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"Plan Brine From Outer Space": From the series of digital collage pieces consisting of some of Karshis's illustrations, photography and found art. There is a five-inch speaker imbedded behind the nine chrome holes so you can hook up and listen to your iPod Nano or Shuffle. Featured in Leander Kahney's Cult of iPod book.

Graphic Design + Talent + Love of Music = iPod Speaker Innovator H. Michael Karshis



MUSIC WAS IN IPOD SPEAKER INNOVATOR MICHAEL KARSHIS'S GENES.

"I was 1 1/2 years old when I got my first 45 as a promo," Karshis says. "It came with a Wrigley Spearmint Gum marketing letterhead, and they wrote the letter to my mom because she wrote them that every time the jingle would come on I would dance to it. So they sent me the 45, and I still have the letter along with a picture of that little stick guy."

The obsession started even earlier than that.

"I was conceived with the radio on; my mom worked in a record store, and I've got all her old stuff... and my grandparents on my mom's side were in the church choir. I have my job, but there's tons of stuff I love doing on the side, and it all relates to music."

By day, Karshis is a senior art director for the Atkins Group. His local work includes the logo and interior design for Stoneworks in the Quarry, when he was flying solo as Karshis Design Group. It was his idea to salvage the big pane windows when the venue was being renovated; he gathered images of the original Alamo Quarry from the Institute of Texan Cultures to jazz up the panes. Now they hang as picturesque, breezy dividers between the eatery's bar and restaurant area.

The artist's obsession with graphic design and music has converged into his unique iPod speakers. *Cult of iPod* author and *Wired* magazine editor Leander Kahney came across samples of Karshis's speakers while writing the follow-up to his best-selling success, *The Cult of Mac*. Kahney decided to include Karshis's innovation in his book.

The iPod speakers don't look at all like speakers at first blush. That's because the iPod plays through rectangular wall pieces constructed of rescued ephemeral artwork and Karshis's own illustrations and photography. Each speaker comes with its own soundtrack as well: ambient music that plays through the wall mount when it's not playing an iPod playlist, composed of Karshis's own "audio Polaroids."

"I have every incoming message left on my answering machine from 1989-1999," Karshis says. "My mom passed away, [and I saved] all of her messages: 'Happy birthday, I sent you your check'; different roommates; the library calling, 'You're not going to get your grades unless you turn in this book.' I've converted all this stuff to mp3s. It's like audio Polaroids... You forget all about them, and then all of a sudden—wow! They're just fun to recycle.

"And their context changes. That's the whole idea originally behind the speakers, was the concept that what you're listening to and what you're looking at changes when you put the two together.

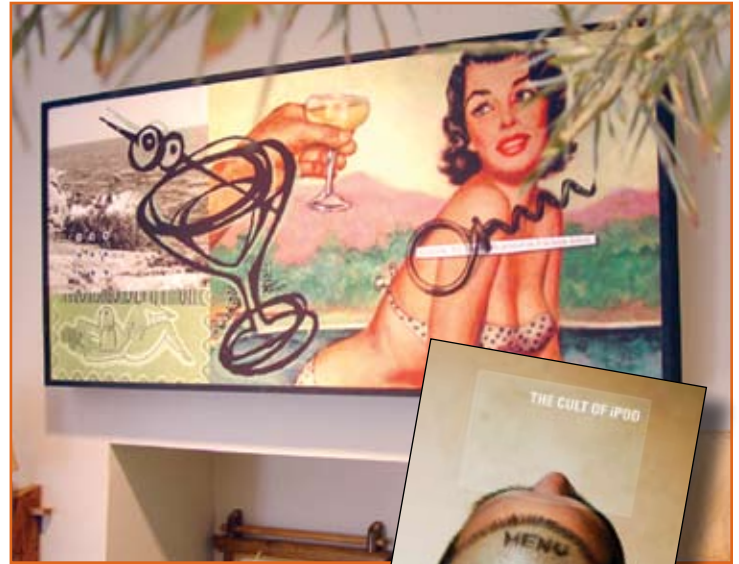
"For example, *Psycho's* score was composed by Bernard Herrmann with just a bass cello and violin. That's all they needed. And the music—watch it without the sound, watch it with the sound, and ... the emotion and the impact is completely different.

"So the whole idea behind the juxtaposition of the art and the audio is to sit in a room and say, for instance, 'Wow, are those birds?' I've got audio of ten hours of different birds from all over the world. So when you take the bird sounds, and then some of the classical music I recorded outside of a bookstore in Cambridge, or some street musicians I recorded in the subway in Boston, and layer some of that, it turns into background noise that's not 100 percent discernable, but you can hear it, and it's more incidental than anything else. It's not supposed to distract you; it's just there, like audio wallpaper."

To hear what Karshis's ambient kaleidoscope sounds like, go to www.sharkthang.com. Here you can download his "irregular frequency" podcast that takes the listener on a sound journey: it kicks off with a cock's crow, then weaves a polyphonic rollercoaster layered

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(Above) "Good Libations" as featured in Leander Kahney's book (right) *The Cult of iPod*.

with sound effects and pieces from Karshis's half-million song collection (that's about a terabyte—enough for 1,000 iPod shuffles!). This type of soundscape comes with each speaker.

Karshis has a backlog of orders for his innovative speakers. To get on the waiting list, contact him at his Web site.

To learn more about Karshis's other music and design endeavors, go to his design and pop culture blog: <http://thatisright.blogspot.com>, or his music musings blog at: <http://lamusic.blogspot.com>. **SA**

HK M ARCHIVE

Below is a sampling of some of Karshis's logos that were selected to appear in the book *Logo Lounge 3*.

