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By: Marius Oiaga, Technology News Editor

Zune HD
Microsoft

Zune HD Goes Against iPod Touch

This fall

Microsoft is planning to release an alternative to Apple's iPod Touch devices in the fall of 2009 under the Zune brand umbrella. At least for 2009, the Redmond company will continue to sell the now traditional versions of its digital music player along with the new device, but it indicated that moving forward the evolution of Zune would be synonymous with Zune HD. The Zune HD portable media player would be made available exclusively in the US this fall, Microsoft revealed.

"The Zune music player is an integral part of the overall Zune experience, and we're proud to be growing and extending our offering beyond the device," revealed Enrique Rodriguez, corporate vice president of the Microsoft TV, Video and Music Business Group. "Delivering on Microsoft's connected entertainment vision, this news marks a turning point for Zune as it brings cross-platform experiences and premium video content to living rooms around the world."

One aspect worth noting is that Zune HD will not be able to deliver HD videos by itself. With just the device, users can watch video content at just 480 x 272, a limitation that comes with the screen of the Zune HD and obviously not an HD resolution. However, Zune HD can indeed play supported 720p HD video files. But in order to get the full HD experience users will need not only Zune HD but also an AV Dock, and an HDTV, which are sold separately. Essentially, HD videos will only be available from Zune HD in 720p via a high-definition multimedia interface (HDMI) audiovisual docking station and an HD TV.

But HD does not stop with video for the next-generation Zune devices. The portable media player brings to the table a built-in HD Radio receiver. In this sense, support for HD Radio makes Zune one of the first devices on the market playing nice with the high-quality content delivered through the over-the-air digital radio technology, in addition to FM radio. Of course that in addition to radio, Zune HD will come with Wi-Fi enabled.

Just as the iPod Touch, Zune HD will have a touch-based interaction model. The device will sport an OLED touch-screen interface, with a navigable space of 16:9 widescreen display at a resolution of 480x272. The real estate space will provide a superior Internet browsing experience as well, the company informs, indicating that Zune HD will sport a full-screen browser tailored to multitouch functionality.