

Out of Bounds

SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

iPod touch

In one of my favorite “Saturday Night Live” skits, Christopher Walken plays a music producer for 1970s heavies Blue Oyster Cult. The band works on its classic “(Don’t Fear) The Reaper,” and Walken says the song needs “a little more cowbell.” As the skit progresses, Will Ferrell, playing the fictional cowbell player, bounds across the stage, crashing into his bandmates. Walken then stops the insanity, only to begin it again by deadpanning, “Guess what?! I’ve got a fever, and the only prescription ... is more cowbell!”

Over the years, I have always chuckled at that one guy (or girl) on stage either playing tambourine or cowbell and wondered what cut of the band’s money that player receives. And, in a rather ironic nod to things so bad they’re good (“Attack of the Killer Tomatoes,” “Death Race 2000,” Twisted Sister, “Knight Rider”), I have come to embrace both the concept and the execution of the cowbell.

Imagine my surprise when, while playing around with a new iPod touch — basically an iPhone without the phone — I discovered an application called “More Cowbell.” At any moment during a song, you tap the icon, a cowbell fills the screen and, well, play that sucker.

NOW YOU CAN ADD MORE COWBELL
TO YOUR FAVORITE SONGS

BY MARK LUCE

I got the iPod touch back in August. It was basically a way to waste an Apple Store Gift Card, but I am now a full-fledged fan of this little device that has 16 times the memory of the laptop I had when I first started writing this column a decade ago.

The only difference, really, between a touch and an iPhone is that you can call people with the phone — assuming you don’t mind paying \$200 for the phone and 70-some bucks a month for two years of service. With the touch you can surf the Web, check your e-mail, keep a calendar, watch funny YouTube videos, get directions, watch a movie ... you get the idea. The only thing you need is a wireless signal, which you can increasingly find for free all over cities.

You might protest, “This is just an iPod.” Yes, on some level, it is just an iPod, but it has a touch screen that turns when you turn it. So, instead of searching for albums by name, turn the thing sideways to look at album



covers of your music, then start dragging your finger across the screen. Go from The Cure to Ike Turner to Ray Charles to Tom Waits to Ella Fitzgerald in seconds, but with the added aesthetic of a kaleidoscopic version of your music library. I’ve used the thing to store my son’s soccer pictures, to check the weather and to take attendance in high school art history class. And, yes, to listen to that super ’70s song by the band Sweet, “Fox on the Run.”

It’s not that the iPod touch is that different from any other mp3 player. But the touch is, to be perfectly honest, much cooler than any personal electronic device I’ve ever come across.

In short, the iPod touch has more cowbell.

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GOLFDOM (ISSN 1526-4270) is published monthly (12 issues per year) by Questex Media Group, Inc., 306 W Michigan Street, Suite 200, Duluth, MN 55802. Corporate office: 275 Grove St., Suite 2-130, Newton, MA 02466. Accounting, Advertising, Production and Circulation offices: 306 W. Michigan St., Suite 200 Duluth, MN 55802-1610. Subscription rates: One year \$39 (U.S. and possessions), \$59 (Canada and Mexico) and \$89 (all other countries). Air expedited service is available in countries outside the U.S. and Canada for an additional \$75 per year. Current issue single copies (prepaid only) \$5 (U.S. and possessions), \$7 (Canada and Mexico) and \$8 (all other countries). Back issues (if available, prepaid only) \$10 (U.S. and possessions), \$14 (Canada and Mexico) and \$16 (all other countries); add \$6.50 per order shipping and handling for both current and back issue purchases. Periodicals postage paid at Duluth MN 55806 and additional mailing offices.



POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to GOLFDOM, P.O. Box 1268, Skokie, IL 60076-8268. Canadian G.S.T. Number: 840033278RT0001, Publications Mail Agreement number 40017597. Printed in the U.S.A.

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