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The Altec Lansing T612

[Altec Lansing T612 iPhone/iPod Speaker System Review](#)

The "Works with iPhone" label really has some merit

Apple's iPhone is most likely one of the trendiest and most popular portable devices available on the market nowadays, so it should come as no surprise that there's a huge number of various accessories available for it on the market, ranging from all sorts of pouches and headphones to some pretty serious gear, like docking stations. One such docking station is the Altec Lansing T612, which offers quite an interesting set of features, while managing to keep the retail price at a low level.

The T612 arrived on the market in the first half of 2008, and really managed to prove its worth in time. Plus, despite general concerns, it also worked quite well with Apple's latest iPhone iteration, the 3G-enabled model, which helped it gain even more praises in the world of iPhone and iPod touch users. Furthermore, it provided certain features no other similar system offered at the time of its launch, primarily related to its more or less "intimate" connection to the smartphone from Apple.

Unfortunately, the T612 represented a bit of a disappointment for the iPod classic owners, but we'll tell you more on the subject in due time. For now, we'll start by talking about the various design features of the docking station as well as its overall look.

Design and aesthetics

Overall design features

The first thing worth mentioning about the T612 is related to the quality of the materials it's built from. Thus, even if we're talking just about plastic and metal, the finishing is a very sleek one, giving it quite an elegant look. This feeling of elegance and style is further enhanced by the fact that the device from Altec Lansing is very slender, which means it occupies a fairly small amount of space around any office or home.

The combo between the black front grille and rear side and the silver of the top makes it quite interesting and modern looking and complements to a very high extent the design and look of the iPhone and iPod touch.

Practically, when docked, any of the two portable devices mentioned above looks like somewhat of a natural extension to the speaker system, something relatively few products can actually achieve.

Button and slot placement

Pretty much all of the most important control options are located on the top side, so that you will be able to access them quite easily. The T612 sports only five buttons, controlling the Power, Volume (+ and -), Bass and Treble.

It's also interesting to mention the blue LED activity indicators, which point out exactly what function is being controlled at the moment (Bass, Treble or Volume adjustment), plus the additional LEDs installed behind the see-through front grille, which will also activate when adjusting one of the values mentioned earlier.

Connectivity options

One of the most serious issues of Altec Lansing's T612 is related to the area of connectivity. Thus, the device features a very limited number of interfaces, namely just an iPhone / iPod touch connector (placed in front of the speakers), plus the power input and an aux audio interface (3.5-mm audio jack), which can be found on the rear side. There's no video output installed, so you can forget about playing the video stored in the memory of the iPod on a widescreen HDTV, for example.

Leaving aside the issue of the video output, what's really disappointing here is the fact that the docking system only works with the iPod touch and the iPhone. Yes, you can connect any iPod flavor (and for that matter, pretty much any other type of MP3 or MP4 player) to the T612 via the available aux interface, but it's simply not the same as docking them directly. Oh, and the audio cable supplied in the box is pretty short, so you might actually have some problems connecting a portable player to the audio system AND controlling the respective player at the same time.

Remote control

As expected, the Altec Lansing T612 is accompanied by a very thin, black and slick IR remote control, which replicates the controls found on the main body, but also adds some extra functionality by allowing users to stop/play a song, fast forward it, skip it or "rewind" it.

Design and color-wise, the remote control fits the general assembly very well, while its range (of around 10 meters) is sufficient for most homes and offices.

Audio performance - the numbers

Within this particular section of our review, we'll present exactly what you can expect, at least in theory, from Altec Lansing's T612 audio system. However, if you want to find out exactly how the speakers behave in real-life and what you can actually expect from them, check out the next section of this article.

Altec Lansing T612 - tech specs

Sound Pressure Level (SPL): 100 dB ;
Total Continuous Power: 60 Watts RMS ;
System Response: 60 Hz - 20 kHz (-10 dB);
Signal to Noise Ratio at 1 kHz input: > 70 dB ;

Speakers

The device features two 3-inch full-range drivers in the mid-size area, accompanied by two silkdome 1-inch tweeters.

Real-life performance

You've seen what you can expect from this thing as far as the "numbers" are concerned, but now it's time to take a look at what the Altec Lansing T612 can do for you in "real" life.

Set-up process

The set-up process is actually a very simple and fast one. Once you've unpacked the T612, the first thing you'll have to do is choose the right power adapter, because the company's providing in package no less than 4 of them, suited for just about any type of socket there is in the world (major thumbs up for Altec Lansing here).

After choosing your particular type of adapter, connect the cable to the power brick, and then to the special connector on the rear side. It's also important to mention here that the overall length of the power cable is a generous 2.8 meters, which grants you more choices regarding the particular position the T612 will occupy in a certain room.

After you've plugged-in the power adapter to the mains, just press the power button and you're done. All you have to do now is connect either your iPhone or your other portable player (via the aux input) to the device and start listening to your favorite music.

Controlling the T612

Controlling the T612 is quite an easy task. You can do this either directly (via the buttons on the upper side) or by using the remote control. I'd say that the latter is better, simply because it provides more control options, and you can also adjust the desired settings without having to change position in the process.

Music quality

This is probably the part of this review all of you have been waiting for right from the start, so let's see how the docking station from Altec Lansing "rocks" on your music.

First of all, the manufacturers do point out the fact that the device features XdB bass-enhancement technology, which creates deep bass without a subwoofer. Indeed, the bass is full, but, unfortunately, it tends to get quite a bit distorted when pushed to the maximum volume. The same thing happens to the mid-range when audio is pushed to the max.

Fortunately, though, at low or mid-range audio volume, the T612 will behave extremely well, producing crystal-clear, deep sound, with absolutely no distortions whatsoever. In other words, the device from Altec Lansing is great for a small room, but don't try to throw a party using it as the sole music system, because you might really be disappointed.

"Works with iPhone" features

We've mentioned right from the start that the T612 was designed with the iPhone in mind, so it's actually no wonder that some of its features are specifically tailored to fit Apple's

smartphone. First of all, as you might expect, the docking station charges the battery of the iPhone when docked. Another major plus is the fact that you won't have to switch your device to "Flight Mode" when listening to music, so you can also receive calls.

Actually, the manner in which the T612 behaves when a phone call is received is quite interesting. The device automatically fades out the music that's currently being played, which is replaced by the specific ringtone assigned to the caller. You can then answer the phone, but you can only do so by picking up the handheld.

After the conversation is over, the music will start playing from where it left off, but through the iPhone's speaker. Of course, when you place it in the dock, the sound will once again be transferred to the speakers.

What's really important to note here is the fact that the speakers and audio system have been quite thoroughly shielded against GSM interference. Thus, you won't hear those "buzz"-es and interruptions commonly associated to a call on a mobile phone that's been placed in the close vicinity of an audio system.

Conclusions

OK, we've gone through the best AND the worst the Altec Lansing T612 has to offer, now it's about time to sum things up and draw some conclusions.

The good

The design of the Altec Lansing T612 is certainly a major plus, as well as the very good "insulation" against the usual interferences caused by mobile phones. The speakers generate good quality, clear and deep sound as long as you don't push the volume too high. Moreover, the fact that you won't have to switch your iPhone to "Flight Mode" is another very interesting feature.

The remote control of the docking station also brings about a very pleasant surprise, and the same goes for the wide range of power adapters included in the package, which will help this thing work in just about any country around the world.

The bad

Probably the worst thing about the T612 is its lack of extensive connectivity options. Another important minus is represented by the fact that the speakers won't behave too well at a high volume. Also, I would have really liked to see in the T612 a microphone, which would have turned it into a speakerphone for the iPhone. Who knows, perhaps in a future model, the company will implement such a feature.

Overall impressions

If you go beyond the sound problems Altec Lansing's T612 exhibits at full volume and the lack of additional interfaces, you'll be left with the image of a very decent docking station, which delivers good quality audio for "ambiance" music. Plus, its elegant and attractive look will help it blend in just about anywhere, whether at home or at the office.

However, it's pretty clear that people who don't own an iPhone or iPod touch don't really have any good reasons to purchase this speaker system, because only when paired with

the two devices mentioned above will the Altec Lansing T612 really prove what it's actually capable of. Otherwise, it won't really be that different from most of the other similar devices to be found on the market.

Sales package

- T612 docking station;
- Wireless remote control with battery;
- 3.5-mm stereo cable;
- Power adapter with 4 power cables.