





# First look

Now with more new products in an extended four-page section

Home and electronics makers hitch a ride on the green bandwagon

## Eco-friendly gadgets a turn on?



**E**nvironmental issues such as climate change are high on the agenda for many consumers, so gadget makers are falling over themselves to produce goods designed to save energy.

We looked at several appliances from Morphy Richards and Philips, as well as a solar-powered DAB radio from Roberts.

Endorsed by the Carbon Trust, the **Morphy Richards Ecoelectric** energy-saving appliance range has been launched, with prices from £34.99 to £99.99. Claiming to save energy during everyday use, the range includes an iron, kettle, toaster, vacuum cleaner and slow cooker.

The kettle has a dual temperature 'eco-switch', heating water to 85°C or 100°C settings, when needed, reducing energy consumption by 24%, according to Morphy Richards.

The iron has an auto shut-off feature after three minutes without use. Both the toaster and slow cooker have insulated lids, while the vacuum cleaner has a 1,000W motor but claims to perform at the equivalent of 2,000W, saving 50% in energy.

All products come with a two-year guarantee and are available from Argos.

**Philips** is also touting its green credentials with the launch of three energy-efficient kettles. Unlike the Morphy Richards kettle's dual switch for reducing heating temperature, Philips has concentrated on the amount of water you boil.

By adding clearer water gauges with visible cup indicators, it says you can save 66% energy consumption, just by seeing how much water you need to boil for one cup. The kettles

cost £20 and £30, and are available from Argos, Currys and Dixons. We'll be testing the energy-saving claims in a forthcoming issue.

If you're after a greener way to listen to your favourite DAB digital radio stations, the £79.99 **Roberts SolarDAB** might be music to your ears.

It features a large solar panel along the top of the radio, and the compact device can be powered entirely by sunlight. A mains adaptor is included, and Roberts recommends that you use it initially to

charge the battery to full capacity. Afterwards, the battery can be sustained by solar power, and the radio retains a charge even when out of direct sunlight.

Without the need for constant mains power, the SolarDAB is ideal for use in the garden or a park, making it a great device for a summer day outdoors. It can also be taken into the bathroom for use without a mains power supply.

The downside to this green approach is sound quality. The single speaker delivers a slightly muffled sound, and doesn't do justice to the true potential of digital-quality radio.

Surprisingly, when left in direct sunlight for a full day, the battery meter rarely rises above two bars, so if you are not playing the radio in daylight hours it may occasionally be necessary to top up the charge from the mains.

The SolarDAB is extremely simple to use straight out of the box. There are 40 digital radio stations to choose from, and it's easy to select your own favourite stations as presets. It is widely available.

### FRESH POD

Food waste is a growing problem – and one the Fresh Pod aims to combat. When placed in the fridge, the Fresh Pod sachet absorbs the natural ethylene gas that is produced by ripening fruit and vegetables. We tested it over a two-week period and, in an infrequently opened fridge, products were well preserved against control samples. In a fridge that was constantly in use the Fresh Pod made no noticeable difference. A 12-month supply costs £12.99. Available from [www.freshpod.co.uk](http://www.freshpod.co.uk).



**£420**

the average value of food a typical UK family throws away annually

CABINET OFFICE REVIEW

**50%**

the amount of household electricity produced using a typical solar panel

ENERGY SAVING TRUST

Electric jam maker aims to preserve your patience

## Tefal promises jam today

Tefal's £79.99 Electric Jam Maker aims to take the fuss out of making homemade preserves. It seems like a great idea, but we felt this product was let down by poor instructions and found its cooking time optimistic.

The manual is badly laid out and our two amateur enthusiasts had to refer to three non-consecutive pages to make a handful of jars of strawberry jam. Awkward translation made it difficult to know whether you were following the instructions correctly. But we have since learnt that the product is to be sold with an updated recipe sheet, which should help matters.

It has several modes: 'traditional', which should take about 45 minutes, 'vital', which uses less sugar

than standard jam making, and 'quick', which requires you to add pectin to speed up production.

We found that the 'traditional' mode took considerably longer than the 45 minutes specified and still produced a runny jam at the end of the cooking time. The testers

were disappointed with both the flavour and texture of the jam.

Although no previous experience of jam making is necessary to get the device working, we felt that it would help ensure that jam was cooked for long enough to gain a good texture.

Washing up is a lot easier than when using a jam kettle, as the pan is non-stick and a special mode rinses it first.

Some users will like the small batch sizes that allow you to make just three pots of jam at a time. However, if you're used to making batches for friends and family, the pan size will be too small.

**VERDICT** If you already own jam-making equipment, it's not worth replacing it with this device.



## Lightweight camera is flashy

The Canon EOS 1000D is a 10.1Mp digital SLR designed for entry-level photographers. At only 450g, it's the lightest Canon SLR to date. While we haven't yet tested it, its features could make it one to watch.

Canon claims that the 2.5-inch LCD screen offers wide viewing angles. It allows you to compose shots using the 'live view' function – handy when the viewfinder is impractical. The ISO can be set between 100 and 1,600, and there are eight white-balance settings, including full manual control.

It's compatible with all EF and EF-S lenses, and will cost around £500 for the body on its own, or £580 with an 18-55mm IS kit lens.

**VERDICT** Similar to the EOS 400D but also features LiveView, which is becoming a must-have function.



## Compact cleaning

If storage space is at a premium, Dyson could help you downsize. Fresh from testing, the DC24 and DC22 are dinkier than the average Dyson vacuum cleaner, but the upright DC24 in particular proves that small can be mighty.

It was great at picking up dust from every surface in our tests, but its size means you'll need to empty the dust container frequently. Uprights can be heavy, but the DC24 weighs a mere 5.4kg.

The DC22 Animal

cylinder vacuum is heavier, at 7.3kg. It produces excellent results on hard floors, but isn't the best for carpet.

**VERDICT** For a lightweight upright that's good on all floors, pick up the DC24.



## Just out

### Tefal Preference cookware range

£25-£90

Guaranteed for life, Tefal's Preference range of non-stick cookware has a reinforced non-stick surface. Using hard minerals and a ceramic hard base, Tefal claims you can use it with metal utensils and cleaning is easier. It's widely available.



### Kodak Easyshare digital photo frames

£149.99, £179.99

The 8-inch W820 and 10-inch W1020 wireless digital photo frames from Kodak feature built-in Wi-Fi for accessing picture-sharing websites. You can email photos directly to the frames, and receive news and traffic updates. They are widely available now.



### Samsung Air Refresh washing machines

£399-£579

Samsung's Air Refresh washing machines promise to freshen up your dry clean-only laundry at home. They work by drawing air into the drum, heating it, then 'injecting' the air over the clothes, expelling microbes and odour-causing particles. They are widely available.



### TVonics DTR-Z series PVRs

£199-£229

The sleek, compact DTR-Z series of personal video recorders from TVonics feature huge hard drives for recording Freeview TV, storing up to 250 hours of programmes. Both models are widely available.





## King Of Shaves Azor

**£4.99**

A new entrant in the multi-blade wet-shave razor market, this sleek-looking razor has four blades and claims to offer a smoother, simpler shave. Our initial tests rated it highly, with the Azor delivering a close shave and tackling awkward areas admirably. Our initial impressions also suggest that its blades would stay sharp for a reasonable amount of time. It comes with three blades, and a replacement four-blade pack is £4.99 – cheaper than other brands. It is available from Boots and Sainsbury's.

**GOOD** Cheaper than the Best Buy Gillette Mach 3 Turbo.

**BAD** Doesn't come with a case.



## Doro HandleEasy 328 gsm

**£100**

Designed for older and disabled mobile phone users, the Doro HandleEasy 328 gsm has a large screen, clearly labelled buttons and can accept text messages.

In our hands-on test, we found that the buttons on the HandleEasy are clearly labelled, well spaced out and in bold colours. As with the earlier 326 model, there are four buttons at the top of the phone that will immediately call pre-selected numbers.

The battery life is an improvement on the 326 – you get an extra 40 minutes of standby time.

The 328 is available online in black or white. **GOOD** Clearly labelled and laid-out buttons, easy to use and able to receive text messages.

**BAD** Limited functions.



## Samsung NV100HD digital camera

**£299**

The Samsung NV100HD has the highest resolution to date for a compact digital camera. At 14.7Mp, it can take photos that will print well at up to 22x16 inches. It can capture video footage in high definition, which can be played back using an HDMI cable directly to an HDTV and controlled by the TV's remote. It also has a

touchscreen interface that recognises gestures drawn with a finger, such as an 'X' to delete an image. It is widely available.

**GOOD** Astonishingly high-resolution HD video capture.

**BAD** HDMI cable needs to be bought separately for about £20.



## Monilisa Cataplana

**£26**

This traditional Portuguese pan resembles two woks, and can be used on a hob, in an oven, and even on a barbecue.

We tested the 16cm version and found cooking complex and the pan a little

unstable. You'll also need to be prepared to boil it in water and soda crystals to remove its protective lacquer before first use.

**GOOD** An alternative to usual barbecue cooking.

**BAD** Hard to check how food is cooking.



## Russell Hobbs 2 Slice Crystal Glass toaster

**£49.99**

Russell Hobbs has jazzed up its Best Buy glass toaster, releasing a limited-edition version decorated with Swarovski crystals.

We found the original toaster versatile and easy to use, with an effective crumb tray.

But the control marking is difficult to read and the buttons are small. However, this glammed-up version could bring a touch of glitz to your kitchen.

**GOOD** Brings bling to the mundane task of toasting.

**BAD** Fiddly to control.



## Krups Mini Chopper

**£39.99**

The Krups Prep Expert Range will be extended from October, with the addition of a mini chopper. The gadget has a smart brushed metal finish, 0.4 litre bowl, metal chopping blade, 400W motor and emulsifying disc and

dishwasher-safe parts. It comes with a five-year guarantee that Krups claims is the longest on the market.

**GOOD** Lengthy warranty should give peace of mind.

**BAD** It's larger than most mini choppers, so takes up more bench space.



# The broadband played on

If DAB digital radio doesn't satisfy your demand for choice, internet radio could be the answer. Thousands of internet stations are broadcast around the globe, and the £139 Roberts WM-202 combines these with DAB and FM radio reception.

The unit works via Wi-Fi, scanning to find wireless networks. Connecting it up is straightforward, as long as you have a wireless router.

Once online, the WM-202 allows you to select from numerous internet stations. There are several ways to browse: you could choose via genre – for example, 'blues' or 'classical' – or via country of origin. You can also listen to



selected podcasts, such as those from the BBC.

There's a simple scroll wheel for navigating screen menus. You can add to the 'My favourites' menu by going online and registering your radio, which allows you to add stations that aren't listed. The WM-202 can play music files stored on your computer if it

is wirelessly enabled. If all this sounds a bit technical, the instructions are clear.

It's portable but heavy, at 1.5kg, especially with batteries – it takes six D-cells, adding 750g.

This could be the shape of things to come for radios, as wireless networking becomes increasingly widespread.

But if you intend to use it regularly, consider upgrading to a broadband package with no download limit to save yourself from big bills.

**VERDICT** Easy to set up with hundreds of stations to choose from, but it is heavy and needs more presets.

## Goggle-eyed over onions

### Onion Goggles £13.50

If slicing onions leaves you crying into your chopping board, Eddingtons' Onion Goggles may be the answer. Our testers found that they blocked out irritating onion vapours, leaving them free to dice onions finely without tears. They don't work over the top of spectacles, but do have anti-fog lenses. Available in cooking, homeware and gift shops as well as online.



## CREDIT CRUNCH COMPARISON

### A First Look and current Best Buy go head to head



**£680**

#### Sony Handycam HDR-CX11E

The compact HDR-CX11E features HD video recording. An optional 16GB memory stick stores nearly six hours of video. It has a 12x optical zoom, as well as face detection and smile shutter technology when taking 10Mp still photographs. It is widely available.

**Vs**



**£429**

#### Panasonic HDC-DX1

Alternatively, the Panasonic HDC-DX1 is a Best Buy for £250 less than the cost of the Sony model. It delivers good HD images and has a battery life of 127 minutes. It records to DVD, but it can take still photos and uses PictBridge to send them to a compatible printer.



### Stirred, but not shaken

#### Waring Professional Martini Maker £60

Waring is aiming to shake up the drinks market with its automatic martini maker, a compact stainless steel device that promises to take the effort out of making cocktails at home.

It features two settings, one for stirring and one for shaking, and guarantees a professional-style cocktail in 60 seconds. We put it before a panel of expert mixologists at London bar Dirty Martini to test its claims.

We tried a range of martini recipes, using identical ingredients in the machine-made and handmade cocktails, and mixing them for the same amount of time. In our blind taste tests, our testers preferred the handmade cocktails.

The secret to blending a perfect martini lies in sufficiently aerating the spirits by tumbling them vigorously over the ice, and it is this action that the Waring machine fails to emulate, according to the experts.

In its shake setting, the Martini Maker moves its shaker up and down in a limited motion, and the panel felt that this doesn't effectively mix the ingredients over the ice cubes.

The stir setting was more successful for tall cocktails, but the machine didn't move the ice and ingredients with sufficient vigour, and much of the mixing occurred when the cocktail was poured into a glass.

Available from John Lewis, Amazon and online retailers.

**VERDICT** For professional results, there's still no substitute for a hands-on approach, although the Martini Maker is good for large groups.

