

Stream line

The Philips Streamium NP2900 is being billed as a networked music player for the digital age. It has no cassette deck, turntable, or CD drawer – instead, it relies on wireless networking to play music housed on your PC.

Its remote control looks good, but we found the buttons fiddly to use and the layout is rather overcrowded. Entering the WEP key required to connect to a secured network was fiddly too. Fortunately, this only needs to be done once, and internet radio stations can be set as favourites on the device to create shortcuts to them and reduce remote

control use. We found adjusting the volume and skipping tracks was easy to do, with or without the remote.

We found the sound quality from the Streamium clear and the bass was full. It has four built-in speakers, four built-in amplifiers and a digital signal processor which, Philips claims, increases the size of the 'sweet spot' – the optimum location in the room for listening to a music player.

To play music from your computer on the NP2900, you will need to install the supplied

software, then follow the on-screen instructions. The device communicates with your computer via a Wi-Fi connection, and the audio playback is seamless.

The device can be hooked up to existing hi-fi systems through coaxial digital outputs. There's also an ethernet port for

connection to the internet if you don't have a wireless router.

The Streamium is available from Amazon for around £250. **VERDICT** The Streamium has reassuring weight and build quality and sound is clear, but some settings are fiddly, particularly when requiring use of the remote control.



Braun's epilator challenges wax

With the launch of its Silk-Epil Xpressive Wet and Dry 7781 WD epilator, Braun is hoping to challenge waxing's reign as the best method of hair removal. Braun claims that the £100 Xpressive Wet and Dry is designed for use in warm water, will give hair-free skin for up to four weeks and removes up to four times more short hairs than wax in one stroke.

We're not in the business of counting individual hairs, but we can give you our first impressions after our epilator expert took it for a dry (and wet) run.

She found it more comfortable to epilate wet skin, particularly with a shower gel, though the

bubbles can make it harder to see hairs, and gels can increase irritation.

Our expert got the best leg hair removal results using the epilator's 'efficiency head' on wet skin, but found it dragged uncomfortably without shower gel.



The underarm cap caught her skin when she tried it dry, but she was more impressed using it with shower gel in the shower. In both cases, though, she saw more underarm irritation the next day than with her own epilator or a warm wax.

VERDICT An effective tool that offers genuine benefits, but at £100 (from Boots, Argos and Amazon.co.uk) it's a lot to pay for an epilator.

Hot shot

The Ricoh CX1 is a stylish 9Mp camera that's comfortable to hold. Featuring a 920,000-pixel LCD monitor – high for a compact camera – it's coupled with a 7.1x optical zoom that provides a 28–200mm focal range.

We were impressed by the high-speed continuous shooting mode. The camera can take around 120 frames per second (fps) at a resolution of 640x480 pixels. Our users were impressed with the results.

The camera also has a dynamic-range double-shot mode, which takes two shots with each shutter depression and then creates a single image. The two shots are taken with slightly different exposure settings so that, in the resulting image, details in both the dark and light areas are clearer.



It sounds complicated, but we found this function easy to use, and the results clearly showed an improved level of detail in darker and lighter areas.

It also has 10 scene modes, including skew correction, which is great if you want to make a picture taken at an angle appear as though it were taken head on, or vice versa.

It costs around £300 and is widely available.

VERDICT The CX1 has a great LCD, an effective and very fast burst mode, but is let down by its lack of both aperture and shutter speed priority modes.



The O2 Joggler is a calendar, music player, newsreader and digital photo frame all rolled into a slick 7-inch touchscreen device. It's exclusive to O2, and costs range from nothing (if you're an O2 customer and get it as an upgrade) to £150 (if you buy it outright).

You'll need to register for O2's online Calendar Service to use the Joggler's primary calendar function. This is free, open to customers of any mobile network and offers the advantage of being able to access your Joggler calendar from any computer that is connected to the internet.

Adding appointments is easy using the touchscreen, which becomes a Qwerty keypad when needed. Free text reminders of calendar appointments can be sent to your O2 mobile phone.

The Joggler's 1GB of internal storage can be used to store photos and music tracks uploaded via a USB connection. The screen is clean and well illuminated, and the speakers are what you'd expect from a digital photo frame.

Further key functions include a Sudoku game, Sky News, weather, traffic and sports headlines. These extras are a mixed bag – news and sports headlines are genuinely well presented, but we found the travel information less helpful.

O2 promises internet radio access and text messaging will be added from December.

VERDICT Could be a useful and innovative addition to kitchens in gadget-loving households where pen and paper are no longer enough to keep track of hectic lifestyles.

CAN DUALIT'S STYLISH NEW KETTLE AND TOASTER DO THE JOB?

Not so clever toaster

Dualit has come up with a very innovative feature for its NewGen range of toasters, which is available now at John Lewis stores.

The good-looking two-slice (£145) and four-slice (£175) toasters now let you



choose how many slots you want to operate.

Sadly our tests on the four-slice toaster have concluded that it didn't make great toast.

If you generally toast one slice at a time, opt for a one-slot toaster, such as the Best Buy Russell Hobbs Glass 10617 (from £50 online).

VERDICT If you want good toast from a Dualit, buy the Lite 45002 DLT4GB, which costs just £80.

Tea time for one

The cordless Dualit Mini kettle holds a litre of water – enough for three hot drinks – but can boil one cup. Most kettles require you to boil a minimum two cups of water, which can be wasteful.

We haven't yet tested this model, but on first impressions, we found it lightweight, with a large handle that

even big hands can grip easily, but the flip-top lid needs a bit of a tug to open.

It's available from John Lewis and Argos from July.

VERDICT This space-saving kettle is easy to use, but slow to boil and a little noisy. At £45, it's expensive for a kettle, but cheap for a Dualit appliance.



Tefal cooker saves time

The Wikook may sound like a computer game, but it's actually Tefal's latest launch – a 'fast cooker'. Tefal claims it'll reduce cooking times by 25%, so we decided to try it out.

The fast cooker works in a similar way to a pressure cooker, and our tester found it took a bit of getting used to. The instruction booklet included some useful safety tips, such as making sure the lid's steam valve is pointing away from you before opening it.

Our tester tried out several recipes from the book supplied, and all

cooked more quickly than usual.

The Wikook costs £100 and is available from Lakeland.

VERDICT It's pricey and probably won't revolutionise your cooking, but as it's a good quality pan anyway, it wouldn't be a bad addition to your pan collection.



Eco shower head aims to save water

Ecocamel says that by switching from your showerhead to its £24.95 aerating one, you will use less water and have a more pleasant wash.

We conducted a quick test with two showers and found that, on one that was fairly powerful, it used a third less water without any discernible reduction in flow, and did make washing feel more pleasant – if noisier.

Our calculations suggest that it could pay for itself in a year. But if you have a low-powered shower, Ecocamel might not work at all.

It is available now from www.ecocamel.co.uk or 0844 888 8339. It will be available in high-street stores soon.

VERDICT If your shower is powerful enough, Ecocamel gives a more pleasant but noisier shower – and used a third less water.

