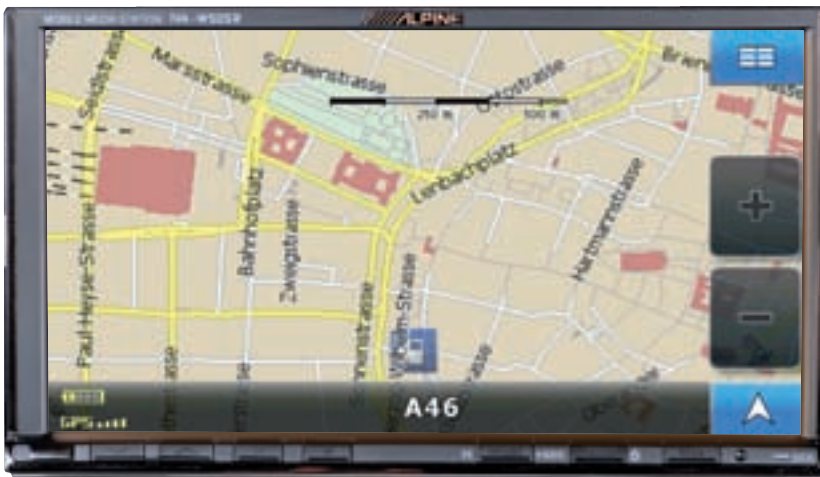


Navigation



Tucked away: The Blackbird PMD B200P sat nav transforms the Alpine IVA-W505R Moniceiver into a fully fitted system.

A plug-&-play sat nav that you can also use as a fitted system – how does that work? It's quite simple. Take the Alpine IVA-W505R Moniceiver and add the portable Blackbird PMD B200P sat nav. Just like with good old VCRs, you slot it into the main unit and you're done – fixed installation à la Alpine. Is this 'NAVI-K2/W505R' package worth the relatively high price of €1,399?

Fully fitted plug-&-play

The unusual combination of fully fitted and plug-&-play navigation has one major benefit to start with: owners of more than one car can use the fitted solution in one vehicle while sticking the Blackbird quickly to the windscreen with a suction holder in the other. They are thus saved from having to buy a second sat nav.

Another practical feature: anyone already owning an IVA-W505R (priced €999 on its own) or an IVA-W205R (€899) can buy the Blackbird as an add-on. However, that costs a mighty €499. Steep in the days of €99 sat navs! The IVA-W505R/PMD B200P bundle is yours for €1,199. It has, for example, a full-speed port for connecting an iPod. This connection is justifiably called „full-speed“, for in contrast to many conventional iPod integration solutions, with the Al-

pine you can quickly switch through the playlists without having to put up with tedious delays.

However, you first need to get used to operating the iPod via the IVA-W505R, as this is rather more complicated than when using Apple's music box on its own.

This is firstly due to the buttons ending up too small and secondly to the fact that the menu is not quite as clear as on the iPod itself. Videos and podcasts can also be played on the 7-inch display. All who are not iPod fans will also be delighted: there is no irritating searching of nested directory structures on USB storage devices, as the Alpine IVA-W505R can read ID3 tags.

The Blackbird also has a practical Bluetooth hands-free facility. We used this a lot during our test drives. Unfortunately in plug-&-play mode it's a bit quiet due to the smaller speakers.

Just another iGo sat nav?

In sat nav mode we are greeted by the familiar iGo interface. Alpine, however, have done a bit of fine tuning, as the menu interfaces are somewhat more colourful and nicer to look at than on the iGo systems from Zenec and Xzent. Our testers would nevertheless have liked the IVA-W505R's 7-inch screen to have a rather higher resolution – as the pin-sharp picture, for example,



Slip it in: The Alpine Moniceiver swallows up the Blackbird sat nav unit just like VCRs used to with video cassettes.

can be enjoyed only on the Blackbird. By way of compensation, operation is a doddle. As on the Zenec and Xzent the menu structure is quickly understood.

Talkative directions

In terms of leading you to your destination the system provides impressively precise spoken directions, even if these have ended up a bit wordy. That can do no harm on unfamiliar routes, but is irritating in everyday use.

The system's talkative nature does, however, also have a benefit: turns to be taken at the end of tunnels are pleasingly announced in good time even without a GPS signal. The friendly male voice also prompts us with the direction and the distance to the next junction.

Compared to the Zenec and the Xzent, the Alpine is a bit more pre-

cise and natural. On hearing the slightly lisping female voice you soon feel yourself reminded of German television personality Katja Burkard.

Nevertheless, orientation at major junctions or crossroads, on motorways or country roads, works really easily thanks to the use of signposts.

In city centres, however, the exceptionally large number of signs sometimes makes things a little cluttered. The TMC traffic jam report function is solved in an interesting way: if traffic has come to a standstill on your planned route, the colour changes in a little window on the edge of the map.

connect-Urteil

very good (442 points)