

JBL On Air Wireless review

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There's a lot to like about JBL's good-looking AirPlay speaker

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Manufacturer: [JBL](#)

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Pros: Large control screen, unique looks, AirPlay compatible, good sound, easy set-up, good-looking

Cons: Unsuitable for use within larger entertainment system; lack of digital radio tuner; expensive, must have wireless network



Star rating: ★★★★★ **Macworld** Editors' Choice

Apple's AirPlay Wi-Fi solution lets you stream audio from your Mac, iPod touch, iPhone or iPad through any enabled system.



In future this will mean watching iTunes movies as well as

music, but today it's for audio. JBL's AirPlay-enabled system is a step up from the iPod/iPhone-dock speakers which preceded it, and retains all the award-winning system's shiny black plastic charms.

Out of the box things look good. The speakers surround the chassis like a circular archway. Controls are clearly marked and easy to comprehend (including a big snooze button up top for use as an alarm clock) and there's a big colour screen under the iPod/iPhone dock.

Set-up is quick and easy, helped by the screen. To connect to your wireless network, the system scans for available networks on start-up. It will cope with hidden ones so long as you know their name and password, which you input using the remote control and the on-screen alphanumeric display on the screen.

AirPlay is the big attraction of the [JBL On Air](#). We used it with several devices, including Macs, and are pleased to report that music playback was solid throughout. I'm in an area in which there's lots of active wireless networks which sometimes interfere with each other, so we expected a little lag in the music, but didn't experience any perceptible examples of this. We were also impressed by an AirPlay feature we hadn't expected to see: when you play music the album cover art is displayed in the colour screen of the On Air system.

This doesn't look futuristic because the future is here, welcome to AirPlay.

Within the limits of compressed and streamed digital sound, music playback quality is pretty good. On Air delivers a strong, bright sound, great at the high end but less so on bass. Its room-filling, but doesn't compete with the Technics system we use (which cost about the same).

Macworld Buying Advice



Don't expect to use this as part of a larger entertainment system as the only audio output is the headphone port. On Air does also work as a standard iPod/iPhone speaker system, and also features alarm clock and radio functions. We'd recommend this as a good-looking and effective second music system for the bedroom or office.