



Social Mobiles

Crispin Jones with IDEO

We are interested in the frustration and anger caused by other people's mobile phones. *Social Mobiles* consists of five phones that, in different ways, modify their user's behaviour to make it less disruptive. All the *Social Mobiles* have been produced as working phones.

The mobile phone industry seems to us to be neglecting the problems that mobile phones have brought with them and we chose to focus on the irritation and social disruption that they manifest. Mobile phones were recently voted the third most hated invention of the past 100 years in a poll of Radio 4 listeners in the UK (interestingly the conventional telephone was in the top ten of most loved inventions in the same period). We felt that it would be interesting to design some phones specifically to address this social aspect of the technology, as a counterpoint to the industry's focus on providing new features as a way of enhancing their products.

We felt that the mobile phones had never undergone a period of radical diversion and exploration. This is different from, for example, the car industry, which enjoyed a sustained period of invention and supported plural approaches to the car—mechanism, engine style, carriage form etc. The period of divergence in the car industry gradually converged on an homogeneous approach (use of steering wheel; standardised pedal layout etc) which all manufacturers largely adhere to today. Mobile phones in contrast appear to have remained largely unchanged in form and interaction since the very earliest models. We felt that this resistance to exploration was limiting the possibilities for the interactive experience of the mobile phone. *Social Mobiles* is an attempt to redress this by introducing some radical new ideas to the interaction and function of the mobile phone.

Social Mobiles was undertaken in collaboration with international design consultancy IDEO. The project was realised with the collaboration of designers from a broad range of disciplines. Having this participation allowed us to produce some extremely sophisticated prototypes both in terms of their form and their function. The form of the phone was carefully considered so that it has a neutrality. We wanted it to be clear that these handsets are not presenting themselves as the "next" mobile phone. The handsets are designed to appear quite difficult to place in terms of when they were made—they look simultaneously old-fashioned and contemporary and utilise non-standard mobile phone materials: for example wood. We hoped that the neutrality of the handsets would make it clear to viewers that the focus was the interaction of the handset, rather than simply its form.

Core team: Crispin Jones, Graham Pullin, Mat Hunter, Anton Schubert



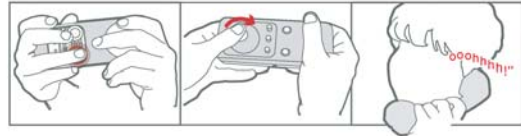
SoMo1
the electric shock mobile

This phone delivers a variable level of electric shock depending on how loudly the person on the other end

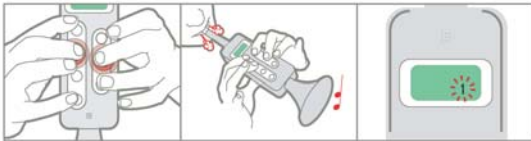
is speaking. As a result the two parties are induced to speak more quietly. SoMo1 phones would be given to repeat offenders who persistently disturb others with their intrusive conversations.

SoMo2
the speaking mobile

This phone allows a user to converse silently: a person receiving a call in a quiet space can respond with simple but expressive vowel sounds which they produce and subtly intone manually.



SoMo2 is the antithesis of text messaging in that it conveys rich emotional nuance at the expense of textual information.



SoMo3
the musical mobile

This phone requires the user to play the tune of the phone number they wish to call. The public performance that dialling demands acts

as a litmus test of when it is appropriate to make a call. Children would take phone lessons in order to learn to play their phone.

SoMo4
the knocking mobile

The user knocks on this phone to communicate the urgency of their call. The recipient hears this knock through their phone and can be discerning about which calls to answer. Given time people would learn to recognise each others' knocking mannerisms.



SoMo5
the catapult mobile

This phone can be used to launch sounds into other people's phone conversations. Firing the catapult transmits a sound into the offender's



phone. This provides a direct yet discreet way of invading their space. Businesses supply users with a choice of interrupts to launch from their phones.