

Review: High-tech gloves work as advertised

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Connected wearables. It's a fancy term for gadgets built into clothing or accessories you wear like a smartwatch or fitness monitor or even a Bluetooth headset.

I never thought about [gloves](#) being connected, but as technology evolves, new opportunities are conceived.

Dallas resident Tarik Rodgers and his cousin Willie Blount started Blue Infusion Technology, maker of BearTek Gloves, which are connected gloves with a Bluetooth or Wi-Fi module that can control music and phone calls on your smartphone or start and stop recording on a GoPro camera.

You may remember these guys from a recent appearance on "Shark Tank." Alas, they did not get funding from the show's sharks, but they've taken to Kickstarter and Indiegogo to get customer backing, and they've surpassed their funding goal.

TARGET MARKET

The first generation BearTek gloves is aimed at outdoor adventure enthusiasts, such as motorcycle riders, skiers and snowboarders.

The gloves have small sensors to activate different commands. The sensors are activated by tapping your thumb to various touchpads embedded along the sides of the glove fingers.

Touching your thumb to a touchpad on the side of your [index finger](#) will answer or hang up the phone or start and stop the music.

Touchpads on your middle finger will skip to the next song or go back in your playlist, and volume up and down is controlled by touchpads on your ring finger.

The touchpad system works well and becomes intuitive after a few minutes of practice. You can use the controls without looking down at your hands; I have to believe using the gloves is much safer than trying the same commands on your phone.

One thing you have to get used to is the gloves' sleep feature. The module goes to sleep 10 seconds after you've used the glove's touchpads - this is to keep you from inadvertently sending commands.

You have to press a power button on the thumb to wake the glove each time you want to send a command. You touch your index finger to the tip of your thumb to wake the module, then touch your thumb to the appropriate finger touchpad to send the command.

Once you wake the glove, you can send multiple commands as long as your button presses are less than 10 seconds apart.

It's easy to start the music, skip ahead and set the volume all at the same time.

The touch system works well, but I can't say it worked with 100 percent accuracy. I did have to repeat the commands on occasion.

BRAINS OF THE SYSTEM

First-generation BearTek gloves (like the ones I tested) have separate

modules for Bluetooth to connect to your phone or Wi-Fi to connect with a GoPro camera.

Gloves come with one module, but the other is available separately. You can only use one module at a time.

The modules are small and have batteries that recharge via microUSB cable.

The module zips into a small pocket on the control glove, and a small USB cable is included and zips into a pocket on the other glove.

When you buy your gloves, you can choose which hand is used for control.

The fully charged module will run for 80 hours.

SECOND GENERATION

BearTek has a second generation of gloves due out later this year.

The gloves look the same and feature the same touchpads on the fingers. The main difference is the module, which will handle both Bluetooth and Wi-Fi.

The module is controlled by an app on your smartphone. You launch the app to configure the module and to switch between Bluetooth and Wi-Fi. The app can also customize the touchpad functions.

There are also a few new features.

According to BearTek, the second-generation gloves "will include a liner option that can be used under other gloves when users want BearTek

functionality but still want to slip on other gloves. The liner option will also be appropriate as a cool weather glove for running and other general purposes. BearTek is expanding their line of high-quality glove designs for snow sports, motor sports, hunting, equestrian and cycling activities as well as in the workplace."

BearTek has also announced a developer kit, which will allow third-party developers to make their apps or devices able to be controlled by the gloves.

WHERE TO BUY?

You can find the gloves on Amazon or at Cabela's stores, but for the next few weeks, the best place to pick up a pair of BearTek gloves is Indegogo.

BearTek has a crowdfunding campaign going on through mid-March.

Right now, Generation II gloves can be had for \$99 per pair. After the campaign ends, the price will be \$225 per pair.

If you'd rather have the previous model, first-generation gloves are \$100.

BearTek's website is beartekgloves.com, and its Indegogo campaign can be found at bit.ly/217qr5i.

CONCLUSIONS

About a decade ago I owned a motorcycle, and I'd occasionally ride while listening to music. It would have been much easier to ride while wearing BearTek gloves. With my iPod in my pocket, I had a hard time pausing the music while riding.

A pair of BearTek gloves would make turning off the music as easy as touching my fingers together.

Pros: Easy to set up and use. High-quality materials.

Cons: Sometimes had to press more than once to get my command to take.

Bottom line: Easy phone or camera control with little distraction. Works as advertised.

More information: www.beartek-gloves.com/
www.indiegogo.com/projects/bear-tek-tooth-smart-gloves/

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