



Product news

Ultimate battery pricey but useful

Digital cameras have revolutionised our ability to document our lives and those of our loved ones. But all this technical majesty comes at a price – they eat up batteries ravenously. That's why we were intrigued by Energizer's new Ultimate Lithium battery that boasts it will last up to seven times longer in digital cameras than ordinary alkaline batteries.

We pitted it against the top-scoring product from our previous big test, the Duracell Ultra M3. In two identical digital cameras the Ultimate Lithium was

able to snap 1,039 flash shots compared with the Duracell's 477, way over twice as many – far from the seven times longer but then the Ultra M3 is no ordinary battery.

And in our computerised high-drain test that simulates how long batteries last in a motorised toy, the Energizer again won, but this time it lasted 28 per cent longer – working for nine hours and 20 minutes, just over two hours more than the Duracell.

Despite this winning formula, the Ultimate Lithium, at £6 for two, is around three times the price of the Ultra M3.

If you're looking for a more economical option to power your camera, we suggest rechargeable batteries. We'll be doing a full test later this year.

VERDICT Pricey for what you get – but if you're snapping away on holiday and you're miles away from the nearest shop, the Ultimate Lithium lasts longer than anything we've seen.

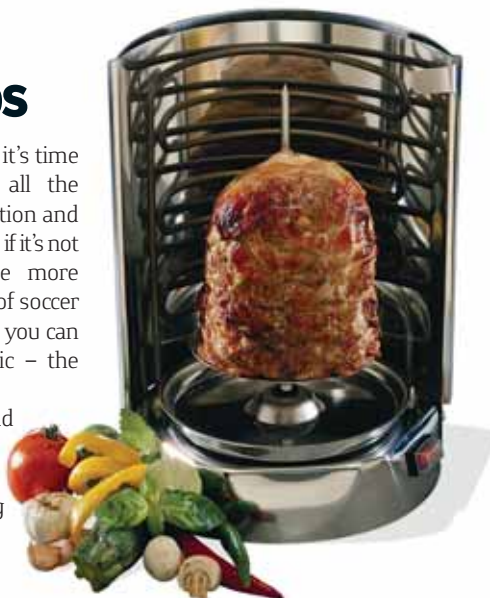


GADGETEER

Home kebabs

June is World Cup season. So it's time to celebrate unashamedly all the wonderful things about your nation and the team you're supporting – even if it's not England. And what could be more nouveau-British for a summer of soccer than a kebab? For a mere £150 you can have the ultimate in lager-chic – the table-top kebab grill.

Invite your friends, pass round the beers and, by the time you're handing out the doners, you'll be as popular as a chippie at closing time. See designasausage.co.uk



Victoria: washing days are so much easier

Me & my buy

Victoria Pearson waxes lyrical about her new AEG-Electrolux L16830 washer-dryer

When the pump on my washing machine broke for the umpteenth time and my old compact dryer bit the dust, I decided to take the plunge and buy a top-notch washer-dryer.

Which? told me that buying any washer-dryer was a compromise between saving space and first-class performance.

Washer-dryers are not as reliable as separate machines either, and they're also poorer at drying. But I didn't intend to use the dryer often, so I was prepared to accept that trade-off.

I've tried to reduce the risk by buying my dryer from AEG-Electrolux, whose laundry products are consistent *Which?* Best Buys. It also makes the most reliable washer-dryers, according to *Which?*'s annual reliability survey.

When the new feature-packed L16830, with its 7kg

capacity, was launched I ordered one straightaway. At £465 from the best-priced online retailer, it was one of the pricier dryers around, but from our experience so far, my husband and I think that it's been money well spent.

It's quieter than the old separate machines and it has numerous washing and drying options. *Which?* performance ratings show that washer-dryers tend to be poor at rinsing but this one has an extra-rinse feature that I can program if I'm not happy with the results.

I love the sensor which automatically chooses how long to dry my washing for. My clothes are so much softer now that I am not overdrying them and, as long as I'm careful to sort my loads into similar fabrics, I've had no problems drying them evenly.

OVERALL So far – love it.

Let Anthony Hume at helpwanted@which.co.uk know about your recent purchase – good or bad

25 million
handheld game consoles
will be sold in the UK by 2010
MINTEL

724 million
batteries were sold in
the UK in 2004
MINTEL

12%
of laundry machines sold
in the UK are washer-dryers
MINTEL

Poor engines let down VW's spacious new Fox

Volkswagen's range has been missing a 'city' car since the demise of its Lupo. So now the Fox has stalked forwards to take its place, priced from £6,950.

In common with many new cars, the Fox is larger than the car it replaces. In fact it's bigger than a Mk1 Golf. This means there's a surprising amount of room inside, and the big doors make getting in and out easy.

The rear seat lacks a third seat belt, so the Fox can carry only four people, but at least it's roomy front and rear.

The 260-litre boot capacity sounds impressive for a city car but it's measured with the rear seat slid forwards – when there's no legroom for the rear passengers. With the rear seat folded down it can swallow 1,016 litres, enough for most trips to the garden centre; however, there's quite a high load lip.

There's a surprising amount of room inside



Fox – VW's new city car

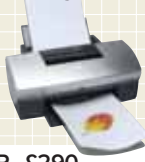

VW offers just two petrol engines: a 1.2-litre 54bhp or a 1.4-litre 74bhp, both of which feel unresponsive. Our testing showed that the 1.2 averaged 40.9mpg – less than the 46.3mpg claimed by VW.

We were expecting great things of the new Fox but its sole trump card against the Lupo is interior space.

VERDICT Poor engines let it down. More a budget car with lots of space.

Is it worth it? Yes

In 2003 we tested inkjet printers. The Best Buy Canon i950 scored 80 per cent. The Lexmark Z65 pro didn't do so well but it was £120 cheaper. Which was the better value?

	PURCHASE PRICE ^a	CARTRIDGE COST	TEXT PAGE COST	GRAPHICS PAGE COSTS	PHOTO COST	3-YEAR COST ^b
Canon i950						
CALCULATOR	£290	£50.94	2p	10p	86p	£175
Lexmark Z65 pro						
CALCULATOR	£170	£48.03	5p	27p	£2	£420

VERDICT An investment of an extra £120 in the Canon would have ensured top-quality print results and saved £245 in running costs over the last three years.

^a In 2003 ^b Three letters, two colour documents and a photo each week. All costs include ink used at standard high street prices

Just out

LG hybrid oven £300

The built-in LG SolarDom claims to cook food up to four times faster than a conventional oven. This oven-microwave hybrid sounds as if it might be comparable to the Stoves Genus (see p60) but, as it uses different technology, we can't comment on its performance until we test it later in the year. It's at Comet and Currys.



Samsung Q1 £800

The ultimate in gadget convergence? The Q1 is a sleek combo of laptop, music and TV player, PDA and games console. It is easy to transport with a battery life of 3.5 hours. It offers Windows with Wi-Fi or Bluetooth and a mike that allows you to make calls over the internet. More details at samsung.com/uk/products



Motorola

The compact new Bluetooth headset from Motorola, the H5 Miniblue, uses a built-in mike that picks up your voice through the ear canal. Motorola claims this means you can talk easily even in a noisy environment like a pub. It should be out this summer. See www.motorola.co.uk



Nintendo

Brighter, lighter, smaller – the Nintendo DS Lite is the next generation Nintendo DS. With the same Wi-Fi and game compatibility as its predecessor, Nintendo says the DS Lite is less than two thirds the size, 20 per cent lighter and the screens are brighter. UK launch date and price are not confirmed but look out this summer.

