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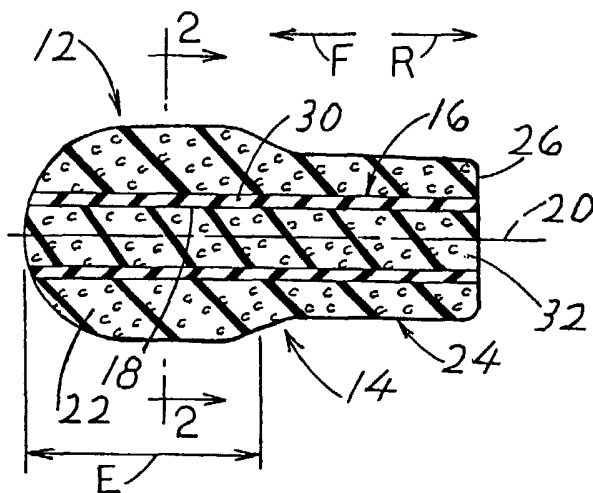
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(54) Title: EARPLUG WITH STIFFENER

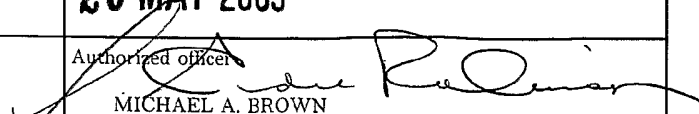


(57) Abstract: An earplug (12), includes a body (14), of soft elastomeric material such as a soft resilient foam for insertion in the ear canal, and a stiffener (16), of more rigid material than the body (14). The stiffener (16), is in the form of a tube rather than a solid rod, so while the stiffener is resistant to column-like collapse, it is easily radially compressed to facilitate compression of the body as it enters the ear canal. The stiffener tube can be filled with soft resilient foam material, to block the passage of sound through the tube. The tubular stiffener can have a slot extending parallel to the length of the stiffener, to allow soft foam material to flow into the tube to fill it, as the foam material that surrounds the tube is molded. Such molding can be accomplished by extruding foam material while the tubular stiffener passes with the extruded foam through the extrusion head.

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

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B. FIELDS SEARCHED Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) U.S. : 128/864-864 Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)		
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 6,006,857 A (LEIGHT et al) 28 December 1999, See the entire document.	1-2, 10, 14 and 16N
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