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The Primary Zune 2 Review

Anyone who has ever used a Zune 30 before will see the obvious differences between Zune 1 and Zune 2 (Here we take Zune 8 for example). These changes make us full of joy to Zune 2. To sum up all these change in one word, Microsoft is improving.

Changes on appearance:

Many people have complained about Zune. They complained that how huge and heavy the Zune was, how silly the shape of Zune was, and they at last turn their face to Apple iPod. Now, based on all the advantages of the former version, Zune 2 has improved a lot. The most obvious change is the appearance.

Zune 8 is similar to the former Apple iPod Nano in size. The screen size is 1.8 inches, a little smaller than 2.0 inches of iPod Nano, and the border of Zune 8 is thinner than Zune 30. All of these changes make Zune 8 look cuter than ever before. This meets the needs of most young people. Many people who planned to buy an iPod Nano have denoted that they will take Zune 8 into consideration due to its great capability and new appearance.

The plastic screen of Zune 30 has been replaced with glass when it comes to Zune 2. This is a major improvement over the Zune 30. And the back of Zune 2 has also been replaced to matte aluminum back. This will prevent the Zune from being tainted with fingerprints and oil and maintains the cleanliness for long time. Meanwhile, it also has a pretty good handle performance. The original round d-pad navigation button is replaced by touching control looks like a "squircle" (a squire circle area), which offers both tactile d-pad type control and also touch sensitivity. The squircle can identify up / down / left / right, and other operations. Too many people confuse the Zune 30 round button with an iPod click wheel. This change will let this phenomenon be significantly improved. And, if Microsoft wants to add game functions on Zune in the later upgrade, it will provide better directional orientation than a circle.



Changes on operation interface:

The Zune main menu become very large and more beautiful. Moreover, Zune 30 can also upgrade to the latest menu theme by adopting the method to upgrade firmware. The large characters and the bright glass screen match pretty well.

The highlight of Zune 2 main menu is Podcast option. This is really pretty great deal. Now you can put your fondest audio podcast or video podcast on Zune 2. You can also share your podcast with people through Wi-Fi or community. There are no other obvious changes in operation interface, so you can easily manage your Zune 2 without any questions.

But, one thing is still regrettable. If you want to go back to the main menu when you are listening to music or watching movies, you need to press the back button again and again. Hope this problem will be resolved in the later version.



Changes on supported video format and playback time:

We know that Zune 30 can only play WMV format, if you have videos encoded in mp4 format, the Zune desktop software will convert it to WMV format while syncing. Zune 2 increased H.264 and MPEG-4 formats, which means that we have more choices while syncing files to Zune. Frankly speaking, I hate syncing and converting. At the same time, Windows Media Audio Lossless is also increased.

Another great feature that we' re glad to see is to sync TV content that was recorded on PC to your Zune. If you are using Windows Vista or Windows media center, you can record the TV content using its video-recording capability.

As to the battery, the official documents said it is 24-hour audio playback, though I haven't had a thorough test on it, the battery is still sufficient after I have used it for several hours.

Changes to File Synchronization and sharing

The Wi-Fi function of Zune player can be only applied to syncing media files with other Zune players, while that of the Zune 2 will have more abundant applications. With the Zune 2, you can not only synch audio, video, photos and other media files with other users, but also synch media

files directly with PCs that support Wi-Fi connection and PCs from Media Center system. It is said that Zune 2 is able to support other audio management software; however, I have not tested it yet.

Now, Shared songs will no longer have a 3 day limit for use, but the 3 play rule remains in effect. Photos as usual have no restrictions at all when shared Zune to Zune.



Changes to Accessories:

The accessory compatibility of Zune 2 is really excellent. All surrounding accessories can be used directly, except that accessories like pedestal and jacket might not be well compatible due their size. One thing that is worthy to mention is that the accessory for TV video output is not applicable for Zune 8 and Zune 4, as they do not support this function.



Final words:

When iPod touch was first released, many people thought that Zune was going to be over. However, the release of Zune 2 this time will definitely give iPod a heavy hit. With the arrival of Zune 4/8, Zune has enough ability to confront iPod Nano. Though the change from Zune to Zune 2 is not as great as that of from iPod Video to iPod touch, yet the meaning cannot be underestimated. If a point must be given to Zune, I believe 4.5 is a comparatively exact score. Microsoft is learning from the others, say Apple, there is an old saying in China, "remember the past and it will guide your future" . I believe Microsoft will do even better.