

Dyson's latest three cylinder vacs

No bags but plenty of smiles

VACUUM CLEANERS

Dyson upright vacuum cleaners often perform well in our tests, but bagless Best Buy cylinder vacs from any brand are rarely seen. We put Dyson's DC21 Motorhead through its paces, along with its DC19 and DC20 Stowaway Allergy machines. The results should raise a smile from bagless fanatics.

All three cleaners impressed on laminate and floorboards, although they were a little noisy. Carpet always proves tougher to tackle, but results were only just short of the standard achieved by the highest scoring of Miele's bagged Best Buys. The DC20 and the DC21 are exceptionally good at retaining small particles; both have a specialist Hepa filter, making them a good choice for allergy sufferers.

What sets the DC21 apart from the other two is its speed at picking

up pet hair. It's a worthy Best Buy, making Dyson a welcome addition to Bosch, Nilfisk and Miele, which currently dominates the cylinders' Best Buy club.

You'll know, if you read last month's reliability report, that Dyson vacs are still below average for reliability. But you'll also have read that Dyson's newer models are proving more reliable than their predecessors during the first two years. So we hope that these machines will prove capable of going the distance – only time will tell. But with this in mind it's worth noting that all three Dysons come with a five-year guarantee. See also 'Just out', opposite.

VERDICT Three decent vacs, but only the DC21 has the combination of pet hair pick-up, allergen retention and good all-round cleaning to make it a Best Buy.



Three new Dysons take to the floor. From top – the DC21, the DC19 and the DC20

Panasonic zooms to another Best Buy

DIGITAL CAMERA

The Panasonic Lumix DMC-FZ18, price £300, is a fantastic camera by any standards.

It has one of the most powerful optical zooms we've ever seen on a digital camera, a truly monumental 28-505mm.

This means that when you're taking a picture of a faraway subject and you want it to appear close, this is one of the best cameras to have in your hands. It is good for wide landscapes, too.

We were impressed with the

overall image quality, the battery life is excellent and it's easy to use. It's fast, too – shutter delay and start-up time are both short, so it's a good choice for spontaneous shots.

It has a wide range of features, including image stabilisation, face detection, shutter-speed and aperture priority, and manual focus.

It also has a good LCD viewfinder, which is more accurate than the optical kind. However, the main LCD screen is a little small by today's standards, at 49x37mm.



Panasonic's new Lumix: great for faraway subjects

STILL LOOKING? See www.which.co.uk/digitalcameras for around 200 reviews.

Into the lean fat and out of the fryer

COOKING

The Tefal ActiFry has been marketed as a healthier alternative to home deep-fat fryers. It stirs ingredients continuously while cooking them in significantly less oil, requiring just one 14ml spoonful to cook 800g of chips. But it does cost £150.

Following the maker's instructions, we separately cooked fresh and frozen chips, with mixed results. Unfortunately, our testers found the fresh chips to be unevenly browned and slightly chewy.



The Tefal ActiFry: disappointing

Frozen oven chips cooked without oil were deemed dry and overcooked – though when cooked with extra oil, results were much improved. Frozen scampi fared better in the ActiFry, as did fresh mushrooms. But a recipe from the booklet provided produced a woefully watery stir-fry.

Cooking times were also disappointing, with fresh chips taking around 40 minutes, rather than 12 minutes in a deep-fat fryer; oven chips took around ten minutes longer than they would have done in the oven.

VERDICT Chip-lovers might quite fairly expect better results, given the hefty price tag. With deep-fat fryers now available for less than £50, and chips faring better in the oven, the ActiFry is a largely disappointing, expensive and slower alternative.

1.8 million

hours of television broadcast
in 2006 in the UK

OFCOM MARKET REPORT 2007

33%

of British-grown potatoes made into
chips – 2 million tonnes every year

BRITISH POTATO COUNCIL

Two new flat-screen televisions buck the trend of falling prices

Designer TV names disappoint our panel

TELEVISIONS

Prices of flat-panel TVs have been falling dramatically over the past couple of years, but, in the last few months, there has been a resurgence of luxury models. The £3,000 question is – are they worth the money?

We've taken a look at a couple of notable additions – the **Philips Aurea**, a 42-inch plasma with built-in digital Freeview, and the 32-inch **BeoVision 8** LCD from Danish design king Bang & Olufsen. Both are striking in their design, but neither managed to completely win over our panel of experts.

Picture detail

First, we looked at the £3,000 Philips model. Surprisingly, for a TV with such a high price tag, we found both the sound and pictures fairly mediocre. The picture has good detail but can be too sharp, causing the edges of some images to become jagged.

However, if neither the picture nor the sound quality draw you to this TV, the light show built into the white picture frame will. This works in two ways simultaneously – reflecting light off the wall behind the TV and projecting light out from the frame towards the viewer.

When turned on, the frame changes colour in line with whatever is on the screen – so green fields and blue sky on the screen mean a green and blue kaleido-



Stylish and expensive – top, the Philips, and bottom, the B&O (stand not included in price quoted)

scopic halo surrounding the picture. We've seen the rear projection part of this Ambilight system on other Philips TVs, and it has a certain aesthetic appeal. But this full-on direct light frame is a radical departure from the subtle effects of the past.

The frame does respond quickly and smoothly to whatever is on screen – and it's impossible not to be impressed by the technology. But none of our viewing panel liked the new effects, finding them distracting and garish.

Sound quality

B&O TVs have always been a little too expensive for our budget, but, compared with the rest of the B&O range, the new 32-inch BeoVision, with its shelf-like design, comes at a relatively cheap £2,500.

Pleasingly, the BeoVision's sound quality is among the best we've heard in the past year. Lots of bass gives a full sound, which is nicely balanced between effects and vocals.

Unfortunately, the picture suffers from a disappointing flaw. It's extremely dull, thanks to a light sensor (this adjusts the picture according to the ambient light in the room) that cannot be turned off.

And for a price of £2,500 we'd expect a bit more from B&O. For instance, there's no integrated Freeview tuner and the remote control is sold separately – for another £175.

VERDICT Higher price tags don't necessarily mean the best pictures. Check www.which.co.uk/tvs for reviews of new Sony and Panasonic big-screen Best Buys.

Just out

Iqua headset £50

The Iqua BHS-603 Sun is said to be the world's first solar-powered Bluetooth headset. It's compatible with mobile phones and PCs with Bluetooth connections. It is not only green but also convenient, claiming to have 200 hours of standby time when not in sunlight and weighing just 14g. Available from Orange shops.



Tefal FV2150 iron £20

This new iron is part of the Simply Invents range, an entry-level range of Tefal products. Despite its low price, you get lots of features you expect to find on a more expensive iron, such as vertical steam, anti-scale, a non-stick soleplate and an extra stable heel. Test results in August. More information at www.tefal.co.uk



Marco Pierre White food prep range £25-50

This Russell Hobbs kitchen range, backed by Marco Pierre White, has been extended and now comes in a glossy black finish. It includes a mixer, a citrus juicer, a hand blender and a 1,000W jug blender – which is being tested now. On sale at Debenhams, Harrods and Selfridges.



Bosch vacuum cleaners £99-129

The new BSG4 range launches this month. The three models claim to clean pet hair, and hard floors as well as carpet. All three come with a handy starter kit containing ten dust bags and two filters. More at www.boschappliances.co.uk

