

Vifa

Oslo Bluetooth speaker

BLUETOOTH SPEAKERS COME

in all shapes and sizes, and this one simply oozes Scandinavian charm. Beneath the tailor-made fabric exterior lies a sophisticated portable speaker designed and built by Danish manufacturer Vifa. If the brand name sounds familiar that's because it's been around since 1933 and is perhaps better-known in hi-fi circles for its well-regarded drive units, which have been found in plenty of big-name hi-fi loudspeaker designs over the years. In more recent times the company has embarked on its own line of speakers, and the Oslo is the fourth model to be added to its Nordic range of portable wireless models.

It's an elegant one-piece design with the logo neatly embedded into the top of the solid aluminium handle, while embroidered up and down volume keys on the custom-made fabric cover produced by Danish textile designers Kvadrat give it a style that makes it stand out from the crowd. It comes in five colour options – sand yellow (shown), ocean blue, ice blue, anthracite grey and pebble grey.

True blue

As well as aptX Bluetooth 4.0 connectivity there's an aux 3.5mm mini-jack socket for wired analogue input sources and NFC (Near Field Communication) for seamless connection to compatible devices. The neat styling resembles a small satchel at 181 x 268 x 90mm (WxHxD) and weighs in at just 2.4kg, but despite its go-anywhere marketing claims the fabric cover isn't water-resistant. There's a built-in Lithium-ion battery, which can only be charged by the supplied adapter – no USB charging here – and an indicator light on the back glows red, amber or green depending on how much juice remains. It takes around three to four hours to charge to full capacity and Vifa claims the Oslo delivers around 12 hours at typical volume levels, which is accurate in my tests but mediocre in terms of practical battery life for this kind of product.



Despite the compact dimensions, the Oslo claims a full complement of speaker drivers with 2x 50mm full-range units supported by 2x 65mm woofer drivers with passive radiators. A freely downloadable Vifa app provides volume control and EQ adjustment for late-night listening with connected iOS and Android devices, but connectivity proves to be intermittent with my iPhone 5s.

Connecting a Pure Evoke-1 DAB radio to the aux input instantly shows off the Oslo's impressive frequency range, bringing superior clarity and a fuller sound that's a good step up from the Pure portable radio. Presenters' voices on Radio 6 Music sound clearer and more natural and without any lower mid-bass bloom, and the extra clarity is very easy on the ear.

The good news continues with the Bluetooth input and a 16/44 Tidal stream of David Bowie's *Modern Love* is remarkably engaging with plenty of detail to distinguish different instruments in the mix and Niles Rodgers' tremendous guitar playing

coming through clean and clear. Bass quality has detail and digs much deeper than I'd expect for such a compact speaker, and even at lower volumes it manages to sound well balanced across the entire frequency range, which is quite a feat. The same high levels of clarity with voices through the aux input are also in evidence via Bluetooth, and Martin Fry's vocal on *Viva Love* has a silkiness to it that's a little on the warm side while the track's instrumentation has a good amount of sparkle to draw you in without ever sounding harsh or bright.

Balance of power

The surprising thing about the Oslo is that it sounds just as good at low volumes as it does when pushed to go loud and manages to maintain a high level of balance with all kinds of music. Its neat design may not be to everyone's taste and the price is a bit steep compared with much of the competition, but if the Scandi-styling appeals you'll be very happy with its sonic ability. **LD**

DETAILS

PRICE
£399

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OUR VERDICT
★★★★★