

by Alan J. Pierce, EdD

**The NewKube MP3 Player** (SMRP \$ 33.00)

Bluetree Electronics, the manufacturer of this MP3 player, indicates that it is the world's smallest. It is an interesting tiny device that reminds me of something out of a spy novel.

It was fun listening to music on it as I put it through its paces.

I found that the sound that it delivers is as rich, crisp, and clear as the sound produced by my iPod Classic. I used an expensive set of earbuds during testing since the pair that came with the unit was nothing special. I did test them and they did work. I felt it was ok to test with a different set of earbuds, since the photo on the packaging actually shows the NewKube being used without the earbuds included in the packaging. My testing goal was to determine the sound and feature quality of the player rather than getting hung up testing everything included in the packaging.

The player, see photo 1, comes with a recharging cable that you must plug into a USB port on your computer. You use this same cable to transfer music to the unit. The package also includes a 2GB Micro SD card and earphones. The instructions indicate that the NewKube will support any micro SD card up to 32GB in size. I did test the unit with the SD card included in the packaging and a 32GB one that I supplied.

The sides of the NewKube are 7/8 high and wide and four out of the six surfaces are loaded with control buttons or slides. To keep things as simple as possible let me first describe what you will find on the top and bottom of the cube. If you position the cube so it is hanging by your earbuds wire which is the logical top of the cube, you are at the correct location to insert the micro SD card. When held in this orientation however, the NewKube name will appear upside down. On the bottom of the cube you will find two very tiny slide switches. One of these switches contains three positions - off, on, and Lock. In the lock position all of the other controls on the unit are disabled. The second slide switch also has three positions. In the first position all of



your songs will be played in the order they exist on your SD card. In the middle position the cube will repeat the same song and in the last position the cube will shuffle your music to play it in random order.

Still holding the cube by your earbuds wire the surfaces going around the cube contain the following

controls. On one set of opposing sides you will find buttons that with a quick press will let you skip forward or back through your play list. If you press and hold one of this set of buttons it will take you forward or back to your next music folder. On this same set of opposing sides you will also find buttons that raise or lower your volume.

On the last two opposing sides of the unit you will find the name of the unit. It will appear upside down if you are holding the NewKube by your earbuds wire. On the opposite side of the unit you will find a single button that will pause the player. When you shut down this player it will remember

what song you were listening to and you current location in the song.

Kind of Cool

It can do a great job playing your music. You can use your own micro SD card and if you go with one that is 32GB in size you can probably hold and play your entire music collection from this little device.

Not so Cool

The slide switches and buttons that circle the unit are difficult to see because of their size and the fact that their marking are the same color as the cube's plastic. Disconnecting your earbuds from the player does not turn the unit off making it easy for you to accidentally leave it running which will run down its battery. It would be better if the light that shows the unit is on was located on the same surface as the earbuds receptacle.

When I went to eject my 32GB SD card it became caught inside the NewKube. The player works perfectly but the SD card now appears to be a permanent addition. Since you load and remove music with the SD card installed I decided to not break the unit to get the SD card out.

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