

Daily Breeze



Musical arm makes amputee feel human again

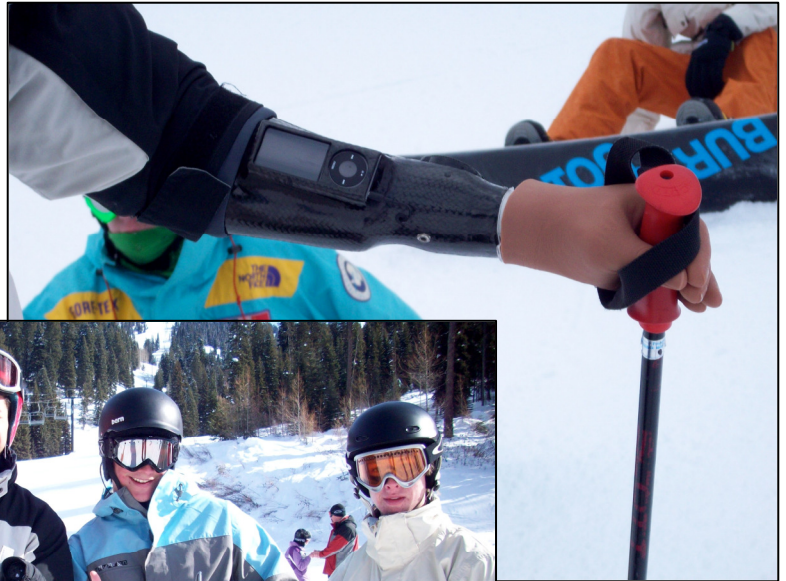
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Three months ago, a man skied down an Idaho mountain with music blaring from where his left hand and wrist used to be.

An amputee, Bernie Diamond was trying out his new prosthesis, dubbed the Reverb Arm, which has speakers and a clip for an MP3 player.

"People were telling me they could hear my MP3 player up to 70, 80 feet away," recalled Diamond, 31, of Fort Worth, Texas.

The Reverb Arm is the creation of Advanced Arm Dynamics, an El Segundo-based company that fits and modifies prosthetic arms and hands.



Ever since he lost his hand in a random drive-by shooting in 2007, Diamond has struggled to overcome his handicap.

Advanced Arm Dynamics' Irving, Texas, clinical facility has been central in this effort.

However, what stands out to me is the creative and truly whimsical approach to Diamond's disability.

With only one hand, Diamond initially was devastated by his loss. He had trouble buttoning his clothing, brushing his hair and driving.

He gave up his eight-year career as a hairdresser.

Soon after his injury, Diamond started using prostheses from Advanced Arm Dynamics.

But it was not until February that he suggested a novel idea.

"I thought it would be really cool to do a device with an iPod in it," Diamond said.

He threw out the idea and the company ran with it.

"This was originally something that we were doing purely for fun just because it was cool," said Chris Lake, southwest clinical director of Advanced Arm Dynamics. "We know people do better and accept their prosthesis if we help them achieve a really big goal for them. That goal might be going back to work or playing with their kids. We didn't realize that this (Reverb Arm) would do it for Bernie because he was looking to get back into his active lifestyle."

The prosthesis has speakers and a battery built into the arm, with the MP3 player attached on the outside. Diamond used it to play rock music, Frank Sinatra and hip-hop on the ski slopes.

"It's a really cool thing to have something that makes you feel - for lack of a better word - human again," Diamond said.

He also has used this new prosthesis to play football with friends.

"It was fun to be the entertainment," he said of the music.

Diamond described using the Reverb Arm as liberating.

I would add the word "defiant."

Because there is something rebellious about transforming such a sympathy-inducing handicap into a blaring stereo system that tells everyone within earshot that life is still good.

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