

Trio of new gadgets answers different calls

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.



Tech Savvy

Rick Broida

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 naviga-

tion), 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

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B worked like a charm; I highly recommend it.

NOISE-CANCELING HEADPHONES

My first piece of advice for any new owner of an iPod, Zune or other portable media player: Ditch the bundled headphones. Most of the time they're cheap, uncomfortable, and unable to reproduce your music with the fidelity it deserves.

The AblePlanet Clear Harmony (ableplanet.com)

Noise Canceling Headphones fit over your ears and employ "active technology" to minimize outside noise. They also sound exquisite.

Because I didn't have any flights scheduled, I tested these large, slightly heavy, battery-powered headphones against my ridiculously noisy lawnmower.

It passed with flying colors: I was able to hear my music loud and clear while keeping my Zune at just half its maximum volume - good news for my eardrums.

Make no mistake: I could still hear the mower, but it was a lot less deafening.

In a quiet room, the Clear Harmony delivers rich, detailed sound - which it should, given its \$299 price tag.

I know that's steep, but if you want to enjoy your music to the fullest and while reducing outside noise, consider these fantastic phones.

Rick Broida writes about computers and technology for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. Broida, of Commerce Township, is the co-author of numerous books, including *How to Do Everything with Your Palm Powered Device, Sixth Edition*. He welcomes questions sent to rick.broida@gmail.com.