



all you need to do to get going is pair your mobile phone via Bluetooth and then hook-up your external source of choice, be it the head unit's tuner or CD, or via the cable loom your iPod, other MP3 player, or SD/USB-stored music files. The MKI9200 allows full iPod playlists and content control and displays cover art work.

The remote controller has a simple set of buttons; a central controller for menu and feature navigation/activation, either side of it the phone control buttons and just below, the music controls for playback/pause and scroll/next/previous track.

A small nitpick regarding the otherwise very nifty steering wheel controller. While driving and making rushed three-point turns or U-turns, we found we were accidentally bumping the controller's main dial which can lead – as it happened

to us – to knocking-off and loosing the knob. An improvement would be to have a flatter-profile knob that doesn't protrude as much therefore being less likely to be bumped-off.

TALKING PARROT

In testing the unit's Bluetooth capabilities, we tried several mobile phone brands and all paired very quickly and without incident, with the 9200 also transferring contacts lists automatically. Voice dialling came with spotty success, the word recognition issues that plague all Bluetooth units were also in evidence here. We had joy with simple names, but more unusual or longer ones were a little confusing to the 9200. As we say, this is something inherent in all voice recognition units. Commendably, the 9200 sonically asks for confirmation (via speech synthesis) before dialling, avoiding the embarrassing wrong number call. Further reassurance is provided by the person's name being displayed on the screen (as it appears in the contacts list) whether you are making or receiving the call. A nice touch: if your contacts have photos attached to them, the caller's mug shot will be displayed on the screen.

Of course, the unit automatically mutes the music while voice calling and the ensuing conversation is taking place. We found the dual microphone arrangement to be extremely effective – the feedback from called parties was that the sound was clear and ambient noise-free. Similarly, the 9200 replayed callers cleanly and with plenty of volume. We found we never struggled with audibility or intelligibility. No doubt Parrot's 'Lateral Noise Detection' system plays a big part here.

The user interface is also quite pretty, with several 'skin' colours available to please the eye or to match the car's instrumentation colour scheme. Similarly, you can choose your own wallpaper theme for backgrounds.

CRACKIN' POLLY

Jason and I spent quite a long time putting the MKI9200 through its paces. As we mention above, we paired several of the major mobile phone brands – including a brand new iPhone 3GS – and they all synched faultlessly. The music-playing capabilities of the MKI9200 are quite powerful, and here the Parrot also performed rather well. iPod control was intuitive, as were the handling of music files from the USB and SD card sources. What's more, the screen is nice and bright, adjustable for viewing angle, and the steering wheel controller made it all easy to operate.

We must say this talking Parrot was a bit of a cracker. ◀◀

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

Alpine has had a similar unit on the market for a while in the ex-10, albeit without USB/SD card connectivity or its own 'Bluebox' amplifier. It retails for \$299

TECH SPECS

PARROT MKI9200

TYPE: Bluetooth kit with iPod control

FEATURES: 2.4-inch high resolution screen, Bluetooth, iPod control, USB/SD card slot

WARRANTY: one year warranty

PRICE: \$479

CONTACT: Strike Group on 1300 792 044

WEB: www.strike.com.au and www.parrot.com

- Works a treat and is well-featured
- Bright screen
- Efficient menus and iPod control

- Steering wheel controller can easily be bumped
- Voice recognition is still not the most accurate