

# [all change]

We review new products

## Hiclean, low rating

Cleaning your hands without soap, water and a towel sounds ideal for life on the move. But, as our nine testers found, Hiclean's Handy Hand cleaner gel, £5 for two from [www.hi-deal.com](http://www.hi-deal.com), won't keep you squeaky clean.

The idea is that you squeeze a little gel on to your hands and then rub them

Hiclean didn't live up to its claims



together, and the dirt rolls up and falls off.

Sadly, it wasn't great on many of our dirt sources, and most testers felt it didn't clean their hands well.

It's tricky to use on the backs of fingers and around nails and most testers found it poor at shifting soil,

vegetable oil and motor oil. The smell of fish, chilli, onions, garlic and ginger also lingered after using the gel. Two people found it OK on emulsion paint.

Overall only two said it was effective. We think travel wipes are better.

# Dyson: on the ball

On the back of record profits and a triumphant conquering of the US vacuum cleaner market, Dyson has launched its latest invention – the DC15 Ball vacuum cleaner.

The vac's nickname stems from the yellow ball on which the cleaner rests. The idea behind this is that it makes the vac easier to steer and manoeuvre than other uprights.

With a heavyweight TV advertising campaign and tales of James Dyson touring newspaper offices to give their staff personal demonstrations of the Ball's cleaning ability, it's evident that Dyson is excited about this new upright cleaner.

We were too and, in general, most people were impressed with the model we tried out at Which? HQ (see *Which?*, May 2005, p37).

However, the only people who really know how the Ball compares with other vacs are the technicians who work in our expert test lab. They have wheeled it through our usual battery of demanding tests to measure its dust-sucking capabilities on carpets, smooth floors and

floorboards. They were impressed. Like its more conventional predecessor, the DC14 upright (see 'New Dyson does the job', *Which?*, January 2005, p37), the DC15 Ball is a fine cleaner, scoring excellent results on both carpet and smooth floors. The Ball struggled with floorboards, though, so it isn't the best choice of vac for this type of flooring. But it does a great job at getting rid of pet hair and scores a ★ – a task which surprisingly few cleaners do well. In addition, though still noisy, the Ball is slightly quieter than the DC14.

Its innovative design helped it score a ☆ rating in our ease-of-use assessments. This cleaner is easier to push around and manoeuvre on flat surfaces than the DC14 and other uprights.

The only downside is that some of our female lab testers found the machine heavy, so it won't be right for everyone.

The Ball – widely available on the high street for £320 – is a great cleaner and, like other Dysons, scores far better than other uprights in our tests. Sadly, though, Dyson vacuum cleaners fare poorly in our annual reliability survey so we can't make them Best Buys. For more on this, see p18.

## the gadgeteer

#9 A look at this month's most peculiar new hi-tech gadget

It's fair to say that one of the unique selling points of a watch is that you can tell the time by simply glancing at the hands. Strange, then, that someone should think of replacing this age-old technology with a system that requires you to interpret ten LEDs using binary maths. Perhaps we should inject more intellectual rigour into other everyday tasks: a tap with a Rubik cube set into it or a microwave that you must beat at chess before it reheats a meal?

As the old joke goes, there are 10 types of people in the world: those who understand binary and those who don't. We think it's unlikely that many of either type will go to [www.iwantoneofthose.com](http://www.iwantoneofthose.com) and spend £54.99 on the binary watch.



## Slimline micro

When we heard about the new Panasonic NN-A574SBBPQ Slimline microwave, we thought it might be ideal for people short on counter space. However, although it excels at some tasks, it's dismal at others.

The Panasonic Slimline, £160 from [www.qed-uk.com](http://www.qed-uk.com), is 10cm slimmer than its sister model, a full-sized combination oven, but it can accommodate the same sized plates. The oven

has several power levels, which helps you avoid overcooking, and it's easy to use.

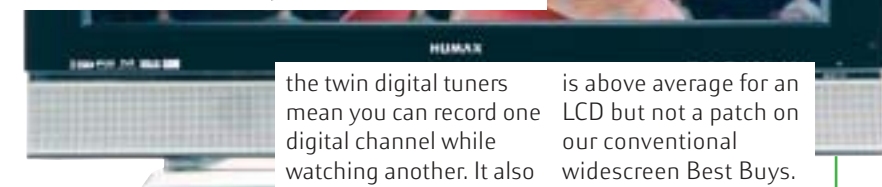
Cooking a ready meal and roasting a chicken proved light work for the Slimline, and it scored well for both. It's also very good at defrosting meat and cooking jacket potatoes, producing a fluffy potato with slightly crispy skin.

However, grilling and baking proved a real challenge. The Slimline grills just a small area,

PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN TRENHOLM



## Humax only halfway there



Humax has a great track record on set-top boxes and personal video recorders (PVRs), so we were intrigued by its latest innovation: an LCD TV with built-in PVR.

The LGB-32TPVR combines a 32-inch flat screen, digital Freeview decoders and 35GB hard-disk recorder. It costs £1,500 from independents.

It stores only 12 hours of recordings in high quality mode but can pause or rewind up to half an hour of 'live' television. A seven-day electronic programme guide makes it easy to set up recordings, and

the twin digital tuners mean you can record one digital channel while watching another. It also has two remote controls: a full-blown version and a simplified one.

One irritant is the internal fan. It keeps the hard drive cool but it's noisy. Despite this, the PVR is outstanding and worth a ★ for picture quality. We've yet to find a PVR that does badly.

If only the same were true for the LCD TV. The Humax's picture quality

is above average for an LCD but not a patch on our conventional widescreen Best Buys. But if you really want LCD, you could do a lot worse – and for about the same price as the Loewe and Panasonic 26-inch TVs (see table), you get a bigger screen and the PVR thrown in.

### KEY

★ ☆ ○ ● ●  
Best Worst  
■ Best Buy

### LCD TVs

#### MODEL

	Price (£)	Picture	Sound	Ease of use	Score (%)
Loewe Xelos A26	1,500	☆	★	●	62
Panasonic TX-26LX1F	1,300	○	★	☆	57
Humax LGB-32TPVR	1,500	○	☆	☆	57

## wave

and does so unevenly. When we tried out the baking option, it burnt the top of our cake while leaving the bottom uncooked. Most worryingly, the oven becomes less effective

after continuous use. When used continuously for 15 minutes, its performance drops to such an extent that meals could be underheated. So,

unless you are really struggling for space in your kitchen, a better choice would be a Best Buy combination microwave from our last test (see 'Hot stuff', March 2005, p38).



### Combination microwaves

#### MODEL

	Price (£)	Size hxxwx d (cm)	Ready meal	Hot oven	Defrost	Grill	Roast	Bake	Potato button	Meal button	Ease of use	Score (%)
Panasonic NN-A754WBBPQ	180	30x51x48	☆	☆	○	●	★	☆	☆	☆	○	64
Sharp R-95STM	260	37x55x53	☆	○	☆	★	☆	○	○	○	○	62
Panasonic NN-A574SBBPQ	160	31x51x38	★	☆	☆	●	☆	●	☆	☆	☆	61