

Is It Time for Portable Media Players?

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After an insane travel schedule over the last six months, I wondered how flights could pass more smoothly. I always have a book handy, but sometimes that's just won't satisfy the senses. Then I came across a plane equipped with displays for each seat and a choice of movies, television shows, and audio programs. All that entertainment helped the flight pass comfortably by. That made me ask the question, "Has the time for personal media players (PMP) arrived? It's portable, plays music, carries pictures and, of course, all that video too.

It's Time

It's not just for flying. Let's not forget about the three-hour delay in Houston and that thirty-minute delay turned 1.5 hours in Oakland. How about the morning bus or train ride to work? A notebook could probably accomplish the same task as a PMP, but I argue that it's far less convenient. Very few of us have three-pound notebooks to tote around. And most notebooks don't open comfortably in coach, even with small 12-inch displays. Not on any airline I've flown, anyway. I don't remember ever sitting on a bus during commute hours either. I usually stand.

In my book, the time for PMP's is here. They're small enough to use anywhere, standing or sitting. You won't have any problem using it on a plane and you'll even be able to enjoy your meal service while watching a movie of your choosing. Then there's battery life, which is significantly longer than most notebooks.

The iPod Killer?

PMP's easily handle everything an iPod can dish out. Is it time to abandon my iPod? The iPod still has a sophistication of simplicity that a PMP's just don't offer. Turning a CD into an MP3's is effortless and syncing an entire music collection to the iPod is even easier.

PMP's require effort. How do you record television shows or movies? Then there's the gauntlet of codecs you'll need to figure out to make sure your video will play on the device. PMP's simply aren't as elegant as MP3 players. For that reason alone, I'm not convinced my iPod will end up in the drawer of gadget's past. It's a grab and go device where PMP's require thought.

I still think the time for the PMP is here, I just don't know where in my hierarchy of gadgets it fits. Ready to buy one? Check out the Portable Media Player Roundup I did for G4.