



Yamaha ISX-18 Restio

The more technology is integrated into our lives, the more it shows! Smartphones and tablets strewn throughout the house, screens in almost every room, charging cables plugged into every possible outlet.

It's easy to get to a point where our homes look like they're underwritten by machines! So, when a piece of tech comes along that blends into your décor rather than sticking out like Darth Vader sun-tanning on the beach, it's a nice reprieve.

The ISX-18 is a wireless speaker hailing from Yamaha's MusicCast Multiroom family and cleverly designed to look like a picture

frame. Last year, when I was introduced to the MusicCast range, I had the opportunity to review its big brother, the ISX-800, which I fell in love with for the same reasons I've been falling in love with the ISX-18: the design!

Despite the fact that the ISX-18 neither projects pictures (despite what my comparison suggests) nor displays the time in a fashion that is acceptable to my OCD, which I like to call my 'perfectionism', I still find myself craving its affection.

It's as if the designer deliberately made it exquisitely symmetrical and, then again,

so fatally, digitally flawed that it created some cat 'n mouse paradox in my psyche.

Why not just put the time text on the same line? Why not include an analogue clock view as an alternative? Why am I forever looking at it?

When I look at the ISX-18, I can't help but think of it as a beautifully modern clock radio. It has all the usual suspects – a clock, radio and timer. But, it's the modern core of this device that makes the whole experience fresh.

The built-in wireless connectivity opens



up this simple and uncluttered speaker to a world of possibility. Bluetooth allows you to both pair devices that will stream music to the unit as well as to other devices that you can stream to, such as another Bluetooth speaker or a pair of Bluetooth headphones.

But it's the Wi-Fi connection that really reveals the power lurking inside this pint-sized performer. Through this connection, you can stream music from PCs/NAS-connected drives on your home network via DLNA, use it as an Airplay speaker (for those using iTunes/iOS) and, most notably, access the MusicCast app.

If you've read any of my other recent Yamaha reviews, you'll know that I've covered the app's potency in relative detail, but to summarise, this clever little program allows you to stream music from a variety of sources like Spotify, Napster, Juke and vTuner Internet radio.

Also, because the ISX-18 comes sans remote control, it allows for the setting of both the clock, the timer, display brightness, tuner and volume control. Chaining other devices to this network is also blessedly simple through the very user-friendly GUI.

Sound reproduction is a little more than what you'd expect from such a small thing. It's by no means 'immersive' but what clock radio ever was? It's a thoroughly enjoyable sound though, and perfectly acceptable for a two-way speaker system sporting a 25 mm tweeter and 50 mm mid/bass unit.

It delivers a well-balanced overall sound that reaches as far as it can into the lower end of the sound spectrum without muddying up the rest of the dynamics.

Expectedly, voices take centre stage here, being the midrange champion it is, and there is some nice punch from the more overly produced and mixed pop songs of our time.

Treble performance is very decent and there is some definite sweetness from the more highly pitched instruments in arrangements. All considered, the ISX-18 produces a slightly more than expected sound for its diminutive size.

If you're tired of your home looking more and more like the Starship



Enterprise, you'll appreciate the ISX-18. The aesthetic value of this unit is enough to consider it as a 'beauty piece' – and the hidden capabilities are enough to make you wonder why you don't already have one.

Justin Beachcroft-Shaw.



VITAL STATS

Type.....	Two-way speaker
Drive units.....	1x 50 mm mid/bass, 1x 25 mm tweeter
Maximum output	Woofer 10 watts, Tweeter 10 watts
Connectivity	FM tuner, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, Ethernet
Dimensions (WxHxD) 195 x 195 x 60 mm
Weight	1,1 kg

Verdict

A beautiful, modern take on the classic clock radio, with just the right amount of connectivity to satisfy our modern desires.

Price R3 990

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OUR RATING: 87/100

