

Shuffle

by

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"CUPERTINO, California-April 9, 2007-Apple today announced that the 100 millionth iPod has been sold, making the iPod the fastest selling music player in history. The first iPod was sold five and a half years ago, in November 2001, and since then Apple has introduced more than 10 new iPod models, including five generations of iPod, two generations of iPod mini, two generations of iPod nano and two generations of iPod shuffle."

Press release.

Characters in the play

CLAIRE
CHRISTIAN : 30s, married.

SAMANTHA
ALEX : 30s, married.

PRELUDE.

Three figures. Dimly perceived.

They wear earphones.

They are dancing: each to different music.

We hear nothing but the scratching noise of other people's iPods.

This noise grows and grates -

One by one the dancers leave -

The noise -

OUT.

ONE.

Sam holds an iPod.

She looks at it as though it were something that had fallen from a UFO.

Christian, expert, carefully puts earphones in her ears.

CHRISTIAN

Use your thumb. It's like a circular motion.

Pause.

CHRISTIAN

Push the button. In the middle. There's all your music.

SAM

Abba. There's Abba.

CHRISTIAN

I know. It's the Yellow Pages and A1 cabs all over again.

SAM

Anthony and the Johnsons.

CHRISTIAN

Shuffle tries to even things out. Sadly, lots of people don't shuffle.

SAM

The Arctic Monkeys. The Beach Boys.

CHRISTIAN

You've never done this before, have you?

SAM

No.

CHRISTIAN

This is really your first time? I didn't know there was anyone left.

Pause.

CHRISTIAN

You didn't want Alex to do it? I mean I'm flattered and everything -.

SAM

He's at work.

CHRISTIAN

Who loaded the music?

SAM

'Loaded' it?

CHRISTIAN

They don't come with the music on there.

SAM

"Belle and Sebastian."

Pause.

CHRISTIAN

It's not yours is it?

SAM

No. I have got one. Alex got me one for Christmas. It's still in its box. I am glad to have one. I just don't want to use it.

CHRISTIAN

Right. Whose is that?

I've got no idea.

SAM

OUT.

TWO.

Alex and Claire stretching before a run.

He hands her an iPod. She clips it on.

ALEX

Some decent stuff on there now. You've got horrible taste in music. Typical girl.

CLAIRE

You've got horrible taste in music. Christian says.

ALEX

He says that?

CLAIRE

Middle of the road. "If it wasn't for him you'd still be listening to Queen's Greatest Hits."

ALEX

There's nothing wrong with Queen's Greatest Hits.

CLAIRE

You know what he's like.

ALEX

A connoisseur.

CLAIRE

A snob.

ALEX

So what shall we have?

CLAIRE

The same thing?

ALEX

To set the pace. Go at the same speed. If you have 'It's a Wonderful World' and I have 'Lust for Life' I'm going to leave you behind. I'm going to leave you behind anyway / but we might as well start -

CLAIRE

You're not going to leave me behind.

They study their machines.

CLAIRE

Abba?

ALEX

Come on Claire. Dylan?

CLAIRE

It's supposed to be fun.

ALEX

Kings of Leon?

CLAIRE

One of Christian's.

ALEX

- ?

CLAIRE

I don't want something that's his. Something he introduced.

ALEX

He introduced us.

CLAIRE

Are we running? Or are we tooling about with / iPods?

ALEX

We're running. We're running.

CLAIRE

Because this is my lunch break.

ALEX

It's my lunch break too.

Pause.

Blondie? ALEX

OK. CLAIRE

On three then. One, two - three. ALEX

MUSIC. 'Heart of Glass.'

They bounce off.

OUT.

THREE.

I found it. SAM

And you want to - CHRISTIAN

Return it. To the owner. SAM

And you thought I could help you find that person. CHRISTIAN

You like music. SAM

To profile the owner - CHRISTIAN

Alex says you're encyclopaedic. SAM

A forensic expert. The Cracker of music. I like it. CHRISTIAN

He takes the machine.

CHRISTIAN

So what have we got? A Nano. Four gig. White.

Pause.

CHRISTIAN

I'm thinking female. Our man is a woman.

SAM

How can you tell?

CHRISTIAN

It's a little one. It can only hold a thousand songs.

SAM

That's not many?

CHRISTIAN

Mine is 80 gig.

SAM

Wow. Gig? Sorry.

CHRISTIAN

Unit of memory. They're basically extra brains you carry around with you. Mine is 80 gig - a big brain - forty thousand songs. This one isn't full. Definitely a woman.

SAM

- ?

CHRISTIAN

Women. They're not really interested in music. They do like it. For women music is fun. A good time.

SAM

What is it for men?

CHRISTIAN

It's much more serious than that. Although - Dylan. Quite a bit of Dylan.

SAM

Don't women like Bob Dylan?

CHRISTIAN

Music taste is homosexual. Men like men. Women like women. I see Abba, I see Blondie, and I think a woman. I see British Sea Power and the Delgados and I think a man.

SAM

I've never heard of those.

CHRISTIAN

Women like music that everyone likes. Men like music that nobody likes. Except other men with 80 gig iPods. Funny.

SAM

What's the matter?

CHRISTIAN

Guided by Voices. Early stuff too.

SAM

That makes a difference?

CHRISTIAN

The early stuff is the good stuff. It means you were in there first. It means you have taste. Where did you find this?

SAM

In the park.

CHRISTIAN

Lots of Guided by Voices. Demos. Bootlegs.

SAM

You seem upset.

CHRISTIAN

It's complicated. In one way I'm pleased that somebody else likes Guided by Voices. In another way, It's my thing.

CHRISTIAN

Shall we find out? Name should be on here somewhere. If it's registered.

SAM

No! No.

She gets it off him.

SAM

I'll drop it into the police. And please don't say anything about this to Alex. That I haven't used my iPod. He already thinks I'm useless.

CHRISTIAN

He doesn't.

ALEX

I read the opposite. You only have so many in you. Look at the Pope. Cliff Richard. The oldest person in the world is usually a nun.

CLAIRE

Like heartbeats.

ALEX

- ?

CLAIRE

Mammals have the same number of heartbeats. In their lives. The elephant. The mouse. Same number of beats.

ALEX

How many?

CLAIRE

I don't know. A lot. But little hearts beat faster. Die sooner.

ALEX

So this is killing us. Sam will outlive me then.

CLAIRE

And Christian will bury me.

ALEX

Survival of the fittest. We need to lie down now.

CLAIRE

I don't know.

ALEX

It's OK. It's Annuncion's day. She'll change the sheets.

They lie down.

ALEX

I've got an idea.

He reaches for his iPod.

CLAIRE

No, No.

ALEX

Something with a beat. Rhythm.

Leave it. CLAIRE

Looking at the screen.

Not too fast. Not too slow. ALEX

Alex! CLAIRE

He is putting an earphone in her ear.

Careful. CLAIRE

I'll be gentle. ALEX

OUT.

FIVE.

Christian at the Mac. Large 'professional' headphones around his neck.

Alex on the Blackberry.

Just got to take this one. ALEX

Can't you turn it off? CHRISTIAN

Slightly defeats the object. ALEX

CHRISTIAN
You'll get RSI. Blackberry white finger. Thirty years from now a generation of pensioners will have claws for hands.

Just be a second. ALEX

CHRISTIAN

When they appeared you had to be important to have one. Now it means you're someone's bitch.

Alex comes to the Mac.

CHRISTIAN

Some popular stuff here - we're not proud. Some folk revival. Rare bootleg from Guided by Voices. Bit of marker this one.

ALEX

When am I going to listen to all this?

CHRISTIAN

You go running. You go to the gym.

ALEX

I listen to things I know.

CHRISTIAN

No. No. No. No. You have to shuffle. If you don't shuffle you'll never learn anything.

ALEX

I like to program a run. Brown Sugar and Teenage Kicks and Wish you were Here and Won't Get Fooled Again is two miles.

CHRISTIAN

You're so classic rock.

ALEX

I'm loyal. Plus I know how far we've gone.

Pause.

CHRISTIAN

We?

Pause.

ALEX

Me and Mick and Keith and...

CHRISTIAN

OK. Feargal and Roger and Dave and Pete and Roger and John and Keith.

ALEX

So many Keiths.

CHRISTIAN

Keith was the name they gave to the Dionysiac spirit of the sixties. Do me a favour please, shuffle when you run. Life is not Greatest Hits. Duff tracks are part of it.

ALEX

It's not my music. It's your music.

CHRISTIAN

Make it yours. Discover something. Otherwise you're just sticking. The version of yourself now is the one you'll be left with.

ALEX

Where do you get all this stuff?

CHRISTIAN

You don't swap music at work?

ALEX

We work at work.

CHRISTIAN

And you can live when you're retired.

ALEX

There are holidays.

CHRISTIAN

Ten days kite-surfing in the Andaman islands makes it all worthwhile.

ALEX

Considering you are my best friend, I really don't like you very much.

OUT.