

# Apple iPods: Original music player is all grown up

December 5 2010, By Jim Rossman

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Apple revamped its iPod lineup Sept. 1, and gracing store shelves are new models of the iPod Touch, Nano and Shuffle.

**IPOD SHUFFLE:** I was fortunate enough to be in the audience in January 2005 when Apple CEO [Steve Jobs](#) introduced the first iPod shuffle. After the keynote, I strolled the three blocks to San Francisco's flagship [Apple store](#) and bought one.

The original [iPod Shuffle](#) was a simple plastic case with a small navigation ring to control music playback.

Fast-forward five years: The Shuffle is now an aluminum case with that same navigation ring.

My original Shuffle held 512 megabytes and cost \$99. Today's Shuffle holds 2 gigabytes and costs \$49. The 2010 Shuffle comes in five colors and features 15 hours of [battery life](#).

Apple did a rare thing when it released the new Shuffle - it brought back a previous design.

The new, fourth-generation Shuffle looks almost identical to the second generation. The third-generation Shuffle was designed without any buttons on the iPod - the controls were integrated into the earbud cord. That wasn't popular with users.

I'm impressed that Apple listened to users who made the second-generation Shuffle a success.

The best feature is called Voice Over. Pressing a small button on the top of the Shuffle makes it announce the name and artist of the song playing. You can also press and hold the Voice Over button to hear the playlist menu and press it twice to hear battery status.

The Shuffle always has been the darling of the workout set. In the ever-competitive world of "make it better, stronger, faster, smaller" design, Apple made the Shuffle too small and too stylish. Now that it has come back to the old design, I'll bet sales will increase.

With any luck, Apple will leave this design alone for a long time.

**IPOD TOUCH:** Outwardly, the Touch looks pretty much the same for 2010. But if you look closely, you'll notice a few key changes.

The case is 15 percent thinner (7.2 mm) and 12 percent lighter (3.56 ounces).

Fire it up and you'll be impressed with the Retina display, which has four times as many pixels as the previous model. The screen is stunning. It's like upgrading your TV to high-definition.

The new Touch features Apple's A4 processor, which also powers the iPhone 4 and iPad.

Apple sees a future in personal videoconferencing, which it calls Face Time. Apple has long been a proponent of video chatting. All its laptops, iMacs and monitors include built-in cameras for video chatting via iChat.

The iPhone 4 brought the first self-facing camera to an Apple mobile device, and now the Touch has that capability.

Right now, mobile devices can only use Face Time with one another - not with computers.

The back features the main camera with an omni-directional microphone. The Touch can record and edit high-definition video and shoot pictures with 960-by-720-pixel resolution.

The new Touch ships with Apple's iOS 4.1, which features iTunes TV show rentals, Apple's new music social network Ping, the ability to shoot and upload HD videos to YouTube or MobileMe, and all the other iOS 4 features such as multitasking, folders and iBooks.

It also ships with GameCenter, which is Apple's online multiplayer game community. A three-axis gyroscope is included inside the new Touch to bring more control to games by adding more sensitivity to the motion gestures used to control most games.

I may be in the minority, but I think the Touch might be as thin as it needs to be. It's on the verge of being too thin.

In my perfect world, I'd make it 2 mm thicker and half an ounce heavier to make it a bit easier to use one-handed. With my big hands, I fear I'm likely to drop it.

**IPOD NANO:** The biggest change in the iPod universe is the completely redesigned [iPod Nano](#).

The Nano has morphed into a small, square shell that's dominated by a 1.5-inch multitouch display with a resolution of 240-by-240 pixels.

The screen is almost too small to use multitouch gestures, but they work.

Like the Touch, the Nano uses icons to launch actions. The screen can show only four icons, so you swipe left or right to get to additional groups of icons.

The new Nano is 46 percent smaller and 42 percent lighter than its predecessor.

Like the Touch, the Nano has a sleep-wake button on top for when you want to interact with it or put it to sleep. There are also external volume buttons on top.

The bottom has just enough room for the 30-pin dock connector and the headphone jack.

The Nano and Shuffle share a similar body shape. I think of the Nano as a large-capacity Shuffle with a touch screen. Both models have integrated clips to make them wearable.

The Nano has an FM tuner, can connect to Nike + iPod accessories and can sync with your iPhoto library. It also has a built-in pedometer, clock, stopwatch and countdown timer.

Let's talk about the features that the Nano lost - namely the camera. The previous generation could shoot stills and high-definition video.

Apple has taken the new Nano in a music-focused direction. Video functionality has moved to the Touch.

**FIRST IMPRESSIONS:** I really like these new iPods. They feel like mature products. All three models have been around long enough to have been through many redesigns.

I think all three are really in the right form factor. None of these needs to be made any smaller.

I put music on all three models, but when it came time to do yard work at my house, I reached for the Nano.

The Nano is small and light enough to not be bulky at all, and the clip makes it very convenient.

But this isn't a contest. I don't know many people who have all three iPod models. In fact, my iPhone is my main listening iPod during a normal week.

There are enough models to go around.

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## **WHAT DO THEY COST?**

-The Shuffle is available in one size: 2 gigabytes, for \$49.

-The Nano is available in two sizes: 8 gigabytes for \$149 and 16 gigabytes for \$179.

-The Touch is available in three sizes: 8 gigabytes for \$229, 32 gigabytes for \$299 and 64 gigabytes for \$399.

-And if anyone wonders, the 160-gigabyte iPod classic is still available for \$249. But [Apple](#) hasn't said for how long.

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