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## IT CAME IN THE MAIL

Sunday, November 5, 2006

An occasional look at products the travel industry insists we need.

WHAT: The Playaway, a self-contained digital audiobook.

AIMED AT: Technologically challenged recorded-book fans who want to look cool.

HOW MUCH: \$29.99 to \$54.99.

BUT DOES IT WORK? Smaller than an iPod, the Playaway is so darn cute you want to chuck it under its little plastic chin. But the tiny audiobook system has plenty of other advantages over MP3 players, books on tape or CDs. It's far easier to use -- nothing to download, no CDs or cassettes to lug around, no need for a separate player. It comes preloaded with one book and runs on one AAA battery (provided); all you have to do is press "play," pop in the ear buds (also provided) and listen. There are titles for all interests, from the 9/11 Commission report to "The Da Vinci Code" to "Getting to Yes."

There's even a button that allows you to slow down or speed up the narrator's voice (hours of fun!) and another to change the reader's pitch and tone. Technophobes of the world, take heart: Who needs a clunky old iPod? -- K.C. Summers

*The Playaway is available at area Borders and Barnes and Noble stores, Hudson Books, Brookstone, Target.com and Amazon.com, or from the company's Web site, <http://www.playawaydigital.com>.*

