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Mio C725 GPS Navigator Review

PND, multimedia player, portable TV, photo viewer...



Mio DigiWalker C725 -
one really BIG GPS
navigator
Softpedia

GPS navigation devices have evolved a lot over the past couple of years, and are now capable of providing a full range of functions, besides their basic ones, namely that of finding the fastest/shortest route to any location. A while back, we reviewed the Mio Moov 330 PND designed pretty much for the general public, but whose extra functions were not exactly amazing. However, the device you'll read about as follows, the Mio C725, is a whole different story, since it has been designed specifically to provide several useful multimedia-related features and functions, all of which will make time behind the wheel a lot more enjoyable.

First and foremost, it's important to mention that the C725 is a 7-inch unit, which means that it's a lot larger than "common" PNDs, the extra screen space being very important when watching movies or TV (yeah, this thing even features a special connector that can be used for hooking up an external antenna, which can receive either television programs or real-time traffic information). For this reason, it will most likely be rather unfit for smaller cars, since it will occupy way too much of the viewing field provided by the windshield. In other words... if you've got an SUV, then this is just the GPS navigator to accessorize it with.

Then, it's interesting to note the fact that the C725 can also be easily used outside the car (it comes with a protective leather pouch that makes it very portable), either as a navigator or as a portable multimedia player, since this thing can easily handle a lot of file formats, including video, audio and photos. Plus, you can easily connect it even to a TV set, if you don't happen to have any other player available at hand at that moment, and use it for viewing videos on a large screen.

Of course, as any product out there, the C725 also has some shortcomings (the lack of Bluetooth probably being the most important one), but we'll talk about everything in due time. For now, let's just have a talk about the device's external appearance.

[[BREAK=Design and aesthetics]]

Overall design features

The C725 can't be described as an "attractive" product, from the point of view of the design. It's relatively carefully crafted, the quality of the plastic finishing and of the materials used being slightly above average. However, when I first looked at it, I thought "Man, that's a big Moov," which translates into the fact that, albeit elegant, this PND doesn't really offer anything extraordinary, as far as its looks are concerned (it also reminded me of a digital photo frame I once had, but that's probably due to its size).

Speaking of size, it's interesting to mention that the C725 is 182 mm wide, 123 mm high and has a thickness of solely 23 mm. Plus, it's pretty light weight, given its very large size, having a total weight of around 380 grams, so it will be quite easy to carry around (especially since it's accompanied by its own leather carry case, but we'll talk about that a bit later).

Aside from the plastic case, the device also sports two metallic bands, one across the rear side, the other in the top side, just in front of the control buttons. Actually, the color contrast

between the chrome-like aspect of these bands and the black of the case is what provides the "stylish" or "elegant" feeling one might get when first taking a look at the C725.

Slot and button placement

Fortunately, the designers from Mio have managed to keep the number of buttons on the C725 at a minimum. Thus, the PND sports just three such buttons, all of which are located right on its top and are used for switching on the device (Power), switching between TV and GPS functionality (GPS/TV switch, the one in the middle) and for muting the navigator's speakers (Mute). Speaking of which, it's also interesting to note that the PND sports two built-in speakers, located on the back, on both sides of the car mounting system slot.

As in the case of any other product of this type, users can also reset the device by inserting a very thin object (usually a needle) into the clearly marked "Reset" slot, which can also be found on the back. The PND sports a memory card slot located right on top of the C725, whose purpose is to accommodate SD/MMC cards. There are other interfaces on the side, but we'll talk about those in the next chapter of our review.

Connectivity options

Given the fact that it can provide extensive multimedia functions, the Mio C725 obviously sports more interfaces than average PNDs. For example, besides the SD/MMC port mentioned earlier, the navigator has also been equipped with miniUSB and standard USB 2.0 ports, located in the lower, right-hand side of device and well hidden (well, yes, protected) behind a plastic cap.

Since the C725 also doubles as a mini portable TV set, it has been equipped with an AV In connector, which can be used for connecting the device to a video signal source, be it a camcorder, car video player, etc. This interface is located directly above the two USB interfaces mentioned above, and it's also protected by a plastic cap. In its immediate vicinity (in the area underneath the same cap), we can find the line-in/out jack as well, used for connecting either a pair of headphones or a microphone to the navigator.

There's an antenna connector located on the backside (left, upper corner), underneath yet another cap. The last connector in the list, used for powering the device, is located on the left side of the PND, in the lower corner.

Unfortunately, there are no "hidden" connectivity options to talk about here, since the C725 doesn't support either Bluetooth or WiFi. This is a big minus, in my opinion, because this PND could have easily become the center of one's car infotainment system had it provided a mobile phone pairing option.

Accessories

Writing a special sub-chapter just about the accessories of the C725 might seem unnecessary for some of you, but I consider it quite important, especially since there are things worth mentioning here.

First of all, there's the carry case. For practical purposes, the C725's sales package includes a very elegant leather carry case, which can be used to "dress-up" the PND, thus protecting it against various environment factors and the effects of excessive usage. The case even sports a few spaces for storing business cards or other stationery accessories, which could really come in handy in certain situations.

Another very interesting accessory is the power adapter (no, not the car power adapter, which is pretty standard, but the AC charger). This adapter sports a removable part, exactly the "prongs" inserted in the power socket. This way, users can very easily change between two and three-pronged systems, thus ensuring the fact that they'll be able to charge their C725 just about everywhere they might be around the world.

Also included in the package are a USB-to-miniUSB cable, plus an AV cable and the windshield mounting system.

[[BREAK=Hardware performance]]

Hardware configuration

CPU: Samsung 2443-400Mhz;
GPS Chipset: 20-channel SiRF Star III;
Storage: 2GB NAND flash;
RAM memory: 64 MB.

Normal operation

The Mio C725 works very well in almost all situations, being able to quickly tune in to the satellites' signal and follow a car's position. Multimedia playback also runs quite smoothly, and the same goes for every other application included in the device.

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However, there's one aspect I really didn't like about the way the C725 works, and that issue is related to the touchscreen display. Hence, compared to other PNDs from Mio, the level of responsiveness provided by the screen of the C725 is not particularly fantastic. I mean, simply pressing (gently) one's finger against the screen will rarely have the desired result, so you'll most likely have to give it a strong, firm push in order to activate a certain function (even after carrying out the screen align process a couple of times). And while this shouldn't really be an issue when you're carrying the device around, it becomes rather annoying when you're driving.

Display

We've talked earlier about the control-related issues of the display, but now we'll take a look at its primary function. So, touted by the manufacturers as one of the main reasons why one should buy the C725, the PND has been equipped with a very large, 7-inch touchscreen TFT LCD display, which offers an 800 x 480 pixel resolution. While this is nowhere near HD, it's quite enough to allow users to watch movies or view photos in fairly good conditions, with the color depth and contrast being quite good, for a device of this type. Plus, the screen has an adjustable brightness level, which allows users to see it equally well during daytime and nighttime.

Battery life

The Mio C725 has been equipped with a non-removable Lithium, 1200 mAh rechargeable battery. The official estimated functioning time provided by a full charge is of around 2.5 hours, but, in practice, the battery gets depleted a bit faster, especially if you're watching TV, a movie or navigating. All in all, you can count on around 1.5 - 2 hours of non-stop functioning, with the amount of time slightly varying depending on what you use the PND

for.

[[BREAK=Real-life performance]]

Up until now, you've read about the main design and hardware issues of the C725, and now, it's time to take a look at just how this thing behaved in some real-life situations. Unfortunately, since I don't own an SUV, I can't really describe just how one of these things might look or "behave" in a larger car. During the tests, I used the same car as in the case of the Mio Moov 330, and while that particular model felt right at home in a smaller vehicle, things were very different with the C725.

Car setup

Installing the C725 within any car is not exactly a very difficult process. Practically, all the users have to do is first slide the adapter provided in the package in the corresponding slots located on the backside, and then firmly attach it to the windshield mount. Similar to most other mounts, this one also attaches to the windshield via a suction cup, which provides quite a good level of stability.

The second step in this process is to insert the car adapter's tip into the corresponding connector. While in the case of the Moov 330, the connector was located on the lower side, C725's is on the lateral side, which means that the wires will be quite visible when installed. Not a big minus, but rather a slight aesthetic "no-no."

This pretty much completes the basic setup. Of course, if you happen to be the owner of a larger car fitted with all sorts of extras and perks, you might also consider connecting your A/V receiver to the C725, or perhaps the external antenna in order to watch TV programs.

Navigation

Despite the numerous additional features it provides, the Mio C725 is, after all, a GPS navigation device, so the way it's able to accomplish this task is very important. The device has been tested both in and outside major cities, and it behaves equally well within the urban "jungle" or in the middle of nowhere. Plus, the satellite signal acquisition time is relatively short (typically, under 1 minute), while the signal strength remains strong throughout the whole journey (in other words, the 20-channel SiRF Star III receiver does it job quite well, as expected).

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The C725 runs the same navigation software as the Moov 330 (MioMap2008). I won't go into too many details regarding this issue, since its been covered quite in detail in the respective device's review. However, to sum things up, I'll just tell you that it uses the same map (Europe Full 2008.04), supports NavPix navigation, provides the same destination search options as the 330 and its database of POIs is quite extensive.

[IMG=22][IMG=23][IMG=24]

What's really interesting to mention here is the POI region lookup option. Thus, this

particular function allows users to search for all specific POIs from a certain region selected by the user, something that can prove to be quite useful when traveling to an unknown area (for example, for finding all the hotels or gas stations in the specific selected region, NOT on the entire map).

Music playback

As mentioned right from the start, one of the main selling points of the Mio C725 is represented by its extensive multimedia playback features, including here the music playback function.

Music playback is done via an included Audio Player application, which provides quite an impressive level of functionality. The music can be stored either in the device's internal memory, or, more likely, on SD/MMC cards, whose contents can be very easily browsed by the player.

Moreover, users can very easily control the playback volume and mode (repeat, shuffle, etc.), and the player even sports an equalizer, so users can either customize their audio or choose from one of the available presets. Plus, the device can even display the song's lyrics, if prompted to, and even sports a power-saving feature, which slightly improves the battery life.

[IMG=25][IMG=26][IMG=27][IMG=28]

Video playback

The video playback application is far less complicated than the audio player. Practically, it allows users to choose the video (also stored either in the internal memory or on an external card) and then play it, with all the playback options you might normally require (pause, stop, etc.).

[IMG=29][IMG=30][IMG=31]

Photo viewing

The photo viewing function provided by the C725 is quite well-designed and developed. First of all, it allows users to view photos stored either in the PND's own memory, but also on memory cards inserted in the corresponding slot or on USB flash drives. The photo viewer lets users see photos in galleries, individually or in slideshow mode. In the individual mode, users can move through the photos or zoom onto them, and if they happen to get bored with some or all of the pictures, they can simply and easily delete them.

[IMG=32][IMG=33][IMG=34][IMG=35]

Video mode

As mentioned right from the start, the device can also be used for viewing TV programs, should the user have the appropriate receiver.

[IMG=36][IMG=37]

Customization options and device settings

Beside the various customization options provided by the navigation software (language, display brightness, audio, guiding voice, measurement units, etc.), the C725 also allows users to tweak some of the settings right from the UI.

[IMG=38][IMG=39][IMG=40]

Thus, they can modify the backlight level, audio volume, GUI language, check the battery stats and adjust the power settings accordingly or re-align the touchscreen, if they feel like the level of sensitivity is not exactly OK. Plus, they can also modify the time/date, while the file browser button, when pressed, will send them right into the Windows interface, in the core of the C725.

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FM Transmitter

Beside all of the features mentioned above, the device also packs a built-in FM transmitter, which could really come in handy if you want to route the navigation guidance system through the car's own speaker system. The process is a very fast and easy one, users being able to choose one of the available frequencies and then store it for future use.

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[[BREAK=Conclusions]]

We've seen what the C725 can and cannot do; now, it's time to sum things up and draw our final conclusions.

The good

The C725 offers a very large (7-inch) display, with a fairly good resolution and OK colors and contrast levels (good enough for both navigation and movie watching). It provides numerous multimedia playback options, photo viewing, a built-in TV viewer, audio player, as well as a host of connectivity options that will ensure the fact that you can hook up just about anything to it. Plus, by using the FM transmitter, you can even listen to music via your car's own audio system.

The GPS module works very well, and it will most likely help you find your way wherever you might be going, since Mio's maps are quite up-to-date and reliable. Another plus goes to the accessories, which are both numerous and useful.

The bad

The most important minus of the C725 is its lack of Bluetooth and Wi-Fi interfaces. While Wi-Fi is not that common and the lack of Wi-Fi support is not that big a deal (yet), the lack of Bluetooth is indeed bad, since it would have seriously improved this device's level of

functionality and, most likely, its level of popularity.

Another shortcoming is represented by the level of responsiveness provided by the touchscreen display, which is not great, users having to push on the screen in order for it to work properly.

Overall impressions

The Mio C725 is clearly a device you'd purchase if you drove a big car and spent a lot of time on the road. While the C725 can always double as a portable multimedia playback device, it's not likely that people will be carrying it around in order to watch short video clips or listen to music. However, when installed in a truck or SUV, it will most likely feel right at home, allowing its users to make their long trip home a lot more pleasurable.

Sales package

- Mio C725
- Leather carry case
- AV cable
- USB-to-miniUSB cable
- Windshield mount
- Adapter for windshield mount
- Car power adapter
- AC adapter with removable "prong" area
- Software CD and User's manual.

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