



Product news



Relax, enjoy, hire – and pour

Summertime drinks bliss

GADGETEER

What could be better than making your favourite cocktail, sitting back and relaxing? The answer: hire a machine to make your own favourite cocktails.

If you live in London or the Southeast, you can hire the

Mr Margarita frozen cocktail machine for your do. For £149 you'll get use of the machine plus one bottle of 'mix' which you add to alcohol and water to make grown-up versions of Slush Puppies. See www.mrmargarita.co.uk



Me & my buy

Patricia Bellieni loves her Panasonic SD253 bread maker

My husband likes to experiment in the kitchen – and I love a good loaf – so we decided to invest in a bread maker.

Friends suggested it was worth spending a little extra to get a decent one so we settled on *Which?*'s Best Buy Panasonic – and it's worked out really well.

The built-in timer is useful, as moisture in the machine seems to affect the taste of the bread if it is left in too long. The four-hour program bakes the best loaf, with the basic mixing program producing the dough for many a pizza base.

After trying different brands, we settled on Wessex Mill flour and we buy yeast in sachets, as it doesn't keep for long once opened. We have our own vegetable patch and make our own pesto to add to the mix.

The raisin dispenser seems to work well, too – and adding chopped sun-dried tomatoes and olives via the dispenser ensures they are distributed evenly.

I've not really considered whether it's any cheaper than buying a good organic loaf – I should imagine it is – but that's not why we bought the machine. It's just nice to have freshly baked bread with the satisfaction of using some of our own ingredients.

Story to tell? Contact Anthony Hume at helpwanted@which.co.uk

Get that bare finish to your walls and floors while going green

Paint stripper that will help you – and the environment

DO-IT-YOURSELF

Health and ecological concerns when decorating may lead you to De-Solv-It Great Strip Paint Stripper, which lets you remove paint in a more environmentally friendly way than solvent solutions.

We put it to the test against two more typical paint-stripping options – Nitromors Paint and Varnish Remover and Langlow Peel Away Paint Removal System. The Peel Away system was the most cumbersome to use and it discoloured the wood from which we removed paint. Our overall view was that De-Solv-It beat it hands down.

De-Solv-It is a gel, which is easy to apply with a brush and doesn't drip. After 60 minutes it strips gloss and emulsion paint well and we removed three layers of paint easily using a scraper. In most cases a second application was required in patches to effectively remove multiple layers of paint.

Nitromors and De-Solv-It performed the same with gloss but Nitromors was slightly better with emulsion and textured paint. Overall, Nitromors was the most consistent performer and relatively easy to apply, taking 40 minutes to work. But it requires its recommended two applications. One litre will strip two to three square metres.



De-Solv-It offers a non-corrosive solution to the problem of stripping paint

With all three products tested you'll need to wash down and sand the surface you are stripping to obtain a bare wood finish suitable for varnishing. And don't forget that protective clothing, gloves and eye protection are recommended.

De-Solv-It is £8 for 400ml, which will strip two square metres, or £13 for a litre, from www.desolvit.co.uk

VERDICT If you're concerned about your health, De-Solv-It is worth considering. It is non-corrosive and has low odour.

16kgthe weight by which cars
get heavier every year

DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT

61%of current account holders
are with their first bank

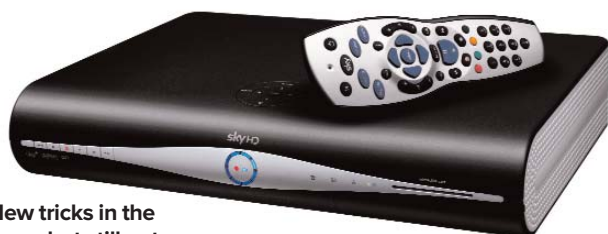
EXPERIAN

77%of households own
at least one car

KEYNOTE

Best Buy tradition is maintained as TV technology advances

Sky moves on with its new HD PVR box

New tricks in the
box – but still not
enough content

TELEVISION

Television technology seems to move on every month – so no surprise that the Sky HD box is the latest personal video recorder (PVR) to hit the market.

It's almost identical to our Best Buy Sky+ box but with one significant difference – it's capable of receiving and recording high-definition television (HDTV). You'll need an HD-ready TV to watch the broadcasts in HD quality. See p68 for more on HD.

The box carries on the proud Sky+ Best Buy tradition. It's simple to use, picks up subtitles, has twin tuners so you can record

two programmes while playing back a third, and its recorded picture quality is as good as broadcast quality.

The remote looks slightly different and the internal fan noise is louder, but it can record and store 80 hours of standard programming, although HD content requires almost four times as much space.

It costs £299 for the box and another £10 a month on top of a regular Sky+ digital subscription. For the extra cash you can access up to ten HD channels. A Sky engineer installs the box – see sky.com/hd

Watching programmes on a Best Buy HD-ready TV, via the HDMI input, can be spectacular. However, not all the channels are on all day, HD quality can vary and not all the material broadcast is actually HD at all. For best results the programme material itself should be recorded in HD.

VERDICT HD looks great and it's a superb PVR. But we'd expect more HD content for the money.

Just out

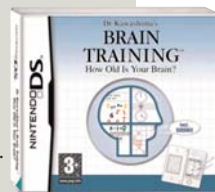
Peugeot 207

Peugeot's 206 is one of the most popular cars in Britain, so the 207 must be Briton-friendly to be a top seller. It's bigger and heavier than the 206, but the 1.4-litre petrol engine we tried felt sluggish. The diesel models make more sense and the 1.6-litre returned 53.3mpg (58.8 claimed) in our tests. It's an evolution, rather than a revolution, of the 206.



Brain game £20

Dr Kawashima's Brain Training game for the Nintendo DS or DS Lite helps your brain stay younger every day using a mixture of calculations, reading and puzzles. You answer by writing on the screen with a stylus or by using a mic. It is strangely addictive and does help the brain. Honest. See www.nintendo.com



Slingbox £179.99

Dr Who in New York? The Slingbox sits at home with your TV and shifts your television signal to your laptop or PC via the internet, so you can watch broadcasts from back home wherever you are. It's available now. More information at www.slingmedia.com/uk/



Sony £700 (with lens)

Sony's first digital SLR camera is launched this summer. The Sony Alpha 100 has a ten mega-pixel CCD sensor, image stabilisation and anti-dust system. We've currently got it at the lab and the results will be online later this year. Available from Jessops.



Is it worth it? Yes

We test all current accounts on a rolling basis. Northern Ireland banks are more expensive than our Best Buys. So we looked at the difference in annual cost between an Ulster

Bank current account and the Best Buy Nationwide FlexAccount if you run a £500 authorised overdraft for two weeks a month. Results below

Nationwide
FlexAccount
annual cost:

£17

Ulster Bank
current account
annual cost:

£25

VERDICT

The Nationwide account saves £8 a year. Customers with credit balances also receive 4.25 per cent interest provided they pay in £1,000 a month, compared with no interest at all for Ulster Bank. Switching clearly makes sense.