

BusinessWeek

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UP Front

SAY WHAT?

» Oticon's Delta (actual size)



HIPPER HEARING FOR BOOMERS

A hearing aid used to be right up there with dentures as an unwelcome sign of aging. But the bulky beige devices are yielding to sleek, colorful ones as America's baby boomers become part of the \$3.5 billion hearing aid market. Oticon, based in Denmark, offers the Delta, designed to look like an electronic gadget. "We tried to make it cool," says Gordon Wilson, Oticon's marketing vice-president. **The aid (above) has a stylish behind-the-ear amplifier that comes in bold colors.** Teresa Clark, a San Mateo (Calif.) audiologist, says she has sold about 20 of the aids since

their debut some six weeks ago. They sell for \$1,700 to \$3,000, depending on the features. GN ReSound, another design-conscious hearing aid maker, also based in Denmark, has sold 300,000 of its ReSoundAIRs since their launch in 2003.

Some 15% of America's 77 million boomers have hearing loss, and, says Sergei Kochkin, head of the nonprofit Better Hearing Institute, aids that look like "a cool little consumer electronics device" fit their generation's vigorous self-image. *—Louise Lee*

