

# DESIGNING



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**DESIGN &  
TECHNOLOGY  
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# gomi - consumer tech out of materials nobody wants

Tom Meades, Co-founder at gomi

**gomi is a design studio based in Brighton, UK, with a focus on turning 'non-recyclable' waste materials into desirable products that are repairable, and recyclable but also built-to-last.**



In March 2023 we launched our first market-ready product, the gomi speaker, and have just started shipping the gomi power bank. Our design ethos is simple: 'make the most beautiful minimal products from loud vibrant waste materials.'

## Sustainable technology

We started gomi as a solution to the waste that ends up in landfills / incineration. We looked at local waste streams in our area, and found that LDPE (plastic bags, pallet wrap etc) is deemed as 'non-recyclable' by local councils around the UK. This means that households have no solution but to bin this material. In 2018, we set out on a mission to prove that this material is in fact not only recyclable, but actually can be turned into a desirable precious material that people wanted on their shelves.

## How it started

We started off with simple household ovens, a car jack, a couple sheets of steel, and some face masks. Then we knocked on doors around the local community, taking people's 'non-recyclable' plastic waste. Very quickly we amassed hundreds of colourful plastic bags, and began melting them down. Once the material gets molten, we twisted the colours, similar to what you may do with oil paint, and pressed it in between the sheets to cool it down into a flat form.

## Development

After a couple of years of development around full-time jobs, working mornings, lunchtimes, evenings and weekends, we launched our first Kickstarter campaign with the idea of a 'portable speaker made from non-recyclable waste'. We received lots of positive press for the idea, getting featured in magazines like Forbes and Dezeen. This led to brands such as Paul Smith and Heineken reaching out to us to do collaborations. We used the collaborations to fund our mission of developing our favourite consumer electronics products but redesigned from waste materials.

We now have a studio in the North Laine area in Brighton where we manufacture all of our products, from machines we have developed specially to work with these weird and wonderful materials.

So you may be wondering why we focus on consumer electronics, when there are so many things we could make from these waste streams? Sadly, our favourite tech products are often pretty terrible for our planet. To manufacture your average laptop today, it takes 20,000 olympic swimming pools to dilute the mercury and cyanide used to mine metals needed to make it. This isn't right, especially when there's many of these precious metals already in consumer electronic products that people no longer use (that kitchen drawer at home, how many phones are sitting there no



longer working, and you're not sure what to do with them?) One of the main issues with the phones, laptops, speakers, power banks, that we all love, is that they're glued together. This is super cheap to manufacture, but actually very costly because it means all the precious materials can not be easily extracted to be recycled. We've spent a lot of time working out how to design our products to be modular. This means if they ever break, we can easily fix them, either by sending out components, or people sending them back to us.

## Plastic waste

As well as working with plastic waste, gomi mines batteries from existing old tech. We work with Lime, to take the batteries from their discontinued e-bikes all over London. We dismantle the cells from the packs, test each individual cell for capacity, and then put them back together into new battery packs, which we use to power all of our products.

Although we're working with serious wastes, we try to keep content fun for people who follow us on socials. Every month, we do a 'drop', making a limited collection of gomi products from unique waste streams. Our highlight of last year's drops was when we made a speaker from recycled Barbie dolls, around the launch of the Barbie movie. We asked people to send us any broken dolls they no longer use, and then turned them

into gomi speakers to send back to them. This led to a funny video of us crushing up dolls, melting them down, and hand marbling them into tech products. We try to do Drops to not only have fun, but also increase awareness of what we're doing at gomi. It can be hard as a small brand to get noticed, so we like to make as much noise as we can by working with the wildest materials.



If you want to follow our work, say hello, or have an awesome waste-to-product idea for us, message us on Instagram @gomidesign or see our website [www.gomi.design](http://www.gomi.design) ✕