

Mini Review: Jawbone Jambox Convenient, Stylish Mobile Audio

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Jawbone's Bluetooth Speaker, the Jambox, offers relatively impressive sound for a device about the size of small alarm clock. Whether it's worth the \$199 price tag is probably dependent on your disposal income. Still, the Jambox seems to stand above the small crop of other stand-alone Bluetooth speaker systems on the quality and style of its design as much as anything.

The Jambox comes packaged in a shoebox, with a retro boombox stenciled in metallic ink on the lid. So much of the appeal of these kinds of accessories lies in the slick marketing and appearance (just ask Apple, they've made a killing at turning this trick). The Jawbone is indeed slick, as well as beautiful.

The Jambox is a simple square (come in metallic silver, blue, red and black), with a rubberized top and bottom and minimal buttons. On one end, the device features a 3.5mm stereo input, a mini USB and an on/off switch. My co-worker immediately offered an unsolicited comment on the unit's aesthetics, saying it was "beautiful."

When paired with a smartphone or tablet, the Jambox can act as both a speaker for music or a speakerphone. Setup was effortless. Pairing went without a hitch and as is my preference, there was no authorization code or anything to complicate a process that simply doesn't need to be complicated.

The speaker sound was clean and crisp. Volume was adequate for a desktop or kitchen unit but probably wouldn't be sufficient in a larger room. Although Jawbone pegs the Jambox at 85 decibals, somewhere between a motorcycle and a rock concert, in actual performance I'd put it somewhere around a small quality desktop speaker system (which is exactly what it is).

Jawbone says the Jambox offers "about 10 hours of continuous play," which will vary by volume and type of audio content. If you're using it with an iPhone, the Jambox's battery life will be displayed on the iPhone itself.

To summarize, the Jambox is a slick, portable solution for audio on the go. While units that dock a phone (especially iPhones) also charge the phone while playing music, there's something to be said for the convenience of a wireless option. Jawbone is pitching the Jambox as a perfect complement to the iPad (as well as other tablets), and I can see why. However, I'm guessing it will see an equal reception from smartphone users as well.

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