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‘Intelligent’ White Cane - First Product in Europe to Win Proto Labs Cool Idea! Award

Shropshire, UK – 6 Aug 2012 – The latest product selected as a Proto Labs Cool Idea! Award recipient – the first to win the award in Europe, was conceived and designed to help visually impaired people be more independent.

Téléfact, created by French company IN3G, is an ingenious add-on to the traditional white cane that uses infrared detection and vibration feedback to identify hazards and obstacles, to help users move through the urban landscape.

For someone with a visual impairment, it is difficult enough to navigate an environment that’s already familiar. But, imagine how much more intimidating and challenging it must be to navigate a completely new and unknown environment. Although the traditional white cane is useful in both cases, it’s a primitive aid with severe limitations. The new Téléfact, however, allows the visually impaired to travel alone, independently, and further afield, even when the environment is unfamiliar.

Téléfact consists of a small box that can be attached easily to a standard white cane. The box emits a harmless infrared beam that is projected horizontally along the ground up to 70cm ahead of the user. The beam is also projected upwards at an



angle of 45°. When the infrared beam strikes an object, the Télétact box inducts a vibration in the cane, which increases or decreases according to the proximity of the object.

The prototypes of the various component parts of Télétact were initially completed internally by IN3G, using additive 3D printers. However, when it came to validating and testing the mechanical parts (for example, the opening of the battery cover), achieving a perfect fit and preparing the tools for injection moulding, IN3G turned to Proto Labs. After two rounds of creating prototypes Proto Labs produced ten moulds and delivered one hundred Télétact cases. The external casing and battery housing is made of black polycarbonate, designed to protect the infrared light system, the power supply, circuit boards and vibration device.

The ingenuity of the Télétact product - and its unquestionable usefulness for the visually impaired, won over Mr. Larry Lukis, founder and CTO of Proto Labs: "We were convinced by the potential and simplicity of the product," he says. "IN3G could help millions of people to move around more easily and with greater independence. It is a great joy for us to offer our Protomold injection moulding service and present IN3G with a Cool Idea! Award."

IN3G is based in Orsay, Paris, and specialises in Research and 'high-technology'. The company works with Universities and public research organisations.

Mr. Roger Leroux, technical manager of IN3G says: "When the team at Proto Labs France suggested we submit Télétact for the Cool Idea! Award, we didn't hesitate," he says. "We've worked with Proto Labs before, so we were very excited about this opportunity. Winning the Cool Idea! Award has allowed us to manufacture enough parts to equip one hundred people with Télétact for real-life tests."

The Cool Idea! Award is a program created by Proto Labs that offers designers the opportunity to realise innovative products that otherwise would not get funded. In 2012, Proto Labs expanded the program to the European Union and is now offering



up to the equivalent of \$250,000 in services for prototyping and low volume production. For more information, visit www.protolabs.co.uk / coolidea.

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About Proto Labs®

Based in Shropshire in the UK, Proto Labs Limited has radically changed the economics and lead times associated with the production of prototype and low-volume parts for European manufacturers. Proto Labs' customers include companies from all sectors such as medical, aerospace, automotive and consumer electronics. With two service offerings: Firstcut® delivers machined parts (ideal for quantities of 1-10 parts) in over 30 production-intent materials including aluminium and brass while Protomold® delivers injection-moulded plastic parts (ideal for quantities of 10-10,000+) in just about any production-intent material. Using an 'ultra-fast' compute-cluster Proto Labs offers a web-based quoting system which includes a detailed manufacturability analysis and an accurate all-in production price in just hours **and** can ship orders in as little as one business day. For more information please visit www.protolabs.co.uk

About Protomold®

Protomold is the injection-moulding service offered by Proto Labs, Limited. Designers and engineers can submit a 3D CAD model of a part to the Protomold web-based quoting system, ProtoQuote®, and receive a detailed 3D model manufacturability analysis and an accurate all-in production price in hours rather than weeks. With ProtoQuote, customers can easily react to last-minute design changes, uploading as many iterations as they need to get the right model, material and cost. This in turn greatly reduces the time-to-market for a new product. In addition to all this, Protomold



can deliver injection-moulded prototype and low-volume plastic parts manufactured from a choice of hundreds of production-intent materials in as little as one business day. For more information please visit www.protomold.co.uk

About Firstcut®

Firstcut is the machining service offered by Proto Labs, Limited. Designers and engineers can submit a 3D CAD model of a part to the firstcut web-based quoting system, FirstQuote®, and receive a detailed 3D model manufacturability analysis and an accurate all-in production price in just hours rather than weeks. With FirstQuote, customers can easily react to last-minute design changes, uploading as many iterations as they need to get the right model, material and cost. This in turn greatly reduces the time-to-market for a new product. Firstcut allows customers to make a fully functional prototype much earlier in the development cycle from a range of over 30 production-intent materials such as ABS, Nylon, PEEK, aluminium or brass produced in as little as one business day. For more information please visit www.firstcut.eu/gb

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