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January 06, 2016 at 03:00 AM EST

Vigo is an Unprecedented 'Personal Guardian Angel' Aimed to Eliminate Drowsy Driving

Drowsy driving meets its match with new smart Bluetooth headset

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, January 06, 2016 /24-7PressRelease/ -- Vigo is the world's first smart Bluetooth headset that tracks alertness. Specifically engineered to counteract drowsy driving, Vigo uses an infrared sensor that tracks eye and head motion. It stimulates users with a flashing LED light, a gentle vibration or music when users are not at their optimal alertness.

"Drowsy driving causes over 100,000 accidents per year in the U.S. alone, according to the NHTSA, and over a third of drivers report to having fallen asleep at the wheel," said Vigo co-founder Jason Gui. "Vigo is the only consumer friendly, affordable solution on the market that tackles this problem. Vigo has cleverly built its alertness detection technology into a headset such that drivers have no problem getting used to a form factor they are already used to. With Vigo on the road, lives could potentially be saved from reducing the chances of drivers drowsy on the road."

What's equally enterprising is Vigo (www.wearvigo.com) may also be the world's first new original tech product to arrive on the market in its own trailblazing, inventive way. Created and engineered by former University of Pennsylvania mechanical engineering students, Vigo started in 2013 as a school project designed by students to help students maintain alertness while in class.

"Sometimes, we found ourselves in a class or a lecture that was a little on the boring side," said Vigo co-founder and creative director Tiantian Zhang. "You might need a little nudge and could miss taking very important notes for class. We thought maybe we can create something that can help us stay alert when we were in class."

The developed and released Vigo is a fully functioning Bluetooth headset that can be used for calls and music, and connects to the iPhone and Android. The accompanying Vigo app provides alertness scores, trends and recommendations to improve alertness.

After graduating Penn in 2013 and relocating to San Francisco, Vigo and its team were selected for a hardware incubator program called Hax, which was intended to help launch hip international companies with new products that have high potential. Vigo got underway at Hax in Shenzhen, China, in August, 2013.

In the research stage, it was discovered Vigo could serve a gap that extended beyond the original idea of staying alert in academic settings. "We noticed the driving market," Zhang said. "We noticed there was a gap between super cheap comparables and very expensive competing models. People can afford Vigo, but it's also embedded with high technology. We think the driving market is the perfect target."

Zhang said Vigo reached out to UPS, Aramex and Peabody Energy for pilot testing. The product was finding its place among companies that have employees engaged in heavy driving or those with long hours requiring focus such as in security. With companies investing hundreds of millions of dollars in driving safety and incurring hundreds of thousands of dollars due to accident expenses, it became clear Vigo had extraordinary value.

Vigo was tested on research samples with a demographic focused on male truck drivers of



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CLEAR CHANNEL OUTDOOR HOLDINGS, Inc.	5.46	-0.43 (-7.30%)
GRAY TELEVISION, Inc.	14.07	-0.96 (-6.39%)
Yahoo	30.16	-2.00 (-6.23%)
Autodesk	56.24	-3.30 (-5.54%)

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Caucasian, African American and Latino descent aged 20-50. "We went to truck stops a lot and to talk to the drivers," Zhang said. "We did interviews to find out how they use Bluetooth headsets and how much they would pay. We invited people to take their head measurements at our design studio to perfect our ergonomic design."

As to competition, Zhang said existing products on the market that aim to achieve what Vigo does are Seeing Machines and Optalert, which are priced in the thousands, along with other less sophisticated models with basic technology that sell for less than \$10. Vigo's retail price is \$129.

"Compared to existing devices that cost thousands to tens of thousands of dollars, Vigo is extremely affordable and consumer-friendly such that any professional or casual driver could purchase," said Gui. "The price point is above conventional headsets for its core functionality, the drowsiness detection and stimuli, while having superior audio quality at the same time."

In February 2014, Vigo completed its Kickstarter fundraising campaign, which successfully raised more than \$57,000 to help launch Vigo into production.

In November 2015, after a comprehensive research and development period, Vigo manufactured 2,000 units and shipped units to its Kickstarter backers and for its pre-order sales spanning more than 30 different countries.

"Vigo makes such technology that have only been available in trains, heavy machinery and high-end cars available to the masses, creating an environment for better road safety and reducing lives lost," said Gui.

And Vigo is proving useful for its creators too.

"I use it when I'm working in the office," Zhang said. "I like the sound alerts. I use it as a Bluetooth headset. When I work out, I like to listen to hip hop music to refresh and help keep awake."

Gui said, "I use Vigo as a Bluetooth headset while driving to take calls, which is less distracting than glancing at a phone to answer a call. I also listen to podcasts when I drive, which helps me stay focused. When I do feel myself going down, Vigo gives me the nudge serving me as a reminder to mind my own safety and pull over if I should. I like how it is watching over me, like a personal guardian angel."

Zhang, a native of the city of Zhengzhou, in China's Henan province, received a Masters degree in Integrated Product Design at Penn and previously graduated the Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics with a concentration in New Media Design.

Gui, who is from Shenzhen, China and studied engineering and business at Penn, completed that initial Vigo project, which was recognized with innovation awards among other competing student projects. Vigo was originally developed during a senior project at Penn as a pair of glasses before it evolved into a Bluetooth headset.

Vigo marked Gui's second collaboration with Zhang. The duo had before created "Three Fellows," a video talk show that explained to a Chinese audience what it's like living in the U.S. The talk show found a home and a strong following on Youku.com, China's YouTube equivalent.

For more information and to purchase Vigo, visit www.wearvigo.com

Founded by Jason Gui and Tiantian Zhang, Vigo is the world's first smart Bluetooth headset that tracks alertness and counteracts drowsy driving.

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