

# TECHNOLOGY

GADGETS

## Rugged Bluetooth speaker offers ‘floating playback’



Soundcore Boom 3i.  
Soundcore / TNS

By GREGG ELLMAN  
Tribune News Service (TNS)

The latest and greatest in the world of portable Bluetooth speakers today might not make the cut tomorrow. Sound is the key feature, but what about size, waterproof rating and other factors?

Soundcore’s Boom 3i is designed for extreme outdoor conditions. Its IP68 waterproof/dust-proof rating allows it to withstand being fully submerged in water, withstanding submersion of up 4.92 feet for up to 30 minutes.

And it gets better. Soundcore touts the Boom 3i as the industry’s first with floating playback, so the speaker will auto-correct and stay upright, allowing the sound to be heard loud and clear, even in ocean waves. It will also survive small drops up to 3.28 feet onto concrete.

Its rugged casing and protective coating enable it to stay corrosion-free for up to 2 years of beach, boat and seaside use, according to specifications released by Soundcore.

As for the booming sound, it comes from a 3.7-by-2-inch woofer, combined with a 10W, 0.65-inch tweeter, as well as a pair of bass radiators, producing 96 dB of volume. BassUp 2.0 is activated with the press of a button, delivering up to twice the bass sound.

A feature that is new to me is Buzz Clean. When activated via the Soundcore companion app, it will shake off dust and debris to ensure crystal clear sound. The 8.27 x 3.35 x 3.09-inch Boom 3i provides 16 hours of playtime from a single USB-C charge, features Bluetooth v5.3 for TWS stereo pairing and includes a detachable shoulder strap. Internal lights on the ends of the speaker provide a user-programmable LED light show.

It’s available in four different color choices: black, blue, desert rose brown, and jungle green.

<https://www.soundcore.com/products/d5100-boom-3i-waterproof-bluetooth-speaker> \$129.99

IKEA, yes, that IKEA, has entered the world of Bluetooth speakers with the Nattbad. The recently launched AC-powered speaker has the design and look of an old radio, with a budget-friendly price point.

Music has never looked better, and with its catchy name, it seems Nattbad, or not bad at all. The speaker has a unique look: It has a rounded top, side to side, and a front-facing grill with the speaker positioned behind it.

Unlike many IKEA products, there’s no package of hardware with special screws and tools. The Nattbad Bluetooth speaker is built to work out of the box. Setup consists of plugging it in, turning it on, pairing it and then listening. The pairing button is on the back. Buttons for playing music and adjusting volume, as well as accessing Spotify, are on the front.

And as always, what’s important is the sound, and the Nattbad delivered a clear and loud sound, great for music and podcasts. It won’t be the life of the party, but it wasn’t meant to be. Instead, you get a good-looking speaker that features multi-speaker mode, and the Spotify Tap feature is a handy addition.



IKEA Nattbad.  
IKEA / TNS

<https://www.ikea.com/us/en/p/nattbad-bluetooth-speaker-black-40601603>. \$49.99, available in black, pink, and yellow

Tribit’s StromBox Mini Plus is a true portable Bluetooth (5.4) speaker with its 4.6 inches high by 3.5 inches round, 19.2 ounce compact size. Inside, the sound is produced by two 48mm full-range drivers, a passive radiator, and 12 watts of output power. The speaker’s body features a grill that extends the entire way around, allowing for 360-degree sound.

The resulting sound is impressive considering the size; you get clear, dynamic 2.0 stereo sound. It will play for approximately 12 hours at 50 percent volume before a USB-C charge is required. The sound can be tuned to personal preferences with the Tribit app. There are five audio presets or manual EQ adjustments.

True wireless sound can be achieved by pairing two StromBox Mini plus speakers, and there are also Built-in multicolor lights for a light show. It has an IPX7 waterproof rating, allowing it to be submerged in water for up to 30 minutes at a depth of 1 meter (40 inches). Internal microphones enable hands-free calls, and a 3.5 mm auxiliary port allows you to connect devices directly.

<https://tribit.com/products/tribit-stormbox-mini-plus-portable-bluetooth-speaker> 39.99, available in black, blue, and green

Skullcandy’s Terrain Mini is also portable (4.1 by 3.5 by 3.5 inches, and 12.7 ounces), enabling you to take the music with you.

Inside the cube-shaped Bluetooth 5.3 speaker is a 48mm driver producing powerful sound. It’s fully waterproof and rugged with an IPX7 rating and comes with a wrist strap. It is rated to play for up to 14 hours, depending on the battery life, and it charges with the included USB-C cable.

The sound has an emphasis on bass and highs, but overall is solid. On-board buttons control everything you need, including power, volume, and music selections. And if you choose to purchase up to 99 additional Terrain Mini speakers, they can be connected for a unique, loud, and spread out true wireless stereo sound.

The Terrain Mini is available in two colors: triple threat ocean and black, for \$41.99. Additionally, there are five limited edition colors, ranging from \$41.99 to \$59.99.

<https://www.skullcandy.com/products/terrain-mini-wireless-bluetooth-speaker>

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## Browser password managers are convenient, but risky

By JIM ROSSMAN  
Tribune News Service (TNS)

I’ve been having some conversations with people online and in person about using and storing passwords.

I’m like most of you, in that I don’t have one solution.

I utilize several options that include a password manager, having a browser to remember some passwords and writing them down in a secured file saved in the cloud.

I also have a lot of passwords to remember for my work life, which is entirely separate from my home internet use.

The conversations this week revolved around the safety of letting your browser fill in your passwords.

How safe is it? (Spoiler ... not very safe)

Every browser has its own way of keeping your logins and passwords secure. I use Google Chrome, but Microsoft Edge and Mozilla Firefox do pretty much the same thing.

The consensus is that storing your passwords in a browser is convenient, but also quite risky. Also, if you create an account and sign in to the browsers, you can choose to sync those passwords to the cloud so they’ll be available if you log into that same browser on a different computer or tablet or phone. Again, convenient, but risky.

Browsers are notoriously at risk of leaking your data through exploitable vulnerabilities. I’m not sure most people are aware that browsers like Chrome issue major updates monthly, with minor updates even more often.

Most of the time, those updates happen in the background, but they can’t be fully applied unless you quit and relaunch the browser. This is why it is very critical that you keep current on your browser updates.

Everyone must weigh their tolerance for risk versus convenience when dealing with their online lives.

My thought is to let the browser remember my login and password information on sites that don’t utilize any financial information.

I don’t mind letting Chrome remember my New York Times login, but I certainly don’t have it filling out my online banking logins or even my shopping accounts like Amazon.

If the account deals with any of my money, I don’t let the browser remember anything, including the username.

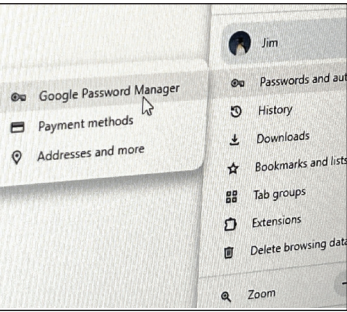
Also, I’ve mentioned this before, but it bears repeating – please turn on two-factor authentication when it is offered.

Two-factor authentication adds a second layer of security to your accounts by requiring two methods of authentication before allowing access.

To put it simply, using two-factor authentication means entering your login name, password and then having a code sent to your phone that you enter on the screen. This means you not only know the login credentials but have possession of your phone as well.

If a hacker manages to steal your password, they will still need your phone to finish the login.

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Jim Rossman / TNS

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