

Title:

Zune, The Latest Cool Tool

Word Count:

542

Summary:

I can just picture how this production meeting went. There are two versions of the Apple iPod sitting in the middle of the table. One plays music and the other music and video. "What if we were to combine the features of these two iPods, a Palm Pilot, a cell phone, and a laptop computer?" "Dude, that's a great idea!" "When could it be ready for market?" "Soon." "What did you say, Zoon?" "No, I said soon, but that's not a bad name for our product. Let's call it the Zune!" And ...

Keywords:

zune, mp3, ipod, microsoft

Article Body:

I can just picture how this production meeting went. There are two versions of the Apple iPod sitting in the middle of the table. One plays music and the other music and video. "What if we were to combine the features of these two iPods, a Palm Pilot, a cell phone, and a laptop computer?" "Dude, that's a great idea!" "When could it be ready for market?" "Soon." "What did you say, Zoon?" "No, I said soon, but that's not a bad name for our product. Let's call it the Zune!" And thus the Zune was born—coming this Christmas to an electronics store near you.

I've got to tell you; at first I was very cynical about this device. I mean, why do a remake of an existing product that is already a market sensation? The answer to that question is, because the Zune has features on it that make it the coolest contraption to come along since, well the iPod. Here's a rundown of some of those features.

I know, we all already know that it plays music and videos. But did you know that the video display screen is 3 inches (44% larger than the iPods screen) with the capability of a 640x480 screen resolution? That's bigger than Dick Tracy's watch, and definitely bigger than your cell phone screen.

The Zune has 802.11 WiFi built right into it which will allow it to transfer data (only pictures and music—no video) between Zune devices, as well as making

it "netcast" capable allowing you to podcast music or the spoken word to anyone on your wireless network.

It supports seven different media formats including H 264, MP3, WMA, WMV, MPEG4, JPEG, and AAC making it much more flexible than the iPod. It also comes with several audio and video files preloaded.

This device interfaces and synchronizes with the Xbox 360 and will allow Zune users to create a social network and interface with friends over Xbox Live.

The one bone I have to pick with Microsoft, is in regards to their choice to limit the number of times I can play a song once I download it from another device. To show the RIAA that they still want to be their girlfriend, Microsoft limits you to playing a song for three days or three plays (whichever comes first). If you want to fork over \$79, then you are granted the privilege of downloading an unlimited number of songs (well, in the millions anyway). Or, you can pay a monthly subscription fee of \$14.95 for what's called the "Zune Pass." Of course it's not yet clear to me that if I let that subscription lapse, what will happen to all those songs I've already downloaded during the time I subscribed? Stay tuned for that one. I suspect we're not going to like the answer.

But that's my only beef with the Zune. This is a cool tool. There are many add-ons in the works for this device, and with the potential and the versatility that it provides us; I think the Zune will be around for a long time. At \$249.99, the price isn't bad either. Come Christmas, these are going to fly off the shelves.