

Is Your iPhone Cool Enough?

WHAT YOUR APPS SAY ABOUT YOU. By Paul Keegan

IF YOU'RE STILL RACKING YOUR BRAIN trying to think of pre-meeting small talk—about the weather, say, or *The Game*—help has arrived. Want to break the ice while demonstrating your coolness? Take it from the trendsetters of Silicon Valley: Show off the latest iPhone app, the stupider the better. There's *iLightr*, *Kazoo*, *More Cowbell*.... "The pecking order gets established before you even sit down," says Bruce Carlisle, CEO of Digital Axle, a marketing company. "Someone showed me *Crazy Disco* the other day, and it blew me away. Never saw it before. I felt like I'd lost for the day."

Crazy Disco, for those using company-issue BlackBerrys and Treos, features a swirling disco ball and campy music. *iLightr* is a flickering flame for waving at rock concerts. *More Cowbell* has a clip of Christopher Walken from the famous *Saturday Night Live* skit croaking, "I gotta have more cowbell!" and a cowbell that clanks when you tap it. But woe to the young entrepreneur hoping to impress VCs with *Koi Pond*, which shows fish swimming in a pool that ripples when you touch the screen. A former No. 1 bestseller, *Koi Pond* is now utterly passe and raises troubling questions about what else you are behind the curve on. "If I have a three o'clock meeting," says Carlisle, "I want to check the apps store right before I get into my car."

"We're all *amazed* that people are trying to monetize stupidity," says MacKenzie Smith of Quacon, a Bay Area technology tester, who admits to releasing the fartlike sounds of *Kazoo* during project meetings. But monetizing stupidity, though certainly a worthy goal, is not easy. While the top ten developers of

iPhone apps have reaped about \$9 million of the \$21 million total

Apple has paid out, most are like Aaron Berk, a 37-year-old web developer from Atlanta whose biggest hit so far is

"*Wooo Button*" (press a button and a guy hollers, "Wooo!"). Like many apps, "*Wooo Button*" is free, so Berk got zip from the 40,000 downloads the first three days of its release.

But he charged 99 cents for *Disco Ball* (a precursor to *Crazy Disco*), which was downloaded 3,000 times. Since developers get 70% of revenues, Berk stands to earn \$2,100—but so far has only one check, for \$315. "Those two apps were more to get my feet wet," he shrugs, promising that his next app, a financial program, will be more useful. Hard to imagine.



Top 10 Must-Have iPhone Apps

At presstime; subject to change hourly; strictly nonscientific

| Title // Price // Developer | What it does |
|--|---|
| Crazy Disco // \$0.99 // Ezone | Disco ball spins to music |
| iBeer // \$2.99 // Heltrix | Beer drains from screen as you "drink" |
| iLightr // \$0.99 // Übermind | A "flame" to wave during rock concerts |
| Kazoo // free // Chudigi Software | Makes silly kazoo noises |
| Koi Pond // \$0.99 // The Blimp Pilots | Fish swim in pond you ripple by tapping |
| MixMeister Scratch // free // MixMeister | Deejay beats for impromptu rapping |
| More Cowbell // free // Maverick Software | Clanks like a cowbell |
| Rimshot // \$0.99 // Sprikit | <i>Badum, Tssss!</i> and so forth. |
| Sim Stapler // free // Freeverse, Inc. | Makes a stapler sound. Really. |
| Wooo Button // free // Aaron Berk | Man's voice yells, "Wooo!" |