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Gadgets Then and Now

TIME takes a tour through the decades to explore how consumer technology has changed over the years.

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Audio Listening Devices

By MIRAL SATTAR Monday, Nov. 29, 2010

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FROM LEFT: KRIS BELDIN; APPLE

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Then: Though Steve Jobs' iPods are the most popular MP3 players around, the person most well known for bringing MP3 players to the mainstream is Nathan Schulhof. Schulhof is often referred to as the "father of the MP3 player industry" with the Audio Highway player. Audio Highway was the first company to announce a portable MP3 player that let users download content. Audio Highway won an innovations award for the Listen Up player at the CES show in January 1997. Of course the first portable audio listening device to go mainstream was the Sony Walkman TPS-L2. The portable stereo system was first introduced in Japan in 1979 and created a whole new category of personal, mobile music.

Now: iPods now have most of the market share for personal MP3 players. Players like the SanDisk Sansa and Microsoft Zune offer buyers a cheaper alternative to their Apple competitors.

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