

Title:

MP3 Players - Many Capable Underdogs vs. the 800-lb. Gorilla

Word Count:

401

Summary:

Although the Apple Ipod reigns supreme, there are many capable alternatives at a more attractive price point.

Keywords:

media players, mp3, ipod

Article Body:

Anyone lover of gadgets and portable electronics knows what an Ipod is - and in fact, many people who have no interest in personal electronics know exactly what they are. With over 21 million units shipped, and over 75 per cent of the personal Digital Audio Player (DAP) market worldwide, it's no surprise - Apple Computer Inc. has become the 800-lb. gorilla of portable music players.

What most people don't know is the variety of alternatives to the Ipod - devices which can play music, videos, and more, and which accept Secure Digital (SD) cards, Compact Flash, and Memory Sticks, and replaceable (or rechargeable) AAA batteries, often for a lower price than a comparable Ipod. The iRiver devices offered by South Korean manufacturer Reigncom range from small players intended to hang on a keychain or as wearable jewelry style devices to full-fledged hard-drive based units pointed squarely at the Ipod's market.

SanDisk (a maker of Secure Digital flash memory) offers the Sansa series of MP3 players, with the distinction of being able to accept the same SD cards as many digital cameras, offering additional storage options and the flexibility to swap music collections without long transfer times. Some of Samsung's YP series of MP3 players offer a miniscule size, picture viewer and LCD monitor, all at a lower price than many competing units.

Although there are a variety of choices, one major reason for the Ipod's dominance is the sheer irresistibility of its marketing. The unit is sleek and simple, stylized yet understated, much like the rest of Apple's product offerings. For many Ipod owners, the device is a fashion accessory as much as a technological device - when walking down the street, the trademark white earbuds are clearly visible even from some distance.

So visible in fact that they have become an easy target for some muggers - but many Ipod owners would sooner risk robbery than trade in their favorite fusion of fashion accessory and music player. Many people find that a particular device simply suits their tastes better than all the rest, but in many cases, one device isn't necessarily "better" than all of the others, only different and with more or fewer features. The selection of manufacturers and models presently available offers as wealth of choices for any portable audio lover, whether replacing an existing device or entering the world of digital audio for the first time.