

On the move

As sales of digital radios continue to grow, we look at the latest pocket and table-top models

Millions of us have digital radios at home and can enjoy the extra stations they offer.

But what if you want this choice while you're on the move? We've tested six pocket digital audio broadcast (DAB) radios, together with nine table-top models.

Pocket radios make up a fraction of the digital market, though sales are growing. We last tested them in 2005 and were unimpressed by their sound quality. This time it's better but many still can't compete with a good FM radio. Even our Best Buy is matched by the Roberts Sport 994 pocket FM radio which costs £30. If you have a good pocket

FM radio, the extra stations are the only reason to switch. Currently, 89 per cent of people in Britain can get DAB radio, with 166 stations on both analogue and digital, and 50 more on DAB exclusively. See what's available in your area at www.digitalradionow.com.

Table-top radios continue to sell like hot cakes. However, if your FM signal is poor and it's difficult to get mobile phone reception, you're likely to have similar problems with DAB. Try moving the radio close to a window and then retuning it. If this fails, you may need a rooftop aerial (about £30). For an installer, see www.cai.org.uk or call 020 8902 8998.

BE THE ENVY OF YOUR FRIENDS

Win a digital radio

Ten Magicbox Lagio radios, each worth £80 (see right), to be won

TO ENTER, SIMPLY ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTION

In what year did the then Queen buy a Roberts radio for her daughter?

- (a) 1929 (b) 1939 (c) 1949

To enter our Best Buy competition online, go to www.which.co.uk/bestbuycompetition. You can also send your entry on a postcard to 'Best Buy February 07; Which?, PO Box 44, Hertford X SG14 1SH. Include your name, address and postcode, daytime phone number and Which? membership number (found

on your Which? membership card as your user name). Entries received by 28 February 2007 will be entered into the competition which is open only to current Which? members. Usual rules apply. See www.which.co.uk/bestbuycompetition for a full set of rules or *Which?*, December 2006, p79.

Worth £80

A greener way to listen

Why listening to radio through the TV can be wasteful

About a third of us listen to radio via a digital TV or a computer. But this is a much less energy efficient way to listen. Table-top digital radios draw an average of seven watts, but listening via your TV can	use ten times as much. These listening habits add 190,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere each year. The two least power-hungry models on test are the Roberts Rambler 76 (2) and Gemini RD49 (7).	Most table-top models on test meet the EU's recommendations for standby power use. The only exceptions are the three Pure radios, the Elan (3), Bug Too (5) and Tempus (6), which far exceed them.
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USING THE TABLE

We tested pocket and table-top digital radios from leading brands. The more stars the better. See www.which.co.uk/digitalradios for previous Best Buys including the Pure One for £50, which we have rated exceptional value, and clock radios.

Specification

Price For Best Buys we give the cheapest widely available high-street price. Other prices are a guide. Online prices in *italics*.

Features

DAB presets How many DAB stations the memory can hold. **Number of alarms** How many times you can set a radio to come on in a given period.

Score

Ignores price and is based on:

Table-top radios

Sound quality	40%
Ease of use	30%
Battery life	15%
Features	15%

Pocket radios

Sound quality	40%
Ease of use	20%
Battery life	20%
Features	15%
Ear safety	5%

Facts & scores

Many models come with interesting extras

Recording radio

This has an electronic programme guide that says what's on when, and records shows to an SD memory card (not supplied).

Other speakers

This is the only table-top model you can connect to external speakers, apart from the Magicbox Best Buy which comes with two separate speakers.

Playing MP3s

Like the Pure Best Buy, this plays MP3 files and records DAB programmes on to its internal 512MB memory.

The way we were

The vintage look of some new digital models recalls radio's early days. When Roberts radios appeared in 1932, they were exclusive products sold only at Harrods. Even three years later, an average of just eight receivers a week were made, all handmade, luxury items that cost 11 guineas (just under £12), equivalent to nearly £395 today. Gold-plated and fur-covered, one-off models were also made. Early customers included royalty. The then Queen bought a Roberts radio for her daughter, Princess Elizabeth in 1939.



PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN TRENHOLM

1 TABLE TOP**74% Magicbox Lagio £80**

The Magicbox is the best radio on test by a long way. Its full, rich sound is far ahead of the others and the maximum volume is also the loudest, comfortably filling a room.

It's the largest model on test and looks more like a micro system than a table-top radio. It isn't portable and

doesn't work with batteries. A scroll wheel controls the volume and there are buttons for other functions. The Magicbox Lagio is available at Argos.

WE LIKE It's one of the least power-hungry radios in use and in standby.

Cheapest store Argos Tuner DAB, FM DAB station pre-sets 10 Speakers Stereo Connect to hi-fi Yes Headphone jack Yes Pause live radio No



The Magicbox Lagio's full, rich sound is far ahead of that of the other models

10 POCKET**62% Pure PocketDAB 2000 £200**

This is the only pocket radio on test that can pause and rewind live radio. It also records and plays back from the supplied 64MB SD memory card. None of the pocket DAB radios blew us away with their sound quality, but this was among the best with satisfactory bass and dynamic energy, although the stereo sound could be better.



The PocketDAB 2000's clear buttons and easy-to-navigate menus make it simple to use.

The rechargeable batteries can be charged in the player via the supplied USB connection. It's available online.

WORTH KNOWING

This radio can play MP3 files, and audio-editing software is supplied to help you convert DAB recordings to MP3 format.

Available Online Tuner DAB, FM DAB station pre-sets 10 Pause live radio Yes Rechargeable batteries Yes Battery type 3 x AA Display size 2x3cm Memory card slot Yes, SD card supplied

TABLE-TOP RADIOS		SPECIFICATION					FEATURES		BATTERIES		WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE			SCORE %
		PRICE (£)	WEIGHT (kg)	SIZE (cm) (h x w x d)	FM	DAB PRESETS	PAUSE/ REWIND	NUMBER OF ALARMS	TYPE	RUNNING TIME DAB/FM (hours)	EASE OF USE	SOUND QUALITY		
1	MAGICBOX Lagio	80	3.1	16x33x14	✓	10			n/a		★★★★	★★★★★		74
2	ROBERTS Rambler 76	110	1.5	14x24x10	✓	1			standard	41/28	★★★★★	★★★★		58
3	PURE Elan RV40	90	1.6	19x28x10	✓	20	✓	1	standard	24/14	★★	★★★★		48
4	BUSH TR2006DAB	40	1.6	18x25x12	✓	10			standard	21/14	★★★★	★★★★		47
5	PURE Bug Too	100	1.5	23x28x21		10	✓	20	n/a		★★	★★★★		45
6	PURE Tempus-1XT	50	1.5	18x21x13		10		3	n/a		★★	★★★★		45
7	ROBERTS Gemini RD49	60	0.7	12x25x5	✓	5			standard	20/13	★★★★	★★		40
8	PHILIPS AJ5100	70	1.7	20x27x13	✓	10			standard	19/20	★★★★	★★		37
9	INTEMPO PP-01	90	1.1	18x31x7	✓	6			rechargeable	7/7	★★	★★		30

POCKET RADIOS		SPECIFICATION					BATTERIES			WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE			SCORE %
		PRICE (£)	WEIGHT (kg)	SIZE (cm) (h x w x d)	FM	DAB PRESETS	TYPE	RUNNING TIME DAB/FM (hours)	CHARGING IN THE RADIO	EASE OF USE	SOUND QUALITY	EAR SAFETY	
10	PURE PocketDAB 2000	200	2.0	12x7x3	✓	10/10	rechargeable	10/15	✓	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	62
11	PURE PocketDAB 1500	80	1.2	11x7x2	✓	10/10	rechargeable	18/13	✓	★★★★	★★★★	★★	57
12	BUSH PSDAB2004	50	1.4	10x7x2		10	standard	18/n/a		★★★★	★★★★	★★	53
13	ROBERTS RD14 Gemini	100	1.6	10x7x3	✓	0	standard	11/8		★★★★	★★★★	★★	45
14	MINISTRY OF SOUND MOSMP075X5	150	1.1	10x7x2	✓	99/30	rechargeable	8/26	✓	★★	★★	★★	36
15	GENUS SLM	100	1.0	10x6x2	✓	20/20	rechargeable	7/10	✓	★★	★★	★★	35

Which should you choose?



Best for partially sighted

ROBERTS GEMINI RD49, £60 The large display and easy-to-learn controls of the Gemini (7) make it the easiest table-top radio for the partially sighted to use. It's a pity the sound quality is quite poor.



Best for limited dexterity

ROBERTS RAMBLER 76, £110 This basic radio (2) with a vintage design has minimal controls which are well laid out, ideal for those with limited dexterity.



Best for clock radio

PURE BUG TOO, £100 The Bug Too (5) is the only table-top on test that can be used as a clock radio. It has on/off timers, and a large illuminated clock display in standby.



Don't Buy

The table-top Intempo PP-01 radio (9) is a letdown on all fronts. The sound is scratchy, thin and lacking bass. Even the maximum volume wouldn't fill a room. It's difficult to use because the buttons are small. The Intempo has the shortest battery life (seven hours for the supplied rechargeable battery) and used the most power when connected to the mains, though not in standby.

How we test

Why we set up our own music broadcasts

This is Radio Which?

To test sound quality, we effectively create our own mini radio station, broadcasting a range of music over a DAB signal.

The second movement of Rachmaninov's Symphony No 2 and a Tchaikovsky piano trio test how the radios cope with music from a full orchestra. It's important that the sound is clear and that individual instruments sound real and natural. A recording by the Jacques Loussier Trio of Erik Satie's 'Gymnopédies' checks the radio can produce clear bass, deal with a range of frequencies and balance bass and treble.

A Rickie Lee Jones song tests how a female vocal sounds and U2's 'Even better than the real thing' tests whether the radios can reproduce dynamic energy and synthetic sounds and give a sense of space.

Sports fans and Radio 4 lovers are more interested in the spoken word, so we play male and female speech on all models to ensure voices are clear and natural.



What you should look for – pocket radios

RECORDING

This Pure PocketDAB2000 (10) can record DAB radio programmes on to the supplied 64MB SD memory card. 1MB will store a minute of radio broadcast at 128kbps, the level at which most DAB stations broadcast, so it stores just over an hour of recordings

FM

Most digital radios can also receive FM. The Bush PSDAB2004 (12) is the only pocket model on test that can't



MAXIMUM VOLUME

All the pocket players we tested, apart from this Best Buy Pure PocketDAB2000 (10), had a maximum volume above 99dB. This is the level that can damage hearing when you listen for more than an hour a day

HEADPHONES

All pocket players come with headphones which contain the radio aerial. Even the best offer only average sound quality. Try Best Buy headphones to improve on this (see *Which?*, August 2006, p50)

DEALS ON DIGITAL RADIOS

Great savings with Hughes Direct

This month there are great savings on selected DAB radios from this month's report,



plus other popular models from our November 2006 feature. See p79 for details.

Contacts

Bush 0870 873 0079; www.albaplc.com

Genus www.genusdigital.com

Intempo 0161 828 5219
www.intempo-digital.co.uk

Magicbox 0845 833 1659; www.lusonic.com

Ministry of Sound 0870 049 4901
www.ministryofsound.com/audio

Philips 0845 601 0354; www.philips.com

Pure 01923 277488; www.pure.com

Roberts 01709 571722
www.robertsradio.co.uk