can rename things, reorganise, set the channels on the radio and so on. The FM radio is a nice touch, and it's easy to put in all your favourite preset stations, although it doesn't pick up their names, only the frequency. You can also set a timer to record radio programmes, which is a fairly unique feature. Design remains an issue in the provided carry case and arm strap. The case is silver plastic of the type that I last saw on a Walkman in 1984. Getting it onto the unit is like fighting into a fetish garment, like a gimp suit. Once on, and secured by the two press studs (or poppers as we call them), it looks terrible. The arm strap is made from neoprene and secures it self with a metal hook through a leather hole. Perhaps the irony of pre-War design is lost on me. To then attach the arm strap to the carry case, you pass a small strap through a loop and fasten with two more poppers. In a word, it's crap.

VERDICT

It's going to take a lot to pull you to this device. OK, the menu and supporting software do the job well. The sound quality is good, once you dispense with the cheap headphones they supply and there is a graphic equalizer to play with. It even has upgradeable firmware. But nothing can divert you from the image of this thing. It reminds me of something I once found in my Granddad's shed, and how they thought they would get away with the carry case farce, I have no idea. However, if you want all your gadget features in one place, then this might do it for you. There is even a clock and alarm functions. Capacity remains an issue, so you might want to look for something with larger capacity.

At a glance

What is it?

MP3 player with recorder, camera and FM tuner

Good

Lots of functions, logical menus

Bad

Only 256mb, looks hideous

Verdict

It fulfils a full range of needs, but the design is terrible.

Price £220

Our score

5/10

Your score

?/10