

SanDisk Ad Blitz

Contributed by Joe Yang
Saturday, 03 June 2006

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<http://crave.cnet.co.uk/digitalmusic/0,39029432,49273890,00.htm>

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Here's the hoopla in a nutshell. SanDisk is said to be porting Rockbox, an open-source OS for digital music players (which supports many different mp3 devices), onto its popular e200 mp3 player. To bring the matter to public consciousness, SanDisk has started releasing the before-mentioned anti-iPod ads in an attempt to blatantly attack its arch-nemesis, Apple.

The ads depict graffiti-like illustrations made to resemble posters for an underground revolutionary movement. One shows a monkey sporting the iPod earbuds with the line "Are you an iChimp?", and another is of a guy strung up in white iPod cables like a marionette, with the text: "Have you become an iPuppet?"

Okay, okay. Mp3 competition is fierce- I get it. SanDisk wants to play rough- fine by me. As far as I'm concerned, open source is good stuff, and there's no doubt in my mind that SanDisk makes a good product. Competition is good for capitalism and the consumer. I'm not here to tout the technical prowess of one geek gadget over another.

What I will comment on, however, is the nature of the ads themselves. I took one look at these things and I'll tell you right now that I'm not going to switch from iPod to e200. You know why? Because as an iPod user, I feel like I'm being insulted. Hey, I'm not a complicated guy so I won't go into the whole nitty-gritty of "Apple makes you do this-and-that blah blah and it only works with iTunes blah blah blah."

I plug the iPod into my computer and the damn thing works. That's why I use it.

In my opinion, SanDisk's whole "revolutionary" ad approach, however provocative, is ultimately misguided. For one thing, SanDisk won't win me over by insulting me and comparing me to a monkey, puppet, sheep, or any other kind of farm animal. Secondly, SanDisk's ads also evoke a political edge, which makes no sense. For better or for worse, people buy iPods because they WANT TO, not because they're forced to. Furthermore, Apple allows its products to stand on their own merit and they never insult people for not using them. Although Apple has poked fun at PCs in their own internet and TV campaigns, it's a far cry from SanDisk's "Are you an iPuppet?" approach.

Perhaps I'm an iPod user who's taking this whole thing a little too personally. But if the e200 and Rockbox are so great, which I'm sure they are, maybe SanDisk should just tell us why and let the people decide.

For all of SanDisk's anti-iPod effort, Apple could easily fire back and say SanDisk is still #2, and 2nd place is the first loser. Even if it's true, it would be insulting, right?