

Marvelous

multimedia machines

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In just a few short years, MP3 players have evolved into multimedia powerhouses, capable of storing not just music, but photos, videos, and anything else they can cram into those compact little bodies. And in that short span of time, they've gotten irrevocably integrated into popular culture as well; what model you're carrying on your daily commute says as much about your personality as the clothes you wear or the shoes on your feet. Here's a closer look at some of the hottest multimedia players now rolling off the market:



iPod nano

The brand that started it all has gone all out on the latest iteration of its best-selling iPod nano series. The revamped nano now comes in nine bright colors finished in polished anodized aluminum. What you'll notice right away is the larger 2.2-inch color display, but the real scene stealer is the video camera, the lens of which you'll find sleekly integrated into the back of the unit. Capable of shooting VGA-resolution (640 x 480) clips at 30fps, the video camera is no doubt Apple's bid to infiltrate the portable video camera market. With a built-in microphone and speaker, the music player cum video camera allows you to both capture audio and hear it when you play back videos.

As usual, the trademark Click Wheel completes the design, but Apple has packed in even more mouth-watering new features such as an FM radio with live pause and a pedometer that will count how many steps you take to help you meet your fitness goals.

Philips GoGear Opus

"Opus" refers to a musical composition, and Philips seems to be evoking a classic, orchestral design with its music player's glossy, black finish, rounded edges, and silver trim at the sides. The rear is plastic, but styled to look like brushed aluminum. With a sizeable 2.8-inch screen, the Opus offers the now requisite audio, still photo, and video playback options, but adds FM radio, FM radio recording, and voice recording features. The controls are a four-way pad with convenient function buttons flanking each side.

This music player boasts excellent sound quality thanks to Philips' FullSound technology, which restores sonic details to compressed MP3 music. It also comes with high-definition, ergonomic earphones with noise-isolation function (a big plus in our books).



Samsung YP-P2

Available in black, white, and burgundy versions, the YP-P2 is cased in smooth, sturdy magnesium alloy. Underneath the 3-inch widescreen touch display is a multi-colored, circular, LED indicator. On the left side of the player, you will find the hold switch, as well as the play/pause button, which also doubles as the power button. And, in a nice touch, dedicated volume controls are found on the right side of the device.

Where the P2 is really able to steal a march on other multimedia players is its Bluetooth 2.0 feature. This means the P2 can be paired with stereo Bluetooth headsets, speakers, and even mobile phones. It is able to pair with up to two devices at the same time, so that two people can listen to the music with their Bluetooth headsets.



Sony S-series Walkman

Sony is out to reclaim the portable audio territory it once dominated with its new line-up of multimedia players in hot colors such as red, pink, violet, and black. What makes Sony's latest offering stand out, however, are the powerful, built-in stereo speakers positioned at the top and bottom of the unit. To further emphasize that the Walkman is for sharing tunes, there is a hands-free, kickout stand at the back to ensure that the group can enjoy music and videos to their hearts' content.

The S-series Walkman also allows for widescreen format viewing on its 2.4-inch color screen. It also has FM radio and voice/FM recording functions. Volume controls, a toggle switch between headphones and speakers, and a hold switch complete the design on its right side.



Zune HD

Sporting a sleek 3.3-inch touch-screen and super-slim 0.3-inch body, the Zune is sexy while still packing in a lot of heavyweight features. Probably due to its slender frame, only three buttons made its way onto the surface of the unit: the power/hold button at the top, the home button directly below the screen, and the playback/volume controls at the side. The curved edges at the back give you a solid grip.

The "HD" in the model refers to both its HD radio and HD video-out functions. HD radio gives you access to FM stations with clear, CD-quality sound (i.e. no static), while HD video-out allows you to connect the media player to your HDTV and view 720p videos on your TV. Its large, vivid, OLED screen makes Wi-Fi internet browsing an enjoyable experience.

