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**Review: Foneshow makes podcasts available by cell phone**

By Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) -- A new service named Foneshow offers a quick and easy way to access the downloadable radio shows known as podcasts. Instead of synching your music player to a PC to get audio clips that interest you, Foneshow lets you listen to podcasts on demand from your cell phone.

In a way Foneshow is an update of old-fashioned telephone information lines, those 1-900 numbers offering sports scores or weather updates. There are two main differences: Foneshow is free, and its pool of content is potentially vast, since any podcast on the Internet can be converted into a Foneshow.

When I tested the service I found it easy to use. I liked being able to squeeze podcasts into little slices of the day, on a whim. When I had to sit in my car for a few minutes, waiting for 9:30 a.m. to strike so my parking spot shifted from tow zone to legitimate, I entertained myself by dialing up a mock news show by The Onion. While waiting for a train, I tried to get smarter with a minute-long science show from Scientific American.

You sign up for Foneshow online. You enter your cell phone number but don't have to give any other information. Then you select which of the few hundred available podcasts you want to subscribe to. Some last a minute, others an hour or so.

The variety should multiply because Foneshow doesn't hand-pick all the content. Anyone can post a podcast's Internet feed to Foneshow, which will relay it.

Once you subscribe to a Foneshow, the service sends a text message to your cell phone the instant a new segment is available. The text message reveals the number you have to dial to hear the podcast. That's especially simple to do if your phone, like most, will automatically call a number embedded in a text if you hit "Send" while viewing the message.

When the audio is playing, you can pause, rewind or fast-forward the file with the phone's number keypad. If you hang up in the middle, Foneshow will resume from where you left off if you call back.

Foneshow hopes to fund itself largely through advertising, but in this early stage of the service it's unclear how obtrusive those ads might be. Right now the text messages come with easily ignorable ads at the very bottom.

The downside of listening to audio clips on the phone is that well, you're on a cell phone. You're likely out and about, not in a quiet place where it's easy to hear a prerecorded broadcast.

Also, this service probably will work only for people with unlimited text-messaging plans. If you lack such a plan and pay 20 cents per message, a common rate charged by wireless carriers, subscribing to a few Foneshows suddenly gets expensive.

Fortunately for the pay-as-you-go people and for people who might find endless text reminders annoying, Foneshow lets you click an on-vacation box on its Web site to temporarily stop the messages.

Another flaw is that once you're given a number to dial for a Foneshow, you can call it only from your cell phone, not a landline. The service will not connect a call made from numbers its caller ID doesn't recognize.

That rule exists because allowing calls from any phone could swamp Foneshow's Internet-based network, forcing Foneshow to buy a bigger bank of phone numbers to handle incoming calls. But Foneshow should slightly relent and let people subscribe from one or two landlines in addition to their cell phones.

Otherwise potential users might face the dilemma I found a few times, when I decided against calling for a Foneshow because I didn't want to eat up minutes on my wireless plan. However, I would have been happy to call from the office phone in a slow moment at work. Not that those exist, of course.

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On the Net:

<http://www.foneshow.com>

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