Brain wave-sensing Mico headphones dictate mood-worthy tune

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(Phys.org) —Can your headphones read your mood and summon the music you want to hear? If these are Mico headphones, then that is their

intent. Neurowear, the group behind the idea, hopes the smartphone user using these special headphones will want to obey what the brain waves dictate is the mood-matched song, at least for the user's mood of the moment. Neurowear is staging the demo of its project Mico at the South by Southwest (SXSW) event in Austin, Texas, running from March 8 to March 13. The Mico system consists of large white headphones, sensor on forehead, and an app for the iPhone.

The headphones are designed to read the user's brainwaves directly to come up with the right song for the right mood. Mico takes the decision-making of what tune you want to hear out of your hands and into its mind-reading technology. Mico, or "Music Inspiration from your Subconsciousness," detects brain waves through a sensor worn on the forehead. Mico then proceeds to analyze "the condition of the brain," according to a demo, and searches music that is the best match, from its Mico database.

The system connects to the user's iPhone via Bluetooth. The database carries a playlist totaling about 100 tracks. The songs are "neuro-tagged," to reflect a perceived mood. If the wearer does not want to continue listening to the song, a phone "shake" clears it.

The company calls the experience "music serendipity." One attempt to take on the experience was reported on *Laptopmag.com*, using a Neurosky Mindwave Mobile headset connected to the Mico app on an iPhone. The mood was relaxed and a "mellow" Japanese tune began to play. The app showed the mood and the current track playing.

Mico app user interface design.

Reactions generally thus far toward this prototype indicate a mixed bag of those who are curious and amenable to the system as something potentially fun and interesting to have versus those who are hesitant to entrust their listening choices to the system. For example, the very "pro" given by the Mico team may be a "con" for some users: "Mico frees the users from having to select songs and artists….allows users to encounter new music just by wearing the device." The disconcerting element, for some, may lie in the very suggestion that the system, not the person, may know what music is best at the time.

One example of cautious enthusiasm was from *Dvice*: "We're not saying the Mico isn't a fun little toy, we're just saying the technology will have to get a lot more sophisticated before it truly understands how we're feeling."

Tokyo-based Neurowear is a project team focused on creating communication for the near future. They said their prototypes are based on biological signals such as brain waves and heartbeats.

More information: micobyneurowear.com/