

## Buying A Micro Hi Fi System

The scaling down in size in a Hi-Fi system need not necessarily limit you as to playback formats or quality of sound. Recent advances in technology mean that Micro systems can retain both high quality pitch and tone. The Micro Hi-Fi system is thus the solution when you are limited for space but do not want to lose the benefits of a full-size system.

A micro system usually comes in one piece with moveable and sometimes removable, speakers. It can offer most the functions you would find on a larger unit, including a CD player, radio tuner, tape deck and even MP3 connections.

The most basic Micro system will provide a single CD player and AM/FM radio capability. The system will often have a tape deck, although cassettes are now being phased out. This tape deck is likely to be absent on the more advanced models.

As with Mini and Midi Hi-Fi systems, Micros vary in price according to the features available. Micro systems can offer DAB radio (Digital), a new way of listening to radio that offers a fast growing choice of channels with crystal clear digital sound. Some now offer CD-R, which enables you to record onto a CD. Mini disks are becoming more popular and are increasingly to be found in micro hi-fi systems. The ability to play MP3/WMA files is also possibility in some, either by connecting via a USB port to your portable MP3 player, or by playing MP3/WMA files that have been recorded onto a blank CD.

### What to look for

**Tuner** - all systems have a conventional FM tuner and most also have MW, but over many also come equipped with a digital DAB tuner.

**Tape deck** - it may be old technology but many micros still support the humble cassette. Many of us still have music on tape that we have been unable to find on later media formats.

**Speakers** - all systems come with speakers but you can often get better sound quality by upgrading, buying separate speakers. Some models have built-in speakers which prevent this so you will need to decide whether you are likely to want to upgrade now or at a later stage.

**MP3/WMA capability** - there are a number of different types of "compressed" music files that are highly portable and can be played on a Hi-Fi system, computer, iPod or other MP3 player. With the ever increasing popularity of the portable MP3 player, it is highly likely that support for these formats will prove useful now or at a later stage.

**USB Port** - this will not only allow you to link to your MP3 player but may also prove useful for connecting with a laptop and other forms of portable media devices. If you are planning to use you micro hi-fi system to enhance the sound output of these devices when listening at home, a USB connection may prove indispensable.

**Digital recorder** - this provides you with the ability to record radio, MP3 or voice, digitally, often through a built-in microphone or via one of the input sockets. Whether using this for casual voice recording or as a means by which to transfer music from one format to another, a digital recording function may prove useful.

**Memory stick** - again, this represents another option for exchanging music and data files with other media devices such as PMPs (Portable Media Players), MP3 players and so forth. There are now even mobile phones with memory stick slots, particularly those designed to double as media players in their own right. If you have or are likely to have compatible devices in the future, memory stick support will be beneficial.

### Conclusion

Miniaturisation has meant that the current crop of micro hi-fi systems are ever more functional than their predecessors. With so much emphasis on portable music and the exchange of various file types between different players, it is well worth considering spending that little bit extra on a micro system capable of supporting the appropriate file types and connectivity. As with any form of technology, spend some time thinking about what you really need from the system and focus accordingly: it is all too easy to get carried away and buy a lot of bells and whistles that will remain unused. Stick to reputable brands and always listen to the unit before purchase.

## About the Author

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