My first MP3 player had everything I needed

The spring of my freshman year of college, my mom sold my drum set. I used the money to buy an MP3 player. Sorry. A multi-codec jukebox.

There is a certain type of person who, when faced with a sleek, friendly, easy-to-use Apple product, will rail on about all the features it *doesn't* have, all the things you can't do with it, all the ways the walled garden is a trap. This person has existed since the dawn of time. I used to be that guy. I still am, sometimes, but I used to be, too. And so, in the spring of 2004, when the iPod had been out for two and a half years, I spent $330 on an iRiver iHP-120. Rolls off the tongue, doesn't it?

The iHP-120 was so *physical.* Where the iPod was gray and white, the iRiver was a black brick with silver rails and visible screws. It had a 1.8-inch 20GB spinning hard drive. It had a joystick on the front. It had four physical buttons and a lock slider on the sides. It had an FM radio. It had an equalizer button. It had a 3.5mm headphone jack *plus* a pair of optical / analog combo jacks: one for line-in, one for line-out, which meant someone else could plug in a second pair of headphones. It came with a lapel mic and a wired remote. The remote had an LCD screen, headphone jack, and three control dials, so you could leave the MP3 player in your backpack, fish the remote out, and clip it to the backpack strap.