

Getting Apple Corp. on board to market iMuffs wasn't easy

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today's cell phones," said Pundsack, "The iMuff can not only play music from an iPod, stopping and starting it, as well as controlling the volume, it also allows the wearer to answer his or her Bluetooth-equipped cell phone, without even taking it out of their pocket."

Pundsack explained how when the cell phone is answered, the device automatically stops the iPod when its playing music, then resumes after the call is finished, all remotely, up to 30 feet from the iPod. The iMuff has a built-in high quality microphone to allow the wearer to talk on the cell phone while wearing them.

Marketed under Pundsack's Wi-Gear company name, the iMuffs were launched in the fall of 2005, but the iPod immediately underwent design changes, so they had to rework the original to accommodate the iPod changes.

The product was selling well, but the biggest break for Pundsack came when he finally made contact with the Apple Corporation.

He approached Apple to promote his product, and his proposal finally paid off—they liked it, and it is now marketed in the Apple stores in the US.

But it didn't come easily.

"It took six months just to find the right guy to try to contact and sell the concept, and then about a year and a half to get the okay from Apple," said Pundsack, "Then we had to make some changes, like the packaging, to fit into their marketing system."

Pundsack said the fact the iMuffs came in both white and black colours was one of the things that helped seal the deal with Apple—the black iPod has become a bit of a status symbol, and the fact the iMuffs match makes them more appealing to market.

Pundsack says the iMuffs have become popular among a variety of users, from people wearing them for workouts at the gym, to commuters, and even people working them in the garden. Personally, he wears them while working at his desk, simply because they are so light—he can almost forget he's wearing them.

"They are ergonomically designed," said Pundsack, "To not only be very light, but also to be quite comfortable. We've had incredible feedback from customers through unsolicited e-mails—one person ran for a couple hours in the London Marathon wearing them."

"We're continuing to keep on top of the technology, and more cell phones will be compatible with the iMuffs, as they incorporate the updated technology into the new cell phones," said Pundsack, "Although the iMuffs are clearly designed for the iPod, they certainly aren't limited to the iPod. More cell phones will work as the new profile Bluetooth technology becomes available."

The iMuffs can be purchased at the Apple Store in the US, and for Canadian customers, online at both the Apple Store, as well as Pundsack's company website at www.wi-gear.com. Price through the Apple store is \$179.95US, or \$199.95CDN online through Wi-Gear.

(Ted Brown can be reached at tbrown@independentfreepress.com)

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