

Buying an iPod is just the beginning...

Andrew Don warns about the true cost of owning a must-have gadget

MANY parents intending to buy their children an Apple iPod this Christmas will do so in the mistaken belief that it will be a one-off investment.

These sleek gadgets command great loyalty from their owners, which is why the brand claims a 75 per cent worldwide share of the MP3 player market by volume. *Which?* says iPod has the best sound of all the players it has tested and is the fastest to download tracks to the player.

But no child will want an iPod without regularly feeding it with new music at a cost of 79p from the online iTunes Music Store, or from other compatible music sites. And they will demand the ever-growing range of accessories which no cool kid can be without.

Parents who pay £69-£88.99 plus VAT for the iPod Shuffle (512M and 1GB), £130-£170 for the

kept on insisting that I was Andrew Don of Wyoming. Total bill so far: £457.66, including VAT. It did not stop there. My iPod came with inadequate written instructions, so I bought *The iPod Book*, by Scott Kelby, for £13.99. Then I decided I wanted to be able to play my iPod through my music system's speakers. An iPod dock and Belkin RCA audio cable cost £35.96, including shipping. And a FireWire cable for quicker music transfer instead of the USB cable that was supplied cost £25. Total bill so far: £532.61. Add on the songs I have bought and will continue to buy and the figure goes ever upward. And, believe me, I've been restrained.

Here is just a small range of accessories with which I could bump up the bill:

▶ A worldwide mains charger will cost a total of £24.99 from ukpreview.

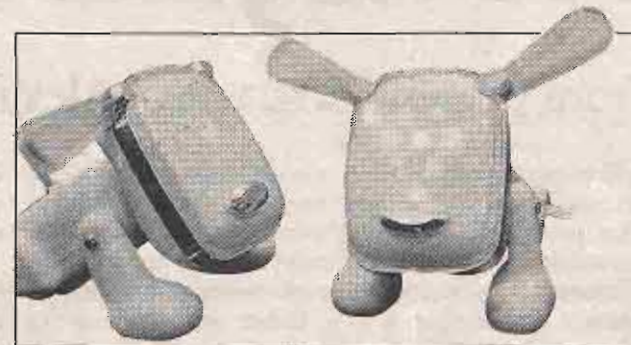
▶ The iDog Musical Companion can be put in front of an iPod or MP3 speaker and its face will light up, ears wag and head tilt in sync with the beat: \$34.95 (£20.31).

▶ Don't forget to take into account the battery, which, anecdotally, lasts 12 to 18

months depending on usage. Replacing an out-of-warranty battery costs from £49 to £76.29.

Total bill, choosing the cheapest options: £707.92 – before paying for music.

Just a timely warning to Santa.



The iDog Musical Companion: its ears wag in sync with the beat.

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iPod nano (2GB and 4GB), and £219-£299 for the iPod (30GB and 60GB), can easily expect to pay as much again and then some over the life of the machine.

I bought a 60GB iPod in September for £239 plus VAT through a National Union of Journalists deal. I wanted to protect it from knocks and scratches so spent another £24.50 plus VAT on iPod Armor – an aluminium case.

The iPod comes with fiddly little 'earbuds' as standard, so I spent another £97 plus VAT on Bose Triport Headphones.

The salesman terrified me into buying an Apple-Care Protection Plan for £29 plus VAT, which I had difficulty in registering online because the website

co.uk. A hard screen protector and film 'clickwheel' protector will cost £7.99 from the same seller.

▶ At £19.79, Camera Connector will transfer pictures from your digital camera to your iPod, where you can view them immediately.

▶ A Monster iCarPlay Cassette Adapter for £23.24 will enable you to play your iPod music through the car stereo.

▶ At shop.ipodworld.co.uk, a Griffin iTalk, which turns the iPod into a dictation machine and doubles as a mini-speaker, costs £29.99.

▶ The Boostaroo Amplifier and 3-Way Splitter allows you to boost the volume of your iPod by up to 12dB and lets you plug in three sets of headphones so you can share with your friends.

Too young to download?

CHILDREN can buy CDs and records in shops, assuming they have the means to pay; buying music online is no different, except that anyone using downloadable websites such as iTunes is subject to its terms and conditions of usage and needs a legitimate means of paying.

The terms and conditions for use of the iTunes store, for example, say that it can only be used by children who are at least 13. However, those under the age of 18 must ask a parent or guardian to agree to the terms and conditions.

A minor buying downloads would have to have access to one of the various methods of payments required.

Legal information provided by Andy Booth, partner at Manchester-based law firm Turner Parkinson.