KNOPS

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IN NIGHT LIFE AND GOING OUT SITUATIONS MOST PEOPLE GET EXPOSED TO LOUD MUSIC. LOUD ENOUGH FOR INFLICTING PERMANENT DAMAGE. ALTHOUGH ALMOST EVERYBODY KNOWS ABOUT THE DANGERS AND THERE ARE EXISTING HEARING PROTECTION SOLUTIONS, ALMOST NOBODY USES HEARING PROTECTION.

Almost everybody has an interest in music. Most people also come into contact with music during social gatherings like festivals, concerts and general going out situations. In these situations, most of the times the sound level is high enough for damaging effects like hearing loss and tinnitus, a constant ringing in your ears. Although almost everybody knows about the dangers and there are also existing hearing protection solutions, almost nobody uses hearing protection in these situations.

I want to know why this problem still exist and why almost nobody want hearing protection before they get some kind of hearing damage.

The goal of this project designing a solution which can protect the users ears and will also be accepted and even preferred by the users. Therefore in this project I spend time investigating the needs of the users and what is wrong with the existing solutions. After this knowledge is obtained, a big part of the project is creating a design which can fill the gaps of existing solutions. This means a big part of the process is experimenting, prototyping and testing.

Hearing protection for the everyday user is an upcoming market, especially with festivals, concerts, musicians and night-life. There are already some good quality and cheap ear plugs on the market, which allow the same quality sound to enter the ear, but then lowered in sound level. However, these plugs do have some downsides. One thing is that all the sound is lowered, meaning that conversations are more difficult, unless you constantly want to unplug and re-plug. The occlusion effect, the deep sound of the users own body which get reflected back by the obstruction in the ear, is also present, especially when surrounding sound levels is low. This also creates the need to unplug and re-plug. Although sound protection is more and more accepted, It still seems that plugs are a product you should be a shamed off. They should be hidden, usually with skin colour, trying to mask their presence.

The end result is Knops, a volume button for your ears. Knops is literally a volume button directly on the users ears. The user is self in control of the volume level which enters the ears. Knops also goes against the grain with existing hearing protection, where it shouldn't be hidden and the users don't have to be ashamed for using this product. Knops becomes an accessory item which is part of the users looks.

Although the focus of the design process of Knops was on festivals and going out situations, Knops has become a product which can be used in many more situations. As it is an accessory lifestyle product, it can be used also in city life. Not just for showing off, but also by lowering the noise pollution around you which is a major cause for stress. Also in work and office environments people can use Knops if they would like to lower surrounding sounds

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