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JBL EON ONE MK2

By Manus Hopkins

For full disclosure, I have to admit I was pretty much sold on JBL's EON ONE MK2 portable PA system before I'd even received the unit or opened the box, let alone tested it out. Running in Toronto's DIY music crowd, I'm no stranger to terrible PA systems, one of the most headache-inducing parts of live shows and rehearsals. I'd had my own for quite some time—quite some time, as in around 10 years—and I knew portable PA systems had levelled up times over in the time that I was using mine. And to be honest, my old system wasn't as portable as it could have been. Sure, it latched up to be carried in a suitcase shape, but it was still awkward to carry and needed speaker stands and wasn't a very compact setup either; it consisted of a brain and two speakers, connected with cables—yep, one of those. The idea of an easier to carry, easier to fit in a vehicle, more compact, harder to trip over, and frankly, much more technologically advanced portable PA system made my eyes pop. This one even has Bluetooth capability!

Now, I'm a musician and singer, but I'm no tech expert, so I didn't want to just plug in and go the way I would with guitar pedals or something of that nature, lest I blow the speaker right when I start playing with it and have some awkward emails to send. I carefully read up on everything I could with the system, even having some meetings before and after I received the unit with the team responsible for it to chat about its specs, uses, and more—which made me even more excited than I already was to give this thing a spin, or a few, or a lot. After scouring the user's manual and deciding I was ready, I hooked up the system with Bluetooth to my computer and played some music from there, to fantastic results. The first thing that blew me away with this PA was just how loud it was—way too loud for my apartment, in the best way possible. I had thought its main use would be for rehearsals, and I immediately began thinking that if I ever need an easy-to-transport PA for a small gig, this could do the trick and then some.

After testing the PA out speaking with a usual Shure SM58 mic, I couldn't wait to try it with as many different mics and in as many different settings as possible. I even got the idea to do a karaoke night with it—hook up my laptop via Bluetooth to the system, as well as to a projector and have a couple mics plugged in as well, and I've got an entire karaoke-on-the-go setup that sounds a

lot better than the ones at most bars I've been to. I also know that if I'm ever in a situation where I need to do public speaking and there isn't a PA readily available (it could happen!) this will be my go-to. Anyway, back to its main purpose for me—the system leaves nothing to be desired as a PA for band practice. I play and sing in a trio, and with the PA's volume, it doesn't have to necessarily be in a certain spot for everyone to hear the vocals, which is a great thing. I find in the center, sort of between and sort of in front of myself and my band's bass player, facing our drummer, the sound is optimal; everyone can hear the vocals loud and clear, and best of all, there's no annoying, unexplained buzzing! I have to say I've gotten used to ever-present buzzing sounds in low-cost rehearsal spaces, but to not have them is still just an awesome thing.

I'm not going to get bogged down on all the specs and have this review read like another owner's manual—you can read all that info in the actual owner's manual, or online, or probably in a few other places. I'd rather tell you about my experience with the unit as I've been doing, but I can't not take a little bit to get into the setup, as I've mentioned it a couple times. The JBL EON ONE MK2 is nothing if not compact. The large speaker has compartments at its back where a smaller one, the battery, and a spacer to raise the small speaker up higher slide in easily. Once removed, they reveal the system's controls and screen. The backside isn't covered in unnecessary dials either, as they all have multiple functions as selectable on the screen. There's a charging chord as well, but the system doesn't have to be plugged in for use, and it was honestly a challenge to try and kill its battery—something I couldn't even do in a single use. While for rehearsals I obviously have power nearby and can plug in if needed, it's nice to know that if I'm ever in some situation where I need a speaker and don't have access to power, this will do the job. What if I want to play very loud music on a camping trip or something? I'm covered. Unfortunately, I have only a page for this review, which isn't enough to say all the good things I want to about the JBL EON ONE MK2, but hopefully this has given you some idea of how much I'm enjoying it.

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