

## Digital cameras snap to attention

**W**e've been trying out a trio of new digital cameras from Canon, Kodak and Olympus.

The 10Mp **Canon Powershot A480** (£119 from Jessops) is the follow-up to the Best Buy Canon Powershot A470. It's smaller and lighter than its predecessor, and its lens is set almost flat against the body, making it easier to carry.

Our initial impression is that the A480 (below) is easy to use. It focuses quickly and takes decent quality pictures. We also liked the special playback button – press this while the camera is off and it will switch it on and send you

straight into playback mode, so that you can view your photos.

Face detection is built in, and there are 15 scene modes to choose from, including sunset, indoors, kids and pets.

The 12Mp **Kodak Z980** (around £280, pictured right) has a powerful x24 zoom, which leaves many other digital cameras of this class far behind. The Z980 is aimed at photographers who want to do a little more than basic 'point-and-shoot' photography. It has many manual overrides, and there's also a hot-shoe connection so you can add an external flash.

It has an HD video recording mode, and a 3-inch display for composing and reviewing photos. Previous Kodak digital cameras have had a poor Best Buy record



in Which? tests, so we'll be interested to see how this one

fares in our lab.

The **Olympus SP-590UZ** (around £315, above) has a x26 zoom – the largest we've seen on a camera of this class. The only models that come close are Kodak's Z980 and the new Nikon P90. Measuring 26-676mm, the zoom range is extremely versatile – not only does it let you get really close to faraway objects, but it also offers a wide angle for landscape shots or group photos.

This camera has up to 12Mp of resolution and face detection for up to 16 people. There are 18 scene modes as well as optional manual control of the shutter speed, ISO and aperture settings, and image stabilisation technology to reduce blurring. It can shoot video clips but, unlike the Kodak Z980, it can't capture footage in high definition.

The Kodak Z980 and Olympus SP-590UZ should be available to buy in March. For more independent reviews, see [www.which.co.uk/cameras](http://www.which.co.uk/cameras).



## Dualit mixer delights

**D**ualit's stylish food processor has been upgraded with a 1500-watt motor since we tested it last year. We've retested it, and it's now a Best Buy.

The new motor has clearly made a difference – the processor is excellent at puréeing baby food and faster at making mayo, with better results. It still scores highly for all the usual food preparation tasks, such as chopping and mixing, but we found it isn't as noisy as before.

The processor is quite heavy but it's stable – the rubber feet

help to keep it in place. You'll need to use some force to lock the bowl into place.

It's available for £220 from John Lewis, Comet and online. It comes in chrome, cream and white, and has a 12-year motor guarantee and a two-year parts guarantee.

We've got several other Best Buys at [www.which.co.uk/foodprocessors](http://www.which.co.uk/foodprocessors).

**VERDICT** The upgrade has boosted performance.



## Cool looks, lower bills

**T**he stylish Hotpoint Quadrio FF4D looks like an American-style side-by-side fridge-freezer but is slimmer, at 70cm instead of 90cm. The fridge has two doors, which open wide for easy access to your food, while the freezer is contained in two pull-out drawers.

We've recently tested the Quadrio and it scored 74%. We found that it cools and freezes food quickly.

The Quadrio costs £550 in stainless steel (FF4DX) or £600 for trendy high-gloss black (FF4DK). Running costs are £45 a year. Overall, this is cheap for an American-style fridge-freezer.

For other economical fridge-freezers, see our report on p66.

**VERDICT** It's almost good enough to be a Best Buy. It cools and freezes fresh food quickly and lets you get to your snacks easily.



## New Breville iron is extra steamy

According to Breville, the Extra Steam+ 2400W iron gives clothes a fresher finish thanks to the nanosilver coating on the ceramic soleplate, which helps to destroy bacteria in fabric. We haven't tested it in our lab yet, but we did set it loose on some laundry to bring you our first impressions.

Overall, we were satisfied with the quality of the ironing. The

soleplate ran smoothly across fabrics, and the iron did produce a lot of steam, particularly when the tank was full, but it was noisy.

We can't give a definitive conclusion on the cleaner, fresher clothes claim, but we noticed the scent of residual sweat from some of the worn clothes that we ironed.

We had to refill the iron four times during an hour of ironing on the highest steam level. It's quite tricky to prise open the thin cover that protects the filling port, but it has a big hole that makes it easy to pour in water, and you don't need to tip the iron to fill it.

**VERDICT** Produces a lot of steam and good ironing results, but hisses and growls when it irons.



## Philips takes you to the movies

The clue is in the name with the Cinema 21:9 TV from Philips. The 56-inch display is much more like the shape of a movie screen than regular widescreen TVs. According to Philips, this means you'll see films as directors intended. It also says that 90% of DVDs sold on Amazon can be watched in this format.

We've only seen a prototype, so we can't comment on picture quality. The screen does make you feel as though you're more submerged in the film, though. Philips says that this is because

you become more aware of the action occurring in the outer edges of the picture.

Regular TV, which is usually broadcast in 16:9 format, can be stretched to fit the screen or watched with black bars on either side. Philips claims that distortion will be minimal.

The price hasn't been confirmed, but we expect it to be more than £2,500 when it hits the shelves this spring.

**VERDICT** Most TV is broadcast in 16:9, so, unless you're a well-off DVD fan, this TV may not be for you.



## JUST OUT

A peek at what's new on the shelves

### Tefal Delfina £16.59

Argos

This new white-and-cream Tefal Delfina kettle appears in the latest Argos catalogue. Tefal has confirmed that – apart from colour – it is identical to the black Tefal Delfina kettle we tested back in January 2006. The original scored 71% and was a Best Buy, but we'll be putting the Delfina in our next kettles test to see if it's still worthy of Best Buy status.



### Sanyo EM-S155AS Microwave £54-£59

Argos and Sainsbury's

Sanyo is replacing its Best Buy EM-S1567 microwave with a new version: the EM-S155AS. It has a smaller, 17-litre capacity plus a reduced wattage of 700 watts (from 800W). However, there's an additional power level and it now includes a preset function. Older Sanyo microwaves haven't always impressed us, so we'll be checking to see if the brand has now found a winning formula.



### Vtech V.Smile Motion £60

Argos, John Lewis and Toys R Us

The V.Smile Motion console with motion-sensitive wireless controller is aimed at three-to seven-year-olds and focuses on educational games. The console itself is quite light, with a storage space for the games cartridges. The graphics in the games are cheerful and functional rather than impressive – if you don't expect it to match the latest generation of big name consoles, the V.Smile Motion will do just fine.



### Apple MacBook Pro 17-inch £1,949

Apple ([www.apple.com/uk](http://www.apple.com/uk))

Built from a single piece of metal, the new-look Apple MacBook Pro is a radical departure from Apple's champagne-coloured Macbook Pros of old. We've been impressed with the solid construction of the Macbook Pros that we've tested – and this model offers many of the same features. We particularly like the slot-loading disc drawer, which is better than the flimsy drawer on most other laptop brands, and ensures that you can't remove the disc accidentally.



# A handier vacuum?

The HV01 handheld vac from Gtech has a narrow nozzle to make it easier to get into tight spaces, and a V-head attachment with castors designed to make it easier to manoeuvre the vac on hard surfaces – the two prongs are supposed to be better at channelling dust. We've given it a try to see how easy it is to use.

With the V-head attached, the cleaner is easy to move around on hard surfaces – the nozzle can pivot on the neck of

the cleaner. The prongs did draw in fluff, but it was hard to see any major benefit.

Although it's reasonable at picking up dust and small bits of debris from hard surfaces, we found it wasn't as good on carpeted and material surfaces.

We got around 12 minutes of continuous vacuuming from one charge. The charging unit is freestanding, and the power button illuminates when the cleaner is charging but doesn't tell you when it's fully charged.

The cleaner isn't as easy to use in tight spaces as we hoped; it was difficult to vacuum around seats in a car, but this is common of many handheld vacs. Emptying the dust container is a bit messy as you have to remove the filter first. The filters are washable, but you need to put them back correctly once they're dry.

**VERDICT** Adequate for small bits of debris on hard surfaces. It didn't do as well on carpet, but newer versions will include a brush attachment.



# Get pool-ready with less pain

Wilkinson Sword's new 2-in-1 Quattro for Women Bikini combines a traditional razor with an extra trimmer for tackling your bikini line. We took one home for a trial.

It's larger than most razors, partly as it houses a AAA battery (provided) for powering the bikini trimmer, which is billed as an alternative to painful wax and daunting epilators. But, for the uninitiated, the design isn't entirely unmenacing. It comprises two rows of sharp metal teeth covered by a plastic cap, which can be slid into three positions or removed entirely. You use the power button to activate the jaws.

Success depends partly on your confidence and dexterity. The trimmer works but you need to keep pressing the button

down while manoeuvring the head. Be careful if you remove the plastic cap – our tester nipped her skin by holding the trimmer at the wrong angle.

The razor has four blades flanked by conditioning strips designed to reduce irritation. The razor glides smoothly over legs and gives a close shave. The shaving head is slightly bulky for underarm use, but the final shave was acceptable.

The Bikini costs £8.99 and replacement heads are £4.88 for three. It's part of the wider Quattro series – the original razor was ranked third out of five women's shaving systems we tested for our January 2007 report.

**VERDICT** The razor's comfortable but using the trimmer takes a bit of practice.

# Pocket projector

Although it's the size of a mobile phone, the Optoma Pico pocket projector (£250) can project displays that are up to 60 inches across (measured diagonally) – that's about as large as a big-screen TV.

When we tried one out, we found the display was weakly lit at the outer limits of the Pico's projection range, though displays were good at distances of less than 1.5 metres. Focusing the images was a little tricky, as the focusing dial is small and a bit stiff.

It's essential to use a completely dark room and a white projection surface to get the best out of the projector. Even a relatively small amount of light in the room can ruin the effect. The sound quality of the tiny built-in speaker was quite weak.

Optoma suggests that the Pico is best used for displaying images or movies stored on a digital camera or a mobile phone – you'll need to buy a

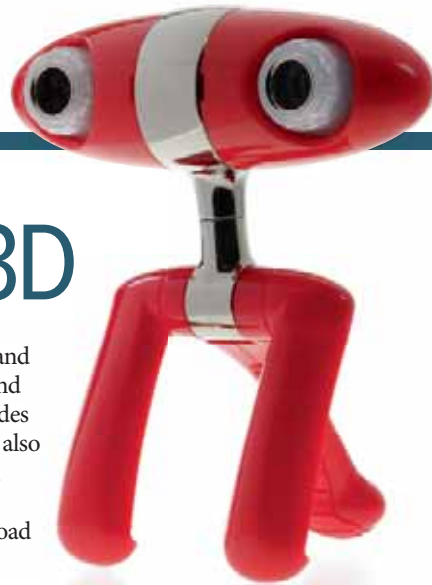
'composite-out' lead to connect them. Unfortunately, you can't connect the Pico to a laptop, which is a shame, as this could have been a great portable device for the workplace.

The Pico includes two batteries – each with a 90-minute running time from fully charged. You can't charge the Pico from the mains when it's in use, though.

**VERDICT** Can project a large display and is very portable, but needs total darkness for best results.







# Film the family in 3D

**T**he Minoru 3D webcam lets you make video calls, take photos and record video – all in 3D. Two cameras, positioned like eyes in the Minoru webcam's head, are focused individually. The two images are then aligned to produce a 3D image when viewed through the 3D glasses – five pairs are provided in the box.

In 3D mode, we found that gestures towards the camera really work – reaching forward makes your hands jump out of the screen – although moving images blur a little, dramatically lessening the 3D effect. It works most effectively if you move slowly, or take still 3D images. Colour isn't great, due to the blue and red image layers and the coloured lenses in the glasses.

The Minoru also has 2D and picture-in-picture modes, and it's easy to flick between modes during online calls. You can also use it to take 2D photos and record video (with sound), which you can save and upload to sites like YouTube.

In 2D mode it's much like any other webcam – focus and colour look reasonable enough and the microphone is sufficient.

We tried the Minoru webcam with Skype. It's also compatible with Windows Live Messenger, AOL Instant Messenger and OoVoo. The minimum system requirements are Windows XP or Vista, a USB 2.0 port, 2.4 GHz Pentium 4 processor, 512 RAM and 100MB hard disk space.

At £50, it's a little more expensive than many webcams, but it won't break the bank. There's no denying the 3D aspect is a gimmick, but it's good fun, and if (or when) the novelty wears off it's still a competent 2D webcam.

**VERDICT** Three modes, takes video and still images, and more fun than looking at flat faces, but moving 3D images could be better.

## FUTURE TECH

### Microsoft Windows 7

**M**icrosoft has released a public 'beta version' of its next operating system: Windows 7. A beta version is an unfinished piece of software that's released for testing purposes; letting everyone in the world have a go is a great way of finding hidden bugs and errors. We took the chance to have a look.

We were quite impressed with its performance. We installed Windows 7 on an older laptop with low specifications – Windows 7 seemed to run quicker than Windows Vista had done – though we'll wait and see how the final version fares when we run technical tests.

Windows Vista users will find it very familiar, with its smooth edges and transparent background.

One new feature is Windows 7's Problem Steps Recorder, which will be great for anyone who's ever struggled to tell a friend what they were doing when something went wrong: start it up, and it'll record all your actions, and even take screenshots, then package them up into a file that can be examined later.

Microsoft has yet to announce a release date for Windows 7, but it's unlikely we'll see it before late 2009.

**VERDICT** Windows 7 seems stable and fast for a beta release, and it may be the product that finally shakes off the lacklustre reputation that Vista has acquired in some circles.

## Sink saviour

**P**ouring cooking fat down the kitchen sink can lead to blocked pipes and sewers. The Fat Trap – a large, narrow pad made from 100% organic, biodegradable materials – aims to solve the problem.

It's simple to use – you place it in pans that have been used

for cooking and either leave it to absorb fatty residues, or use it as a wipe for pans or spills.

We found that it was extremely absorbent and made light work of moderate oil residues from



grilling, frying and roasting.

It's strong enough to use as a wipe for larger dirty pans, and isn't too expensive, at £1.29 for a pack of five pads.

**VERDICT** They are biodegradable, but you shouldn't put Fat Traps in your compost bin if they've been used to soak up animal fats.

## HEAD TO HEAD

**Nokia launches its N97 smartphone this year. Is it worth waiting for, or is the N96 just as good?**

### Nokia N97

The N97 is certainly packed with features. There's a 5Mp camera, GPS, and HSDPA and Wi-Fi connections for fast web access. The N97 also comes with 32GB of memory, which can be expanded to 48GB with a memory card. The handset is controlled via a 3.5-inch, wide-format touchscreen, which should be great for browsing the net or watching videos.



### Nokia N96 £486 (Sim-free)

(£Free on contract) 72%

The N96 is a 3G, Wi-Fi-enabled phone with HSDPA support. It has an excellent music player, with stereo speakers, and a built-in satnav system. The N96 has a smaller screen than the N97 (2.8 inches) but the quality is excellent, and, although it has only 16GB of storage, it does have a high-quality 5Mp camera.

