

Review: A gel-covered computer mouse, just because

January 6 2010, By BRIAN BERGSTEIN , AP Technology Editor



In this product image released by Jelfin, a number of Gel Covered Mice are shown. (AP Photo/Jelfin)

(AP) -- There isn't much about computers that is warm and fuzzy. But now there's something kind of squishy.

A [startup company](#) is selling a \$35 [computer mouse](#) with two unusual features - it's round, and it's covered in a smooth, gel-like coating. There's nothing amazing about it, but it raises an interesting idea: Because we spend so much time with our devices, shouldn't they feel a little friendlier? Does everything have to be hard and sleek?

The company behind the gel-covered mouse, Jelfin LLC, is betting that there are enough people out there who want to enliven their dorm rooms or cubicles by spicing up the prosaic computer control device.

Jelfin's mouse, which is slightly smaller than a tennis ball, is gray over most of its body, but the scrolling wheel and the plastic bottom come in bright fluorescent colors not often seen on gadgetry.

The mouse, which for now is sold only on Amazon, comes in a small metal case resembling those novelty-store cans from which a fake snake pops out. The Jelfin can is heart attack-free, however, and once you remove the mouse and plug it into the USB port of a Windows, Mac or Linux computer, you should be ready to go.

I would not pay \$35 for it, however. You can get a decent mouse for less, and it might be an ergonomic disaster to work for extended stretches in the position many people could be inclined to adopt - with your knuckles positioned higher than your wrist as if you're about to throw a split-fingered fastball.

But I will say that it felt good to cruise around my computer screen while gripping something with a hint of softness. The gel material that covers most of the mouse is not thick enough to make it something you can squeeze deeply, like some stress-release ball, but it provides a nice little cushion for your hand.

Perhaps the softest groundbreaker in computing has been the Chumby, a little touch-screen computer that comes in a stuffed leather case. But its maker's goal is not necessarily to sell pillowy computers - Chumbys now also are available in a harder, plastic casing. Instead, the company mainly wants to provide software that enables a variety of gizmos to show photos, display the weather or perform other Internet-connected services.

So if Jelfin follows through on its plans for more mushy accessories - perhaps keyboards or cell phone cases could benefit from this treatment - the company could find itself with few competitors when it comes to

pliable products. It might have a niche filled with gel.

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