

SHORTCIRCUIT**INTISAB SHAHRIYAR**Feature Writer
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Most influential gadgets of all time

Children growing up these days, or in fact, the early 2000's, have had the wonderful opportunity to grow up with things that we, the so-called 'Gen Next' could only dream of, or see on TV. Where once it was amazingly cool to see a talking black car, that same feature is now so commonplace that it borders on sheer annoyance.

While most of pop culture may not have aged well, the one thing we can all look back on with fond memories were the gadgets we all lived with and loved to bits. Granted, we have way cooler, and perhaps more efficient stuff now, but the nostalgia factor that works with the gadgets of old is something that simply will not be echoed for our current gadgets in the near future.

And there is a simple reason for that; the rarity factor.

Think about it, nearly everyone and their dog has a smartphone or two these days, but two decades ago, you would be hard pressed to find someone with either a polaroid camera, a camcorder, or any of the other iconic gadgets we had googly eyes for.

So, without further ado, let us take a



stroll down memory lane, and go through the devices tied to our cherished memories, in no particular order than what caught my fancy.

SONY WALKMAN

If you are the type to drown out your environment by putting on headphones and listening to music, you have Sony's Walkman to thank for it.

Having a whole social effect named after it, this insanely successful product has changed the landscape of personal entertainment forever when it was unveiled back in 1979. You can understand why it was so popular; before this came along, music could only be enjoyed at home or the record store blaring out songs on speakers, but with the Walkman, you could take your music with you wherever you'd go, and listen to it in the middle of a crowded space without bugging anyone, by using headphones.

You could say it started a revolution, and it truly had. Later models even featured cool tech like Dolby and Auto-Repeat. Many other companies like Panasonic, Aiwa,



Sanyo, etc. tried to cash in on the popularity of the Walkman with their own take on the gadget, with varying degrees of success. If you didn't "temporarily borrow" your elder sibling's Walkman to take on your school field trip, you really haven't lived adventurously.

SONY DISCMAN

Despite being launched in the mid-80s, it really starting catching on in the mid-90s, when people started shifting from the cassette to the Compact Disc or CD as it is more popularly known. Another reason it wasn't a smash hit on debut was because CDs were notorious for skipping when there was any movement, but that all changed with anti-skip, featured on later versions.

While it was really cool, it never really managed to live up to the same hype that the Walkman enjoyed, principally because the better sound quality was not enough to offset the price difference between cassettes and CDs, along with the convenience of a smaller device.

Nevertheless, the Discman remains a marvel of engineering, and fond memories to "some" 13-year-old who listened to his

Discman while stuck on the eternal Panthapath intersection traffic.

SONY PLAYSTATION

You've seen the bout between Hunt and Lauda, you will see the bout between Ford and Ferrari pretty soon in theatres, but there's one equally exciting bout that led to a revolution in the gaming industry.

While many don't know the history, everyone knows the outcome – the Sony Playstation. Launched in 1994, it created waves in society akin to its Walkman line. For one thing, it demolished the notion that gaming was a hobby for children that they eventually grew out of.

Another would be its frankly revolutionary tech; who could imagine playing full 3D games with proper sound, thanks to its CD Drive, in the comforts of their own home? Do remember, this was at a time when games were still 2D, like Sonic the Hedgehog 3 or Super Metroid. As for that exciting bout, it all began when Nintendo asked Sony to make a CD-ROM version of their Nintendo NES console in 1989, but then dumped them for Phillips, in fear that Sony might reverse engineer it and make their own console, leaving them with apoplectic rage.

In the end, it happened anyway, and me and millions of other gamers are glad for it.

MOTOROLA DYNATAC/STARTAC/RAZR

If you truly cherish the cellular device in

your pocket, even though it forces you to listen to your friend's incessant ramblings at 3 AM, Motorola deserves your hat tip. Let's start in the '70s and '80s with the Dynatac, the first truly mobile handheld phone.

Ok, so it was 1.1 kgs, and took 10 hours to charge, only to have 30 minutes of talk time, but consider the fact that cell phones before this were heavy suitcase styled ones, you can forgive the term 'mobile'.

Our story now moves to 1996, and Motorola has just unveiled the Startac, successor to the MicroTAC, the first proper semblance to what would later become the template for clamshell phones. Even though the new phone was broadly similar, what set the Startac down the path of success was its lower price, paving the way for it to become one of the most popular mobile cell phones ever.

All roads lead here — the Razzr. If you were not salivating and contemplating which kidney to sell to be able to afford one when seeing its ad for the first time, then I am sorry, but something's properly wrong with you.

Building on the formulas laid down by their previous devices, Motorola made something look and feel decidedly futuristic. The aluminium body, the razor thin dimensions, and thoroughly modern (at the time) specs, which even included a colour screen. On a phone!

You could even capture all your friends' dumbstruck faces with the on-board camera.

APPLE IPOD/IPHONE

By the late '90s, mp3s were all the rage, and their convenience still cannot be understated. However, things in the portable audio market weren't budging, and Discmans and Walkmans were still reigning, even though mp3 players were already around.

