



# Product news

## Phones for all tastes and desires

### MOBILES

The latest in Sony Ericsson's Walkman music phone range, the **W880i (1)**, is a great all-rounder. It's stylish and there are plenty of features to keep even the most demanding user happy. These include a good 2Mp camera and an impressive music player that supports all popular formats.

Sony Ericsson's lightweight **K550i (5)** is another excellent option for music fans. Although promoted as a camera phone, the K550i incorporates a terrific media player and an FM radio. There's a 2Mp camera with autofocus and flash, plus a dedicated camera-features menu – though we were a little disappointed with the overall picture quality, which was no better than average.

Something simpler is the **Nokia 6085 (2)**. It's an inexpensive but durable clam-shell, offering excellent battery life and fine sound quality. Handily, it's also quad-band so it can be used anywhere in the world, and it comes with an MP3 player and FM radio. There are limitations, as the camera is basic and the headset supplied is mono – but it's a good choice if all you're after is a phone for calling and texting.



Highly rated – the Sony W880i

All our new Best Buys are easy to operate, but for heavy texters two models stand out – the **Nokia E65 (3)** and the **Samsung D840 (7)**. The E65 is Nokia's latest smart phone, so is primarily aimed at business users, while the D840 is a stylish slide phone with a 2Mp camera and multimedia music player.

**VERDICT** The impressive Sony Ericsson **W880i** has replaced its compatriot, the **W850i**, as our highest-ever rated mobile. If you're not into music, there's a range of other great new models to suit all needs. Check [www.which.co.uk/mobilephones](http://www.which.co.uk/mobilephones). We will publish a full roundup of new results in September.

MODEL	AVAILABILITY		SCORE %
	NETWORKS	PRICE (£)	
1 SONY ERICSSON W880i	O <sup>2</sup> Vo Vi O T	230 O <sup>2</sup> Vi O	69
2 NOKIA 6085	Vo	100 Sim Free	68
3 NOKIA E65	O <sup>2</sup> Vo 3 O	250 Sim Free	67
4 NOKIA 6151	Not Available	110 Te	67
5 SONY ERICSSON K550i	Vi O T	120 O Vi O <sup>2</sup>	67
6 NOKIA 6300	O <sup>2</sup> O Vo T	120 O <sup>2</sup> O T	66
7 SAMSUNG D840	Vo	150 Vo	66

USING THE TABLE **Networks** Availability on a monthly contract. O = Orange; O<sup>2</sup> = O2; Te = Tesco Mobile; T = T-Mobile; 3 = 3; Vi = Virgin; Vo = Vodafone **Price** The cheapest price a handset could be bought for on PAYG as we went to press

## Cost of cool falls as summer warms

### AIR CONDITIONERS

Keeping cool can be a pricey prospect. The two Best Buys from our air conditioners report in May (p58) cost £636 and £300. But as temperatures have risen, prices have started to fall.

Several budget options are now available in the shops, and two newly tested models from the Argos and Homebase own brand, Challenge, show that you don't need to empty your wallet to combat the heat. Both are Best Buys.

Top is the Challenge 414/0021, which, at £249, is superb value and packed with helpful features, including a remote control and a timer function. It scored 72 per cent in our tests. It has an indicator light that tells you when to empty water accumulating from condensation. But its

best asset is its phenomenal cooling capacity. This machine is great for bigger rooms, as it can cool large volumes of air quickly. Yet its dimensions are no bigger than those of the lower capacity units we tested previously. What's more, it's easy to use, not too noisy and has a heater mode.

We were also impressed by the Challenge 415/0602 – a steal at £190 and scoring 70 per cent. This model is slimline so is a good choice if you're concerned about space. But although it's designed for smaller rooms, it still manages a high cooling rate. And its budget price tag doesn't exclude handy features, such as the remote control, timer and indicator lights featured in its larger companion.



New air conditioners rise to the challenge: the 414/0021 is pictured left, the 415/0602 right

**VERDICT** The only disappointment is that the 414/0021 has poor energy efficiency. Nevertheless, both units' high cooling capacity and helpful features make them exceptionally good value and worthy additions to the previous Best Buys.

**51%**

increased sales of plasma-screen TVs at Comet in past year

COMET

**1902**

the year the air conditioner was invented

THE SHELL BOOK OF FIRSTS

**15%**

of UK homes have four or more mobile phones

MINTEL

# BT's Vision unfocused

## BUNDLED SERVICES

**B**T's new Vision service, which gives users broadband access to the internet and pay-per-view on-demand TV content, is the latest arrival at the bundling station. Unfortunately, our first dealings with it were less than successful. It took five weeks to get it installed, and wrangles over line speed and interminable conversations with the technical support line would have put many customers off – but we persisted and finally got it up and running.

The V-box, which powers the service, is free to existing BT Broadband customers – others will need to sign up for this and have a BT Home Hub installed (from £8.95 a month). Installation costs £60, plus a £30 connection charge. Engineers will need to check you're getting a minimum line speed of 2Mbps, which depends on local line conditions.

On the face of it, there was much on offer, with PVR Freeview, seemingly lots of on-demand

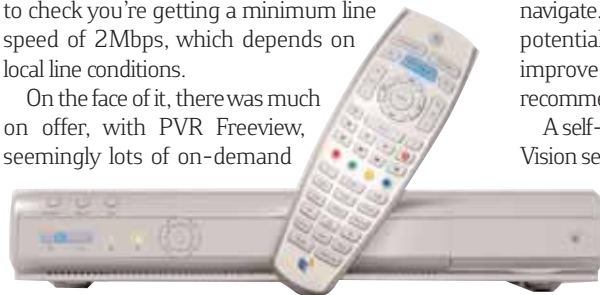
content, plus a new sports service and a catch-up facility for programmes you may have missed.

But its performance let it down. Once it was working it kept crashing, locking up and generally misbehaving. All this meant further calls to the technical helpline – we estimate we were on the phone to it for around four and a half hours in total. BT agreed to install a new box but this one also crashed from time to time. When it worked, the remote control was slow and clunky and the on-demand offerings didn't particularly inspire us.

The Freeview PVR service is nothing special; you still need an aerial and you can't buffer recording times, so it missed the ends of programmes that overran. We also found the EPG awkward and slow to navigate. In theory, the BT Vision service has much potential and the on-demand content is set to improve but, based on our experiences, we can't recommend it at this stage.

A self-install version will be offered this year and the Vision service will soon be available on the high street from Comet and John Lewis.

**VERDICT** It was incredibly frustrating just to get it running. On-demand offerings aren't great to date and, unfortunately, the V-box is temperamental and technical support just doesn't seem able to cope.



BT's new V-box didn't perform in our tests

# Panasonic keeps its top TV spot

## TELEVISIONS

**P**anasonic continues its domination of the television world in our latest flat-panel results. This new batch has three new Best Buys – Sony's KDL-32V2500 and KDL-32S2530 plus Panasonic's TX-32LXD70, pictured. All three are HD-ready 32-inch LCD TVs, with built-in digital Freeview.

The Panasonic stands out, thanks to a vibrant and detailed picture. It is superb for both standard and high-definition content and the dynamic sound is better than most

other 32-inchers. There is a slight glitch with sound interference on the five analogue TV channels but it's difficult to pick out and doesn't affect digital reception.

The Sonys sound mediocre and the picture quality



doesn't quite reach the level of the Panasonic's, but our testers still rated them above other models.

The Panasonic costs £900, the Sony KDL-32V2500 £850, and the near identical KDL-32S2530 costs a bargain £600 at Comet.

**VERDICT** Panasonic currently leads all other TV brands. But if you are interested in HD-DVD and Blu-ray, as well as a new TV, we have our concerns over picture quality. More details in 'Technology focus' next month.

## Just out

### Sony HDR-CX6EK £899

Sony's smallest high-definition camcorder is out this month, recording HD footage on to a Memory Stick Duo memory card (not supplied). Recording time is limited by the memory-card format, but the device is small and light and promises excellent picture quality if you watch your film on an HDTV. Look out for our report on digital camcorders next month.



### BT Elements £60

This new cordless phone from BT will suit gardeners as it claims to be weather resistant. It has some great features, including the ability to send and receive text messages. We're putting it through our stringent test programme at the moment – and will publish results soon. Available at Argos, Comet, John Lewis and Tesco.



### Phone translator £3

You can forget the phrase book, thanks to this downloadable software for your mobile. Just select one of the key phrases and your phone will recite the local equivalent, enabling you to learn the phrase and the pronunciation. The downloads work on most mobiles and are available in six languages. See [www.coolgorilla.com](http://www.coolgorilla.com)



### KitchenAid oven £1,399

KitchenAid's new Koss 6610 oven combines steam with the heating elements which, it says, makes for 'a golden, crispy roast'. The push-release drawer gives easy access to the water tank for filling. There's a Sabbath function so the oven can be set up for Saturday's dinner on Friday. More at [kitchenaid.co.uk](http://kitchenaid.co.uk)

