

Apple Music is missing one major thing: a classic iPod to go with it



Earlier this year, I did something weird: I bought an iPod 5th generation, originally manufactured back in 2006. I got it mostly as a fun thing to mod, but I've actually been using it on a near-daily basis. The experience has brought me to the conclusion that Apple should bring back the iPod, but updated for the modern age. It should keep the click-wheel of course, but I can't stop thinking about how good an iPod, designed for the age of music streaming, AirPods, and high-res displays would be. I know that might sound silly, but let me explain.

There are a few reasons why Apple should make a new iPod. For one, it would allow the company to capitalize on some nostalgia for the iPod age that seems to be coming around, based on recent iPod-themed web players, apps, and mods.

The other, perhaps more obvious reason, is that the iPod is a music-centric device, and Apple literally has a service called Apple Music. The company is currently in love with services

revenue, but many of its devices just aren't that great at playing music. The iPhone makes it difficult to plug in many types of headphones, and Siri interrupts what you're listening to when you're asking it to do something simple that doesn't really warrant an audible response (like turning on HomeKit-powered lights, for example).

Most of, if not all, of Apple's devices also can't play the highest-end lossless files that Apple Music can now deliver without additional hardware. This means that Apple doesn't sell something it can point to and say "this is the best Apple Music experience you can get, period." An iPod could be just that.

While Apple Music should be tightly integrated into a modern iPod, it would also be great if it could play music from other services, and if it had a totally Classic mode that just played files synced from a computer.

Not only would opening the iPod up avoid some terrible optics for a company that's being scrutinized by the government and competitors (like Spotify) for abusing its role as a platform and service designer, but it would also help avoid some of the weirdness that comes with streaming music. A lot of the times I use my iPod these days are because Apple Music is acting up, forcing me to restart the app because it claims that content is unauthorized, or completely fritzing out when trying to play the lossless music Apple recently introduced.

(Seriously, is anyone else having this problem? Randomly, but very often, the song I'm trying to listen to will devolve into a flurry of high-pitched, digital-sounding squeals, like I'm listening to a 100 Gecs song playing on a Discman that's being vigorously shaken.)

Of course, Apple does still sell an iPod, after all these years: the iPod Touch. Now, don't get me wrong, the iPod Touch is a very good device, especially for children, and people who

just want a non-expensive iOS device. But that's just the thing – the iPod Touch isn't a purpose-driven music player, it's an iPhone without the phone.

But so what? That just means it can use its headphone jack to listen to tunes from Apple Music, as well as Spotify, Tidal, Amazon Prime Music, and anything else, as well as play games, surf the web, read books, etc.

And that's the rub for me: the iPod Touch is a good computing device, one that Apple should arguably update more often, but sometimes the best tool for a job isn't the one that can do everything. It's the one that's designed to do one thing really well.

The iPod Touch is a good device, but sometimes the best tool isn't the one that can do everything

For example, when I'm listening to music on an iOS device I often find that I'm not actually *listening* to the music, but scrolling through Twitter with it on in the background. That doesn't happen with my 2006 iPod. The focus that comes with something that's not offering you everything, all of the time, is the same reason some people prefer e-readers over just reading on a tablet or phone.

And, practically speaking, making a dedicated portable music player without a smartphone OS and touchscreen would mean that Apple wasn't competing as much with Android-powered players from the likes of Sony and Fiio.

There's also the matter of hardware – if Apple made a new iPod designed for just listening to music, it wouldn't have to make it powerful enough to run 3D games or Safari, and could instead put resources to a better DAC and amp (perhaps one that could play Apple Music's aforementioned 24 bit, 192 kHz lossless files).

I don't think that a new iPod would ever reach the dizzying heights of popularity that the older models did. Most people

are perfectly content to listen to music on their phones – if they weren't, Apple probably wouldn't have stopped selling iPods in the first place. However, Apple's a big company – it could stand to make a niche, music-focused device, even if its last one didn't do so well. And as an old iPod enthusiast, it coming out with a new one would be literal music to my ears (I had to).

P.S. – I've also found the Apple Music experience on the Apple Watch to be pretty mediocre, and I don't want to take my phone on a run. I'm not saying there's room for an iPod Shuffle with the new offline Siri instead of VoiceOver, but...

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