

D R. T O M O R R O W ™

FRANK OGDEN

LESSONS FROM THE FUTURE ™

THE 1990'S DIDGERIDOO

THE ZUBE TUBE

\*\*\*\*\*

If you have ever been to Australia or seen a "Crocodile Dundee" movie, you may have heard strange sounds from the bush. The sound of the didgeridoo, the long tubular hollowed-out branch of a tree that is played like a large flute or an oboe with highly resonant sound by the aboriginal people of the outback. Now modern technology comes close with the Zube Tube, an inexpensive "toy" that can produce sounds that place your voice at the bottom of a well, put the cries of humpback whales under your houseboat or Star Trek sounds overhead.

The Zube Tube, America's latest contribution to the music world resembles an Australian didgeridoo. Billed as the ultimate cosmic sound machine, the device apparently was the big seller at the U.S. Spring Toy Fair and in Europe at the world's largest toy fair in Nuremberg, Germany. Sales this year have already topped half a million according to the manufacturer, Ritam International.

Some toy show buyers even wanted units to use at the World Cup Soccer competition. More units with new external designs will soon provide high night-time visibility and even greater portability. The Zube Tube will be a big item next Halloween. Making ghost sounds are a snap for a five-year old (adults need some practice).

Although simple to use, the sounds from the Zube Tube are limited only by the imagination. Requiring no batteries nor electricity and costing about \$10, the tube's ability to generate sophisticated sounds, previously impossible without expensive electronic synthesizer equipment, makes the unit attractive to children and adults alike.

Sounds varying from "Star Wars" battles and MTV-style echoes to whale songs or the ocean's roar can be produced by shaking, twanging or speaking into the 39-inch (metre-long) brightly colored cardboard tube.

Developed by physicist Robert Dressler, the toy is deceptively simple. Inside the 2.75-inch diameter cylinder, an acoustic spring is attached at either end to plastic cups. A reinforced hole on the side of the tube allows the player to reach inside to pluck the coil or talk into the tube from either end. I've been playing it for a while before writing this column and the sounds are unbelievable. I just know my editor will want to borrow it and ride his own sound wave, tripping to some distant galaxy.

The Zube Tube is constructed to be safe and durable. It weighs less than a pound and "Good Morning America" says it's going to be the toy of the 1990s. It is retailing in the U.S. at \$9.95.

More information: Judy A. Walls, Vice President, Ritam International Ltd., P.O. Box  
1180, Fairfield, Iowa 52556.  
Phone: 515/472-8262.  
Fax: 515/472-5524.