

Ben Newton

"One day, all music will be delivered on the internet," claims Apple's boss, Steve Jobs. Have you started downloading music yet?

One of the issues concerning the proliferation of the new digitally-led media - and its attendant 'trendy' hardware - is confusion among consumers in general concerning true value-for-money and what, indeed, constitutes a 'good' buy in terms of longevity and quality; will this or that product last the course, or will it go the way of say, Betamax or eight-track (remember those?) or whisper it carefully, good old CD? I think not.

Manufacturers will, of course, realise when they're onto a good thing in terms of volume sales; one need only point to the great success of the DVD format globally which has led to its relative decrease in price terms, most certainly for the hardware. However, there will always be a place for quality over quantity, surely. Internet downloads of music rely on heavy compression to access and replay the data; this can only lead to a degradation in sound quality if replayed through a half-decent sound system (and I've tried it) - but maybe in years to come we'll all be playing everything solely on personal nanocomputers attached to the tip of an eyelash or an earlobe. What fun!