

Cambridge Yoyo (M) | Wireless speakers | £300

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The Yoyo (M)s are covered in an 'acoustically transparent' fabric which is water and dirt resistant

"Convenience and hi-fi grade audio"

FOR Weighty sound; compact, stylish design; good battery life | **AGAINST** Rich presentation masks detail



Here's your dilemma: you want stereo speakers that are wireless, easy to use, portable, look good in your home, will charge your smartphone, and must sound better than your average Bluetooth speaker. Does such a product even exist?

It does now, in the form of the Cambridge Yoyo (M) wireless stereo speakers. They promise something unique: a stereo pair of portable, wireless speakers that combine lifestyle aesthetics and convenience with hi-fi-grade audio.

Cambridge Audio has nearly 50 years of expertise in producing high quality hi-fi products, many of which have picked up *What Hi-Fi?* Awards over the years, so if anyone can do it, it'll be this celebrated British audio company.

Portable desktops

We're immediately taken by the Yoyo (M)s at first glance. The petite, stylish speakers are covered in "acoustically transparent" fabric made by Yorkshire weavers Marton Mills. What's special about this 'worsted' wool (with all fibres running in the same direction) is that it's treated to resist water, dirt and shrinking. That doesn't mean you can take them scuba diving or to Glastonbury, but they should survive your kitchen and garden just fine.

As well as the blue finish of our review sample, you can get the speakers in light or dark grey fabrics. All three finishes look nice and feel well made.

Cambridge has paid attention to the inner workings of the Yoyo (M)s, too. Inside each speaker you'll find a 30mm full-range driver and a 75mm bass driver, both powered by a class D amplifier.

Of course the real draw of these stereo speakers is that they're completely wireless and portable. That's an unusual set of features for any desktop speaker. Rivals such as the Ruark MR1s (£300) and KEF Eggs (£350) not only need to be plugged into the mains at all times, but they also have a wire connecting the two speakers. The Yoyo (M)s connect to each other wirelessly and automatically from the second they're powered up.

Flexible controls

How do they know they're in left and right stereo orientations? Easy: the master unit (the one with the logo badge on it) is the right channel (so make sure you place this speaker on your right), leaving the slave unit to handle the left channel.

On the portability front, the speakers boast an impressive 24 hours of battery life. This inevitably goes down if you're listening at

raucous volumes, but it gives you leeway to untether both speakers from the mains for long periods of time. Press the button under each speaker to check how much battery is left, and the white LEDs light up accordingly. Each speaker also has a USB port hidden in its base, giving you double the chance to charge up your smartphone when it runs out of juice.

Features such as the lack of wires, long battery life and portability make the Yoyo (M) incredibly flexible. We're not sure we'd use stereo speakers in the same way you use a standard wireless speaker, though - it's trickier to carry around two speakers than a single unit. You can take just the master unit away and use it as a single speaker, but Cambridge's insistence on supplying the Yoyo (M)s as a stereo pair is at odds with this.

Cambridge keeps things simple with standard Bluetooth streaming and 3.5mm auxiliary inputs (one in each speaker) for hardwiring music players. In comparison, the KEF Eggs offer Bluetooth aptX (which offers better quality streams) and even 24-bit/96kHz hi-res music over a USB input.

But the Cambridges' simplicity means they're easy to use. There's no remote, as you'll be using your smartphone's controls to skip tracks and adjust volume. You can also tap any of the touch-sensitive buttons on the units' rubberised top panels to control the speakers. The icons light up when you poke at them. All the controls - volume, playback, Bluetooth pairing - sync simultaneously across both speakers, too.

A magic touch

Want a third way of controlling the Yoyo (M)s? Okay then: simply wave your hand over the speakers as a magician might. Left-to-right plays and skips tracks, while going the opposite way pauses the music. It's a nice idea, but gesture controls are seldom intuitive and a bit hit-and-miss when you don't get the speed and movement just right.

Once we stop playing around with the Yoyo (M)s' features and start streaming

KEY FEATURES



Wireless, portable stereo speakers



bluetooth



24 hr battery

The Cambridges promise lifestyle aesthetics and convenience combined with hi-fi-grade audio



"In trying to tick all the boxes, Cambridge has played it a touch safe. But there's plenty to like about the Yoyo (M)s' big-scaled presentation"

music, we're entertained by Cambridge's presentation. The sound from the compact speakers is impressively large-scaled and infused with warmth. Conor Oberst's vocals in *Counting Sheep* come through prominently; it's a touch mid-forward, but it sounds solid and detailed.

Scrubs up nicely

It's a comfortable listen. Guitar strings and basslines have plenty of weight behind each strum. The sound is pretty powerful and meaty, too, and the authoritative way in which the speakers go loud and spread music across the room is appealing.

You do sacrifice a modicum of fine detail and accuracy in favour of that rich presentation, though. We'd like more clarity, too, as there's a thickness to the sound we wish we could scrub away. By comparison, the KEF Eggs offer a more refined sound that combines clarity and precision to deliver a subtler and more dynamic sound. And they're only £50 more than the Yoyos.

Alt-J's *Breezeblocks* sounds fluid and sprightly through the KEFs; the tune is less agile through the Cambridge speakers, weighed down by the rich coating covering the sound. The treble is also rolled off a touch, squashing the dynamics of the song and smoothing off the rough edges.

As a result, you don't hear the vocal nuances or as much of the crunchy effects in Portishead's atmospheric *Biscuit* with the Cambridge. Conor Oberst's earnest, wavering singing sounds more delicate and expressive through the KEFs, too.

In trying to tick all the boxes, Cambridge has played it a touch safe. We were hoping for a more articulate and dynamically challenging sound - something closer to the company's Award-winning CX series - along with the lovely design touches.

But there's plenty to like about the Yoyo (M)s' big-scaled and smooth presentation,

as it works well with all kinds of genres. You can leave them playing for hours and have a perfectly enjoyable time. Their flexibility and extensive features go a long way, too.

The KEF Eggs remain our go-to desktop wireless speakers, but the Cambridge Yoyo (M)s are a stylish pair of wireless speakers that are a worthy alternative.

WHAT HI-FI? says

Rating ★★★★★

SOUND ★★★★★

FEATURES ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VERDICT A charming pair of stylish, wireless speakers with plenty of features and a smooth, enjoyable sound



The master unit, with the logo, is the right channel, leaving the slave unit to handle the left channel