



The

Broadcasters' Desktop Resource

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... edited by Barry Mishkind – the Eclectic Engineer

The Cheap Channel Low Cost Earbuds that Rock and A Really Cheap Phone Service



By Dana Puopolo

[January 2012] This is another in a series of articles by Dana Puopolo, designed to alert you to some real bargains on gear you might need or are already looking to buy.

Today's first deal is on a pair of really cheap earbuds that can rock!

They are made by a company called Section 8 and are sold branded as different rock stars.



They usually sell for about \$8.00 each. But keep an eye out. I got a deal on them from Woot.com: 3 pairs for \$7.97, shipped. I got Elvis, The Who and Jim Morrison. The only difference is the sticky label attached to the back of each bud.

CHEAP PRICE, GOOD SOUND

Initially they sounded just so-so.

There was a rattle in the left ear, so I took off the small black sticky thing in the earbud and found a small piece of aluminum there.

Removing it made the sound improve a bit. but then I carefully punched a few holes in the sticky thing with a push pin (be careful to not hit the diaphragms) and they really took off. If you wanted, you probably could just simply leave the black thing off.

One disadvantage is that they do not have the channels marked on the buds, so I put a small red dot on the right channel with some fingernail polish.

After breaking these buds in for about ten hours they absolutely rock! Great bass, clear mids, and sizzly (but not harsh) highs. In some ways they outperform my Klipsch S4 buds. They also have nice cloth wires that work much better than the

typical cheap plastic wire. You can find these all over the web for between five and ten dollars on up, shipped. [Here is one link you can use.](#)

FREE EARBUD TIPS

Next, here is a way to get some very good plastic earbud tips free.

In many Staples stores there are Dr. Dre earbud demos. They provide you with a free pair of ear tips sealed in plastic. Take a couple of those – but I also took the dozen or two used buds left in the display, took them home and boiled them for ten minutes.

These tips are about as good as tips sold on Amazon for \$10 per set – and you can get them free. I spoke with a friend of mine who is a doctor and he agreed that boiling them will not only kill any germs left on them but will also clean any wax from them, making them as good as new.

ANOTHER CHEAP PHONE SERVICE

This week Google Voice (GV) announced that their service will remain free for USA and Canada calling through 2012.

Google started this free service in 2010 after taking over Grand Central. I started using it as Grand Central, but last year is when it really took off because a company called Obihai began making inexpensive phone adapters that allow you to use GV with a standard analog telephone



The Obi110 unit is not much bigger than a large apple.

It works even without a computer, although you still *do* need an Internet service, and the bandwidth and latency will determine call quality.

As part of the GV package, you will get a free incoming number. Even better, the Obi units allow for two numbers and also allow you to mix GV and SIP in the same adapter. I have two GV incoming numbers in mine: one is a Santa Monica, CA number and the other is Boston and each has a distinctive ring. You can set either number to be your default callout number, but it is easy to call out from the other line if you wish.

Using an Obi box is simple. After programming the unit you simply attach an analog phone and when you pick it up you get a dial tone. When someone calls your GV incoming number the phone rings (and Caller ID also works).

All incoming calls are free. Outgoing calls to the USA and Canada are also free. International calls are billed at GV's very cheap international rates of a few pennies per minute.

Amazon is currently selling the Obi 110 for \$49.99 [at this link](#). There is also a cheaper unit available, the Obi 100. The difference between the two units is that the 110 also has an extra RJ11 input for a POTS or VOIP line.

911 ISSUE

One major caveat: Google Voice has *no* capacity for 911, so you should not use this as your primary telephone line. However, it is great for a backup. Nevertheless, you might be at a location with a standards POTS line that can call 911, and the Obi 110 can be programmed so when you call 911 it uses the POTS port to handle the call.

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Want some help in finding a bargain? Ask Dana Puopolo. He is the Chief Engineer at WURD and a long-time bargain hunter. Dana's email is dpuopolo@usa.net

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