

Which? testers at CES 2009

A TV controlled by hand gestures and the first Wi-Fi digital camera with a web browser were among new products tried by Which? testers at the world's biggest technology show.

Manufacturers unveiled their latest products and gave a glimpse of future ideas at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) 2009 held in Las Vegas in January.

Hitachi unveiled a **prototype TV** that you control by waving your hands. We found the TV responsive and it was easy to learn what to do. Hitachi hopes to have it in production in 2010.

The **Sony Cybershot DSC-G3** camera has a built-in web browser that connects to any Wi-Fi hotspot so you can upload photos and videos to a website. The 10Mp camera has a 4x optical zoom Carl Zeiss lens, 4GB of memory, a 3.5-inch LCD, plus smile and face



recognition. It is expected to cost around £350.

The **Olympus SP590** 12Mp camera has a 26x optical zoom – the largest we've seen in this camera type. The 26mm wide angle should help you with wide landscapes or group shots indoors. It's compact for such a large zoom, fast and very smooth.

The **Kodak Zx1** HD pocket camcorder records in high-definition 720p resolution and comes in water and shock-resistant rubber casing. Our first impression was positive. It's an improvement on Kodak's Zi6 (facing page) with

better-spaced buttons. Both have a jerky digital zoom.

Sony's **X Series MP3** players have Wi-Fi, 3-inch touchscreens, OLED displays and up to 32GB of storage. We found it simple to control the MP3 player using the touchscreen, and the



OLED display looks sharper and has richer colours than LCD screens. Sony's wearable 2GB **NWZ-W202** has the music player in the headset, ideal for joggers, but there's no display, so you can't easily choose a track.

Samsung claims that its new **Luxi LED** TVs can use 40% less power than an equiv-

alent-size LCD TV. Samsung LED TVs contain no mercury or lead, making them more environmentally friendly to make and dispose of. The most basic, the Luxi 6000, is just an inch thick, and is on sale in 2009. The flagship Luxi 8000 has a 200Hz picture refresh rate, to give a smoother picture. The model we saw did this impressively. See 'Future Tech', p11.

Palm turns over a new leaf

Smartphone maker Palm stole the CES 2009 show with its Palm Pre. The Pre is aimed squarely at the iPhone and has a similar multi-touch display, glossy graphics and software to access the web. It's heavy and combines a 3.1-inch, 320 x 480 pixel touchscreen with a sliding Qwerty keyboard. It's Edge and

Wi-Fi capable, though like the iPhone, it's 3G. There's a 3Mp camera, music player, GPS and 8GB storage. The full screen browser works like the iPhone's – you can 'pinch' the screen to zoom into menus and images. There's no date yet for when it will be released in Europe.

 Visit www.which.co.uk/phonesces2009 to see the phone in action.



Sew fine, but sew expensive

A sewing machine and digital camera combined may seem an odd idea, but at first sight, it certainly looked impressive.

The Brother Innovis 6000D Quattro shows designs on its seven-inch colour LCD touchscreen that you can also use to change the machine's settings or show the eye of the needle. There are 600 embroidery designs in the memory

that you can automatically stitch. You can upload your own photos or designs and reproduce these in thread embroidery. Sewing patterns is quite hands-off – once material is in place and a spool threaded, the Quattro automatically starts

stitching a colour at a time. It will be on sale in the UK shortly, but at £6,000, it's the most expensive sewing machine we've seen.



Pocket HD camcorder

This pocket-sized camcorder lets you film in high definition and upload the results to YouTube.

The Kodak Zi6 costs about £90 and can record in 720p resolution at 30 or 60 frames per second (fps).

We shot 60fps footage and were impressed by how it looked on a 42-inch plasma HDTV, though there was juddering in panning shots. Results were less smooth for 30fps recording, the difference clear enough to be seen on the Zi6's 2.4 inch screen.

The Zi6 isn't great at distinguishing subtle colour differences, and it's lacklustre in indoor light. But footage shot in very low light is impressively clear.



The zoom is jerky, and the autofocus doesn't adjust as you zoom.

Overall, any larger HD camcorder will outperform it every time.

There's only 30MB of memory available for recording, enough for just a few minutes. You can add

to this with an SD or a SDHC memory card.

It comes with a software CD to install on your computer before you upload videos to YouTube or burn them to DVD. Uploading a video to YouTube is easy.

VERDICT Cheap and compact, the Zi6 offers 60fps high-definition filming, but zoom is jerky.



Better, quicker cooking

If you're short of time and have a hungry family to feed, the unique 'speed cook' option of this LG microwave may appeal.

The LG MP6287NL SolarCube has the usual combination microwave choices of microwave, convection and grill. But it was the innovative speed cook option, using halogen lights that we found impressive, though the machine overall isn't a Best Buy.

This option takes around 35 minutes to roast a chicken weighing just over a kilo, just five minutes slower than our fastest Best Buy. The roast chicken came out juicy, brown and crisp.

This machine reheats food evenly in microwave-only mode though it's not the fastest and the longer cooking time means food dries slightly. However, it's good at cooking several dishes in a row. Auto-defrost is quick and even but manual defrost is slow and left some areas warm, others frozen. The grill browned toast evenly, though it was lighter on the edges. Jacket potatoes were well cooked.

It's available from Comet, online and independents in black, £299.99, or stainless steel, £349.99.

VERDICT Speed-cook option produces great results.

JUST OUT

A peek at what's new on the shelves

Vax Power vacuum from £59.99-£119.99

Vax has launched a range of value-for-money upright bagless vacs. The Power 5

(left) is the most expensive in the range.

It has a 4.5-litre dust bin and a 4.2 metre stretch hose. All six models have Hepa filters for allergy sufferers.

Previous Vax upright vacuum cleaners have above average reliability in our survey.

This range is available at Argos, Currys, Littlewoods and Tesco.



Sony Vaio P Series from £849

This ultra-light (640g) laptop, the size of a business envelope, goes on sale this month. Its wide screen makes viewing the width of a web page easy, though the vertical display is more limited. It comes with Windows Vista, works with 3G mobile broadband, and has built-in Wi-Fi and Bluetooth for wireless networking. We currently have one Sony Vaio Best Buy. This series is available from sonystyle.co.uk.



Bosch Move Vacuums from £120

These mini vacs are aimed at those who want a light, easy-to-maneuvre cleaner.

They weigh just 5.8kg but still hold 3.5 litres of dust in a self-sealing, anti-bacterial dustbag. Reach is just 8 metres, which is less than other models. Bosch vacuum cleaners generally perform well in our tests and have average reliability. This range is expected to sell for about £119.99.



George Foreman 6QT Oven £70 / G5 Grill with pizza plate £100

The 6QT (pictured) is big enough to roast a chicken in and being a George Foreman model lets you drain off unwanted fat. The G5 Grill is designed to cook a 10-inch pizza in 15 minutes or can be tilted to use as a health grill. They're both sold in Argos. There are two current Best Buy George Foreman health grills.

Coffee in a capsule

The £156 Francis Francis X7 Illy capsule espresso maker looks stylish and makes decent tasting coffee.

We found that its buttons are clear and easy to use, however removing its water tank takes some dexterity.

The X7 is the first coffee maker from Francis Francis to take capsules, a mess-free way to make coffee. You place a capsule of coffee into the machine, which pierces it and forces hot water through to make espresso.

Each capsule contains just enough coffee to make one shot of espresso. The capsules stay

fresh for up to nine months, which is ideal if you're only an occasional espresso drinker.

On the downside, this machine can use only the coffee capsules produced by Illy. A tin of 21 capsules costs around £7, so each shot of espresso costs 33p. The plastic coffee capsules are thrown away after use.

There's a growing trend toward capsule coffee makers and some may regard the fact that the capsules have to be thrown away afterwards as a downside.

Based on our first look, it appears easier to put the capsules into this machine than to put the

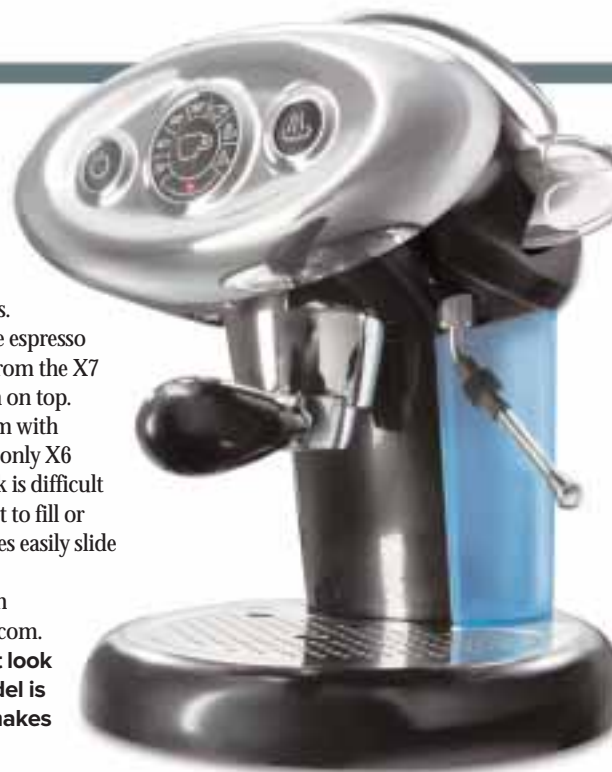
pods into the pod-only X6 Trio Trio from Francis Francis.

We found that the espresso comes out quickly from the X7 with a golden crema on top.

The main problem with the X7 and the pod-only X6 is that the water tank is difficult to grasp and pull out to fill or empty, though it does easily slide back into place.

It is available from www.espressocrazy.com.

VERDICT Our first look suggests this model is easy to use and makes decent espresso.



Save your memories

If you have negative film strips left from pre-digital photography days, the £80 USB negative scanner may be the solution for preserving those memories in digital form.

This, the first dedicated negative scanner we've tried, takes little room on your desk and charges from your computer's USB connection.

Installing the software is simple and the scanner's easy to use. Just secure a 35mm film strip into the plastic frame provided – there's an alternative frame to use if you're scanning 35mm projection slides. You insert the frame slide-by-slide into the scanner.

You scan by pressing a button on the computer or using the large button at the top of the scanner. There's a handy 'live view' display on your computer as you move the film strips through the scanner – this displays what the scanner sees, so you can be sure you're aligning each slide correctly.

You can scan up to 12 negative frames before selecting to transfer

them to your computer hard drive – negatives are automatically converted into 5Mp colour images, enough for a 6x4 print. Scanning and transferring is quick, even at the highest quality.

Scanned image quality is mixed. Photos of bright daylight tended to be a little washed out and there was a recurring problem with one of the bottom corners of pictures having an orange tinge, suggesting the scanner fails to keep all outside light away from the process, slightly spoiling the scanned image.

VERDICT Fast and easy to use, but quality isn't outstanding.



A simple blender

You can blend hot liquids such as soups or sauces directly in the pan using the Cuisinart's new £45 Multi Stick Plus hand blender. However, it has a metal shaft so you'll need to be careful not to scratch non-stick pans.

There's a simple-to-use one touch control which you press to blend or pulse. It has an anti-splash guard, which is useful, but we found this only worked if you keep it below the surface of the liquid you're blending, which isn't always possible.

It's comfortable to hold and can be used right- or left-handed.

Vegetable soup and mushroom gravy from the recipe included in the instruction book, were blended with ease and the whisking attachment worked well making meringue and thickening cream.

However, the instructions say you can use the blender for only 60 seconds at a time, so whisking eggs or cream needs to

be done in short bursts. It comes with a 200 watt motor, detachable metal blending shaft, stainless steel whisk attachment and measuring/blending jug.

The packaging says that detachable parts are dishwasher safe, but the instructions say that

this applies only to the whisk attachment.

It feels sturdy and has a five-year guarantee. Cuisinart has done fairly well in our tests in recent years. We have tested its products since 2006. We awarded its slow cooker, four-slice toaster and bucket ice cream maker Best Buy status. Available from www.cuisinart.co.uk and specialist cookshops.

VERDICT Detachable parts for easy cleaning, but confusing information about dishwasher-safe parts.



System has big speakers to fill

The Teac Reference 380 system is the successor to the Teac Reference 300, which is by far the best micro hi-fi system that we've tested.

It has an A-H380 amplifier, T-H380DNT radio tuner, and the PD-H380 CD and MP3 player. Teac claims the system will work with just about any available speakers and you can buy an iPod docking station for about £30.

The amplifier gives 45 watts of power through each channel, and has a six-input selector: tuner, CD, tape, USB, phono and aux.

The CD player plays MP3 files from a CD and has a front-facing USB port. The radio receives digital and internet radio as well as FM and AM.

It also has outputs that can link it up to play video files on a TV.



The units are 21.5cm across and just over 30cm deep. The amp is 11cm tall, the tuner and CD player 9.3cm – giving a stacked combined height of 29.6cm.

Smooth epilator

This machine could take some of the sting out of removing hair from your legs.

The Philips Satinelle Ice Premium HP6513 Epilator has an icy cooler to numb skin as it plucks hair. It also massages at the same time. We used the main epilating head with cooler on the lower leg and found it less painful after use than an epilator without a

cooler. After one go, it left few hairs, and these were easily removed at a second attempt. You have to hold it in a certain way to keep the cooler in touch with skin. A guide shows you how, but it takes a bit of getting used to, especially if new to epilating. There's one speed for bony areas or those with little hair and one for larger, hairier areas. Most hair was removed



with light pressure and moderate speed.

It's £55 in Argos, Boots and online. The cordless (HP6503) is £65.

VERDICT We found it as fast as shaving and with smoother results.



HEAD TO HEAD

We pit a first look Sony camera against a current Best Buy that is £80 cheaper

Sony Cybershot DCS-T500 £250

This is Sony's first digital camera to offer high-definition video.

Photo resolution 10.1Mp

Lens 33-165mm lens. The 33mm lens isn't especially wide, so large groups could be a challenge.

Other The 3.5 inch LCD is touchscreen for many functions. There are 13 scene modes. You can increase the 4MB memory with a Pro Duo memory stick.



Sony Cybershot DCS-H10 £170

This current Best Buy is £80 cheaper than the DCS-T500.

Photo resolution 8.1Mp

Lens 38-380mm.

Other There's a powerful 10x zoom, nine scene modes, optical image stabilising and 31MB of memory you can add to with a MemoryStick Duo memory card.

FUTURE TECH

Turning on to 3DTV

TVs that are 3D, wireless, or even adjust the volume for you were on display at CES 2009 in Las Vegas.

Samsung, LG, Sony and Mitsubishi all showed 3D TVs and screens, though on most models you had to wear special glasses to view the effect. We watched 3D footage on Sony and Samsung TVs and found the effect relatively convincing, though to us it didn't quite achieve the impression of true 3D images.

US movie studios including Disney have said they will release films in 3D, while Sky is exploring how to send programmes in 3D.

TVs connected to the internet were also on display at CES 2009. Panasonic showed an ultra-thin (1-inch thick) Z1 plasma TV. The 54-inch 1080p TV uses WirelessHD technology – meaning you don't need to plug in as many cables – and it also lets you see internet content such as YouTube videos on your screen or scroll through online photo albums on Picasa. Internet services are limited, though Panasonic says they will be updated.

Toshiba showed its Regza range of high-definition TVs which it claims transform standard TV signals into ones that look more like high-definition footage. We were impressed with what we saw. The sets also feature Dolby Volume, which makes the audio consistent when you switch channels or TV ads appear – hopefully ending the sudden blaring of sound that can happen when a TV programme breaks for ads.

Watch our coverage of 3D TVs at www.which.co.uk/tvscs2009.



HOT PRODUCTS VIDEO SHOWCASE

Visit our CES pages at www.which.co.uk/ces2009 for lots of videos showing the hottest new products revealed at the CES event in January in Las Vegas.