

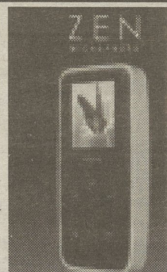
Eye on Entertainment

Device Review: Mp3 Players

Without a doubt, this holiday season's "IT-gift" is the mp3 player. This media receptacle has entrenched itself into the national psyche. A man can't even get through the Sunday funnies without being barraged by that electronic brick that shoots music notes into his eardrums. The selection is daunting, and with Black Friday come and gone, most major electronic companies have released their flagship devices.

The perennial favorite is Apple's iPod. Now in its fifth generation, this small audio device packs a punch. In addition to its sleek, trim look that would meet space age standards, but it now comes in black or white and has a standard color screen for displaying current album art and music videos. The interface the iPod has is intuitive and uses simplistic hierarchal menus that allow you to quickly navigate to that hard rocking Yanni concert through the process of elimination. The selection of third-party add-on devices for the iPod lists in the hundreds - from armbands to car adapters, most portable audio needs can be filled. The new fifth generation iPod only has two capacity sizes: thirty and sixty gigabytes. File management is done through Apple's program "iTunes" which has versions available for Macintosh and Windows personal computers. The prices through the Penn State's Apple Store are \$269 and \$369 respectively.

A popular alternative to the iPod is iRiver's H10 series of Audio Jukebox Players. Hard drive capacities are available in 20, 6, and 5-gig versions with prices at \$299, \$279, and \$229 respectively. One of the H10's best-selling points is the ability to listen to FM radio and record it for use later. Also included is a built-in microphone for voice recording: something the iPod can do only through a propri-



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etary add-on. iRiver's color selection is a bit more copious with hues like "Remix Blue" and "Trance Red." The battery life for the H10 matches the iPod's: if used in its lowest power conditions, the total playtime is approximately twenty hours. This is according to iRiver's site and pending on how you use the standard color screen, the device's hold on a charge can drop significantly. The display can display pictures, but not video. Media is managed through Window's Media Player.

Creative's Zen Microphoto may be in a lower weight class than the two preceding mp3 players, but many of its features are designed to compete with the iPod and H10 this holiday season. Jumping on the color screen bandwagon, this pretty little music player will get looks on the bus, in the classroom, and in church (it's a bad idea to listen to

music during service... who knew?) It's available in 10 colors, and has a blue glowing touchpad for navigation, which undoubtedly accentuates the hot pink color option. The Microphoto is only available

with an 8-gig storage capacity and sells for \$249. Auxiliary options include photo storage and management, slide show capabilities, FM radio and recorder, and the ability to sync with Microsoft's "Outlook Express" program, to satiate that PDA hunger in all of us. Distribution and management of files is handled by Creative's "Mediasource" application.

Even with all the facts, it's hard to decide what option is best. The best deciding factor on an mp3 player purchase is to weigh price versus practicality. The iPod may have video and larger storage capacity, but for someone who listens to five bands religiously and nothing else, the higher price range may not be worth it. Good advice for a consumer that buys one of the aforementioned devices: To be popular is to purchase the most expensive and fancy mp3 player they can find. That way, everyone will know just how cool he or she really is.

— Daniel Robert Peter Delaney

Movie Review: Eighties Holiday Classics



Singing and dancing Raisins, a Lasagna loving cat, a playhouse full of celebrity cameos, lots of various animals and creatures under one roof singing carols; it all points to one thing: a "Very 80's" Christmas.

I know you're sitting there thinking, "How can I take that walk down nostalgia lane?" I advise visiting eBay and searching for pieces of your childhood and buying them back. This is what I believe to be the top four best of the best.

The Claymation Christmas This famous California Raisins special of little musical numbers has singing by various claymation characters. The film takes the viewer to Quasimodo conducting the "Carol of the Bells," the soulful camels singing "We Three Kings" and the California Raisins themselves singing "Rudolph the Red-Nose Reindeer." However, one of my favorite memories of this special is the consistent groups of carolers singing the same song incorrectly: "here we come a wassailing (waffling, waddling, ect.)"

Garfield Christmas In this classic, Garfield, Odie, and Jon take a trip to Jon's parent's farm-

house. This special includes the classic Garfield sarcasm that writer Jon Davis is famous for. The best scene is the emotional moment when Grandma, sitting stroking Garfield, reminisces on her past husband and his love of Christmas.

Pee Wee's Playhouse Christmas Special This is the definition of Christmas specials in the 1980's. It has everything from a Hanukkah celebration, claymation, ice-skating, Santa and of course about 20 celebrity cameos; guests like Little Richard, Magic Johnson, Frankie Avalon, Charo and Cher among many more. The best moment however, is the overly forced Hanukkah segment with a woman so stereotypically Jewish it's almost offensive.

The Muppet Family Christmas This Christmas special is the all time greatest in my opinion. In this forgotten Christmas special, the Muppets go and visit Fozzie Bear's Mother, accompanied by all the Muppets, the Sesame Street cast and the Fraggle Rock cast. It's also an emotional special to watch since it was Jim Henson's last film/special. The highlight moment is Big Bird and the Swedish Chef singing "The Christmas Song" (chestnuts roasting on an open fire).

So go, find some of your favorite childhood Christmas specials before they go out of print or cost about \$50.

— Matthew James Gebheart Kelly

Featured Review:

A Top 10 List of Holiday Melodies

Ahh, the holiday season. Snow is on the ground, lights are on our houses, and music is in our ears. Whether it is a finely-caroled rendition of a holiday classic or some cheesy "muzak version" of a song blaring through a department store speaker, there are many songs that are synonymous with the holiday season. So, without further ado, I give you my Top Ten Christmas Songs...

1) **"No Presents for Christmas" by King Diamond.** Though it opens up with a jazzy medley of holiday favorites, the song is thrust into a driving 80's thrash metal riff, occasionally punctuated with short segments of holiday melodies. Without a doubt, this is my favorite Christmas...err...Christmas-themed song of all time.

2) **"Christmas Time is Here" by Vince Guaraldi Trio.** If you've seen the Charlie Brown Christmas special, you've heard this song. Personally, I prefer the instrumental version. Sure, you don't get to hear any lyrics about the season, but I think the melody conjures up some holiday imagery on its own.

3) **"Christmas in Hollis" by Run DMC.** Wow...I never thought I'd expect to find a hip-hop Christmas song. It doesn't get any better than lyrics like "My name's D.M.C. with the mic in my hand, and I'm chillin' and coolin' just like a snowman. So open your eyes, lend us an ear, we want to say Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!"

4) **"A Mad Russian's Christmas" by Trans-Siberian Orchestra.** The Orchestra takes melodies from "The Nutcracker" ballet and elaborates on them, combining heavy metal style guitars with classical orchestral string and wind sections. Very awesome!

5) **"Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" by Frank Sinatra.** Though the dreary melody and tempo are slightly depressing, whenever I listen to this song, I feel like my "troubles will be miles away..."

6) **"Back Door Santa" by B.B. King & John Popper.** This is an upbeat, bluesy holiday tune. Although, I don't know what B.B. is implying with the title...

7) **"Dominick, the Italian Christmas Donkey" by Lou Monte.** Alright, this is a bit of an odd song, but it makes me crack up every time I hear it. I've heard of reindeer, but never a Christmas donkey.

8) **"Just Put a Ribbon in Your Hair" by Alan Jackson.** I enjoy country music. I admit it. Having said that, this is a nice, easygoing Christmas-themed love song. It shares the somewhat depressing nature of the Frank Sinatra song, but I guess everyone gets the proverbial "holiday blues" sometimes.

9) **"K605 No. 3" a.k.a. "Sleigh Ride" by W. A. Mozart.** This is a beautiful composition of Mozart's. While there is nothing about Christmas aside from the title, this is an elegant piece that you can show off to your friends during the season. Try and find the version performed by the Vienna Mozart Ensemble.

10) **"Little Drummer Boy" originally by Katherine Davis.** Come on! As a drummer, do you really think I could omit this one? Though I'm not totally keen on the traditional holiday songs, this one catches my fancy. I can't say I have a particular favorite version of the song.

—David Patrick Niven Hardison