Flash MP3 Player Review - The Apacer Audio Steno AP510 Combination MP3 Player and Mini Portable Stereo

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There are a lot of different brands and models of MP3 devices displayed at major electronics 3C chain stores with varying designs, styles and functionality. However, the new Apacer Audio Steno AP510 MP3 player under review breaks through the ordinary product design thinking typical of the market. Not only can the Audio Steno AP510 be used with an earphone as a portable, multifunction MP3 player/recorder/FM tuner, it can also be played through its exclusive “Stereo Station”, allowing it to be used as a super “mini stereo”, greatly increasing its usability.

▲Apacer Audio Steno AP510 is a MP3 player and a mini stereo

▲The appearance of the standalone player is not flashy,
but the fashionable aluminum alloy shell does give it a good quality feel.

■ Exclusive Stereo Station Increases Product Flexibility and Function

Out of the numerous MP3 player products on the market, the design of the Apacer Audio Steno AP510 MP3 Player and its mini Stereo Station is clearly ahead of other similar products. Though there are similar designs in the 3C market place, it has been rarely applied to MP3 players. After testing the Apacer Audio Steno AP510 MP3 Player, the writer feels the small sized Stereo Station offers more ways for the AP510 MP3 player to be used and is ideal for integration into daily lifestyles typical of the consumers that buy these types of products.

The mini Stereo Station can be used as a stereo speaker or a PC transmission base (USB 1.1 port). The Stereo Station base itself is slim, taking up only the equivalent space of two cigarette packs lying flat on a surface, which is a perfect solution for enjoying music on a desk at the office or at home.

On the back of the Stereo Station, there is a standard Mini USB port to connect to a PC. The port is used for data transmission and as a power supply, which means the base must be connected to the USB port of a PC in order to play music through the speakers, so it cannot be placed anywhere to play music. The transmission base also cannot play music and perform transmission at the same time, the base must be switched between Data/Audio at the front to either play music or transmit data.

▲Simple design at the back of the Stereo Station, with 1 USB port for data transmission as well as the only power supply for the speakers.

▲The Apacer Audio Steno AP510 MP3 Player can be placed on the Stereo Station for data transmission, or transmit music/data directly through the connection cable.

▲A switch at the front of the Stereo Station switches between data transmission and speaker playing mode.

The speakers on the Stereo Station are not big, with two 2.5 cm diameter speakers pumping out stereo sound. The sound quality for this type of small speaker is not bad, and although the sound quality can not be called crisp, there is no distortion in mid to high frequency ranges, with only a little distortion in the bass or deep bass range when the volume is turned up to maximum. Sound quality for low to medium volume is not bad. For people who just want to “listen to” music, this device would be satisfactory.

▲2.5 cm compact size speaker with above average sound quality

The Apacer Audio Steno AP510 MP3 Player and Stereo Station are both plug & play ready and are connected through a 24-pin connection port. The AP510 MP3 player can either be plugged into the speakers when it’s playing or be unplugged from the speakers for listening using earphones at any time without having to turn the device off. For listening to FM radio using speakers, there is an included antenna that can be plugged into the earphone socket for better reception quality.

The Apacer Audio Steno AP510 MP3 player offers built-in flash memory options of 128 MB, 256 MB, and 512 MB. A built-in SD card slot allows users to expand memory capacity up to an additional 1 GB with a SD card, giving users up to 1.5 GB of total memory.

▲Supports SD cards up to 1GB.

The display panel is the popular OLED display
that allows users to see the display clearly, even in the dark.

▲OLED display is bright & clear

▲Display supports multiple languages.

Although the operating interface is in English, the device is quite easy to operate since the functions are not complex. The tri-directional knob on the side of the device allows users to switch between setup, music, record, switch sound modes, FM radio and delete functions. Besides the knob mentioned above, there is also a Play/Pause, Stop, Record, Lock and language learning Repeat Playback button as well, which are all very easy to operate. The OLED display can show MP3 file names in many languages including Traditional Chinese of course. Users can also set the device to Normal, Rock, Jazz, Classic or Pop sound modes as well as playback modes for replay that include single replay and random replay, as well as the language learning function of playback from point A to point B.

▲Playback, record, lock buttons and earphone plug on left side of AP510 MP3 player, the slotted battery cover requires the use of a coin to remove.

▲Provides a language learning function, function settings adjusted using a 3-way button.

The supported music formats for playback are in MP3 and WMA. FM radio programs can also be received with the built-in tuner. Users are able to preset up to 10 programmable channels for quick channel selection. Also, when a user needs to change the battery, all stored channels will remain in the device. The record function can record external sounds with above average recording quality and average noise processing capability, which is good for general memo recording, but still cannot compare with professional recorders or recording pens. The recording file format is ADPCM in .WAV format.

The Apacer AP510 needs only one AA (UM3) battery with power consumption allowing continuous playback for over 20 hours, or 15 hours of continuous recording according to official specifications. Therefore, the battery will last 2 - 3 days for an office worker or student without any problem. Our field trial with 4 hours of use a day left 50% of the power remaining after 3 days of use, so it consumed less power compared to other MP3 players.

▲Uses single AA (UM3) battery

Apacer Audio Steno AP510 Specifications

USB Interface	USB 1.1 specification with mini USB connection
MP3 Player	.mp3 & .wma music format supported
Digital Voice Recording	Optimized to operate in various environments
Screen Display	3 Line brilliant 96 x 32 Full Dot Matrix Two-Colored OLED Display
Digital FM Tuner	FM supports world-wide frequency / 10 programmable channels / FM Recorder
On Board Memory	128MB/ 256MB/ 512MB
Rec. Format	ADPCM
Output	3.5 mm earphone Mini-Jack 32 OHM / 103dB/mw at 1KHz
Display Functions	ID3 TAG support
Repeat Mode	Repeat One/ Repeat All/ Normal/ Random/Random & Repeat All
Equalizer Mode	Jazz/ Classic/ Pop/ Rock/ Normal
Power Source	AA (x1) 1.5 Volt Battery
Battery Life	Up to 20 Hours playback with Alkaline Battery (based on .mp3 files)
Voice Sampling Rate	LP (Extended Recording)/SP (Standard Recording)/HQ (High Quality Recording)
Dimension	(L) 70.7 x (W) 65 x (H) 14.3 mm
Weight	59g without battery
OS Support	Support Microsoft® Windows 2000 (SP3, SP4)/ME/XP (Driver required for Windows 98/98SE)