- News
- Blogs
- White Papers
- Downloads
- Reviews
- Prices

- Page One |
- Research |
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Rio ramps up with new MP3 player

By Micheal Mullen GameSpot PC June 24, 1999, 5:00 PM PT

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- Format for
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Diamond Multimedia's Rio has been a prized addition to its product lineup since its introduction. The MP3 players have done so well that the company has spun off its MP3 download and Rio support site, RioPort, into a wholly owned subsidiary called RioPort Inc. RioPort will introduce the next Rio device, the Rio 500 with 64MB, in August for about $269.

The Rio 500 adds PC and Mac (G3 and iMacs) compatibility with a fast USB connection, InterTrust copyright protection, support for MP3, MPEG2.5, G.723 (Audible's format) and ADPMC. A new updated design will give buyers the option of a teal, purple, or silver casing along with a new larger back-lighted LCD display.

The new display will be able to show off graphics, artist names, song titles, playback times, and a new customizable equalizer. Other features include new control and bookmark functions to allow users the option of listening to audio books, news, or other spoken word content.

Doubling the Rio's memory to 64MB allows users to store two hours of digital music and 32 hours of spoken content. If that isn't enough, users can also buy optional Smart Media cards (16MB $59 and 32MB $99) for additional time. And the Rio 500 still runs off a single AA battery.

The Rio 500 will ship with a disc with the company's Rio Audio Manager software, which will allow users a fast outlet to online MP3 sources and a CDDB music database. And for those looking for good MP3, the disc will come with audio files of the Cowboy Junkies and Julian Lennon, along with choice selections from Cductive, E-music, Epitonic.com, Fandom Records, JazzPromo.com, MP3.com, Riffage.com, Songs.com, and several spoken word files from Audible.

The new company also plans to introduce other devices later this year with support for Microsoft's WMA file format and IBM's 340MB MicroDrives.

And you can start pre-ordering the Rio 500 today at Babbages, Electronics Boutique, and CompUSA. The device itself will release in August. Clearly, the added capital from yesterday's announcement that

S3 would acquire Diamond Multimedia has helped to change Diamond's MP3 device strategy. With its aggressive push to dominate MP3 playback devices and established brand name - Diamond looks to be the company to beat when it comes to MP3.

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