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Keep gear safe in the sand and surf

By GREGG ELLMAN | McClatchy/Tribune news



Swimming soundtrack

Combining water with today's electronic gadgets is, for the most part, a bad thing unless you have something to protect them.

If you want to take your iPod on a swim, H2O Audio's waterproof cases and headphones are a great choice.

The Amphibix is unlike similar waterproof products because its design enables you to use it with many different-size portable media players from most any company and gives full access to all the devices' controls through a clear front-panel pouch.

Each unit has a patented locking closure (LatchTight) and headphone connector (Seal-Tight), which are individually tested by the company to ensure they are 100 percent waterproof.

It is compatible with H2O Audio Waterproof Headphones and standard 3.5 mm headphone plugs.

H2O Audio rates the case to withstand the water with a 100 percent watertight seal up to depth of 12 feet.

The armband is adjustable and comfortable, securing the device in place while in the water.

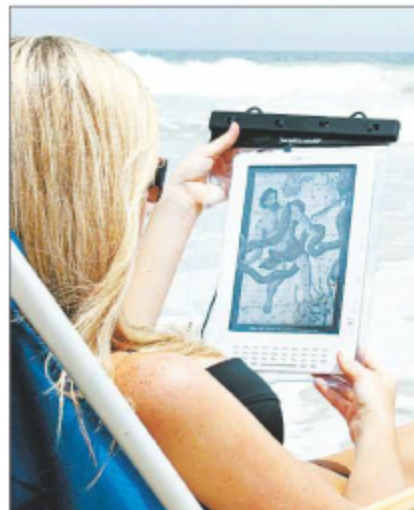
For a truly waterproof musical experience, the Surge 2G Waterproof Sport In-ear headphones make it a great combination.

To make sure you get the right seal in your ears for the best performance and comfort, five sets of lightweight earplugs (XS-XL) are included.

Once I got my iPod secure in the pouch and the headphones attached, I tested it under a faucet with a light amount of running water, which I would recommend for anyone wanting to take a waterproof device for a swim.

After I was convinced the seal was secure it was in the pool for me.

Details: Amphibix armbands range from \$38 to \$79, depending on the model, and the Surge 2G Waterproof Sport Headphones are \$27 at Amazon.com. See more at H2OAudio.com.



The all-purpose protector

For those undecided on what they want to take underwater, from cameras to iPods, the DryCase should be your choice.

The 100 percent waterproof and rubberized case can hold just about any portable electronic device and gives you access to most controls while in the water up to 100 feet deep or in most any inclement weather situation.

Installation is pretty simple. Once you have the right model for your electronic device inside the case, which is a basically a really thick plastic bag, snap it shut for an airtight seal.

Then remove any extra air with the one-way air evacuation valve and the vacuum hand pump (included).

If it's a digital camera inside, you will have no problems accessing all the controls including viewing the LCD for full menu access.

A waterproof headphone/microphone port is sealed into the outside of the case, with a standard plug on the other end to plug into your device inside the bag.

Waterproof headphones are not included, but a lanyard is helpful for holding on to your device while in the water.

The Dry Case worked great for me with my nonwaterproof point-and-shoot camera, but I highly recommend you test your device in the sink before fully submerging it in water.

Another great use for this would be on a beach to keep out gadget-killing sand.

The DryCASE iPad/tablet case will fit many of today's e-readers, and while I really have no desire to bring my iPad in the pool, I would find it handy to use sitting poolside to protect it from splashing water.

Details: DryCASE.com, prices start at \$29.99 at Amazon.com.



Underwater filming

For filming underwater video, the General Imaging DVI 5-megapixel ultra-compact camcorder doesn't need a waterproof housing since it is waterproof up to a depth of 16 feet for full HD recording.

The camera is similar in style to the well-known Flip camcorder, including its fold-out USB plug for downloading and charging.

As with most products I test, no directions were read and I took it straight into the pool since I'm brave with other people's products.

While underwater, I could easily see my subjects on the 2.5-inch LCD screen, filming with its built-in 5.5 mm, fixed focal-length lens (35mm equivalent of 33mm).

Recordings are stored on the removable media (SD or SDHC up to 32GB).

In addition the waterproof features, there is a built-in microphone and the camera takes still images. It's also shockproof for a small accidental 5-foot drop and dustproof.

Other features include an HDMI output along with the USB plug and highly recommended wrist strap connection on the bottom.

A rechargeable battery is included and rated to record 80 minutes of video or about 280 still photos.

A set of buttons below the LCD makes controlling the camera easy. Menu items were a little confusing, but after finally breaking out the instructions they were pretty standard and easy to navigate.

It's important to make sure both side doors are secured before heading into the water.

These compartments give you access to the memory card, USB arm and HDMI port, but if they are not shut tight, the camera is not waterproof.

Details: general-imaging.com; \$98.

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