

# Sony presses 'stop' on Walkman in Japan

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This picture taken in 2009 shows the first model of Japanese electronics maker Sony's stereo cassette player, the "Walkman TPS-L2", at the company's museum in Tokyo, 31 years ago Sony launched the first Walkman in 1979. After three decades and more than 220 million units, Sony has stopped selling its Walkman cassette player in Japan, the company said on October 25.

After three decades and more than 220 million units, Sony has stopped selling its Walkman cassette player in Japan, the company said Monday, admitting the gadget could not keep up in the digital age.

Cherished by a generation of joggers, school children and [music](#) fans since its launch in 1979, the Walkman revolutionised the way people listened to music but has since been overtaken by another icon of the modern era -- the iPod.

"The music-listening style of our customers has shifted so much to digital audio," Sony spokeswoman Hiroko Nakamura told AFP. "We have decided to end shipments because demand for the cassette-type Walkman has decreased."

Models on the company's Japanese website were marked "production completed".

The consumer electronics giant said that Chinese-made Walkman cassette players would still be exported to markets such as North America, Europe and Asia.

The July 1, 1979 rollout of the portable cassette player helped transform Sony into a global electronics powerhouse.

The Japanese giant sold 30,000 Walkmans in the first two months after its launch, and 50 million within a decade.

Three decades on, however, Sony has found itself struggling against rivals such as Apple, which has enjoyed immense success with its iPod music player.

Times have changed since Sony engineer Nobutoshi Kihara sketched out designs for the Walkman by hand.

"Back in my day, we had to draw product designs on paper," Kihara told AFP in an interview in 2006 after his retirement.

"I would close my eyes and imagine our products. I would imagine joggers with Walkmans to see how the hinges should move or how the products fit into the lives of the users."

[Sony](#) co-founder Masaru Ibuka came up with the idea for the gadget on

one of his overseas trips, during which he used to listen to music on existing tape recorders that were too heavy to be considered truly portable.

The initial reaction to the Walkman was poor. Many retailers thought that a cassette player without a recording mechanism had little chance of success.

That changed, and today, including newer digital models that use flash memory, total sales of the [Walkman](#) have reached 385 million around the world.

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