

# Whole lotta cranking going on

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Slashdot covered [hand-cranked radios and other electronica](#) a while ago. I keep [an old-model Freeplay flashlight](#) in the trunk of my car. It sort of fits the whole energy-counter-culture ethos, since I drive an early-model Toyota Prius.

Freeplay is a South African company, and one of my South African colleagues pointed out that the Freeplay devices sold in South Africa are heavier than the ones sold in the States. Not for any technical reason, mind you. It's psychological, I'm told. Apparently, in South Africa, you want your equipment to be good and heavy, since that makes it seem solid and dependable.

When I was in London a few years ago, I joined a friend in a day trip to the [Victoria and Albert Museum](#). The museum is far too large for you even to pretend to see it all so we created for ourselves a one-day tour on the theme "The history of British furniture from 1500 to the present". Yeah, it sounds stupid on paper, but it was actually quite fun. (We saw how the British were fond of Japanese teacups but couldn't get over the fact that they don't have handles. They solved this problem by building a metal cage with a handle; into the cage was placed the teacup. Now you can drink your tea out of the lovely Japanese teacup with the added civility of a proper handle. Yet for some reason, this didn't catch on in Japan.) When we got to the late twentieth century, one of the items on display was... a Freeplay radio.

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