Trio of new gadgets answers different calls

Tech Savvy

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Over the past couple of weeks I've had a chance to try out three nifty new gadgets: a smartphone, a pair of headphones, and a nifty cable kit for connecting bare hard drives to your PC.

Let's start with the phone: the $295 Helio Ocean (helio. com). It's a dual-personality handset, sliding up to reveal a numeric keypad or sideways for a QWERTY keyboard.

You'll use the latter a lot, as the Ocean offers some of the best e-mail and instant-messaging capabilities I've seen on any phone.

It also sports a GPS receiver (which couples with Google Maps for excellent navigation), a 2-megapixel camera, and nifty Web-search features: Just slide open the keyboard and start typing your search query. There's no need to run a separate application or load the browser manually.

The Ocean also covers all the multimedia bases with aplomb: music, video, games, and a microSD slot for expanding the respectable 200MB of internal storage.

It's a bit bulky, though smaller than its main competitor, the Sidekick ID (which does cost considerably less at $99.99).

Price and size notwithstanding, I really like this phone. It's an excellent communicator, a versatile entertainer and, with its dual-sliding razzle-dazzle, a serious conversation-starter.

MAKING THE CONNECTION

My cousin Rachel, of Huntington Woods, recently upgraded from a years-old desktop computer to a shiny new notebook - a common move these days, now that notebooks are so affordable (see my May 24 column for three sub-$1,000 examples).

Of course, the challenge in any computer migration is moving data from old machine to new. I arrived with one of my favorite tools in hand: the NewerTech USB 2.0 Universal Drive Adapter (newertech.com).

This inexpensive kit ($24.95) connects any IDE or SATA hard drive (like the kind that came out of Rachel's desktop) to a USB port, effectively turning it into an external hard drive.

Thus it was a simple matter to copy my cousin's iTunes library, Excel documents and other files to the new machine. The kit worked like a charm; I highly recommend it.