

Getting up and running

Continuing our year-long makeover, we see how the Joneses fared with a new vac and digital audio-visual equipment recommended by Which?

In January we began a unique and ambitious experiment, demonstrating Which? expert advice on products and services with the help of the Jones family from Wolverhampton. This month we report on how they got on with trying out our recommended products in their home.

The family's recording from TV habits were due for an overhaul, so we encouraged Darren and Toni, and their respective parents, to abandon their outdated VCRs and replace them with more user-friendly modern alternatives. Despite this being the first time they'd strayed from the familiar VCR format, every generation of the family felt persuaded by the new recording systems recommended by Which?.

Recording revolution

John and Kath, Toni's parents, had been struggling on with a VCR. Unable to set the video timer, they had resigned themselves to missing programmes when they were out of the house. This all changed when we gave them a Best Buy Humax 9200T PVR (see *Which?*, April 2008, p62).



They found it simple to set up and use, and in no time at all had set it to automatically record every episode of *Coronation Street* in perfect digital quality. 'I love being able to record two channels simultaneously and watch a third at the same time,' John said.

Dallas and Maureen, Darren's mum and dad, took to their sleek new Best Buy Panasonic DMR-EZ27 DVD recorder (see *Which?*, December 2007, p45) like fish to water. They loved the fact that they



Playing fast music on the iPod helps Toni's marathon training

Darren and Toni now find it simple to record TV

could record from their digital TV in the bedroom on to DVDs that they could also watch in the living room on their existing DVD player.

Darren and Toni enjoyed the flexibility of the Best Buy Panasonic DMR-EX95VEBS (*Which?*, December 2007, p45), a DVD/PVR/VCR combination model. They found it incredibly simple to record TV programmes to the hard drive, and the VCR element



The Joneses get to grips with their new TV recording setup

HOW YOU CAN DO IT

Keep up with the Joneses and fill your home with Which? recommended products

When buying new products for your home, always check our advice and reviews in *Which?* and on www.which.co.uk. On the back page of *Which?* you can find a six-month index for your reference. And online we have countless in-depth reviews of home and electronic products, with recommendations on quality, usability and value, identifying the Best Buys and the Don't Buys so you can buy with confidence.

For clear, step-by-step advice on how to set up your TV equipment, go to www.which.co.uk/tvconnection and use our online connection wizard.

Suck it and see

To show how our ratings reflect real-life vacuuming, we gave the family a Best Buy and a low-scoring cleaner from our last test

The Miele S4281 is one of our highest-scoring Best Buy cylinders on all surfaces, and Toni could see why: 'The suction is fantastic – it picked up bits that our Henry vac wouldn't touch. We had previously blamed the pile of the carpet.'

The Vax VZL-704 costs around £30 less but scored 30 per cent less in our tests. Toni said: 'It's heavy and bulky and I couldn't get it to suck up small pieces of paper the kids had cut up, and it's noisy.'

Regarding the Miele, Toni said: 'I've adapted my vacuuming style to suit the slightly shorter cable. I used to brush the kitchen floor a couple of times a day but now it's just as simple to get the Miele out. The standard nozzle suits all floor surfaces, which is great. Transitioning from hard floor to carpet is simple using the foot pedal, but it's not essential when vacuuming a rug on a hard floor – unlike the Vax, where you need to use the right attachment on the hard floor.'

See *Which?*, April 2008, p52, or www.which.co.uk/vacuumcleaners to find out which vac is best for you.



Toni liked the suction on the Best Buy Miele S4281



Although cheaper, the Vax VZL-704 wasn't a hit with Toni

meant that kids Sam and Harriet could still watch their favourite VHS tapes.

Go to www.which.co.uk/tvs for help with choosing a PVR or DVD recorder, and use our online connection wizard (www.which.co.uk/tvconnection) to help you to set up your new system.

Musical makeover

Neither Darren nor Toni had used an MP3 player before, so they were a bit daunted about getting started with their new Best Buy iPod Nano. It took them a little while to get the hang of transferring music from CDs on to the iPod. But once they had worked it out, Darren and Toni were hugely impressed by their 'amazing, convenient and easy to use' Nano.

'The only problem I am having at the moment,' Darren said, 'is prising the iPod from Toni.' She's using it as a key partner in her training for the upcoming London marathon. 'I'm running faster as a result of listening to upbeat music,' Toni told us. (See p56 for more on getting started with an MP3 or MP4 player.)

Digital radio

The Joneses' digital listening experience didn't end there.



A Best Buy Pure Evoke-3 digital radio (pictured below; see *Which?*, November 2007, p54) quickly proved a welcome addition to the household.

Toni and Darren had considered purchasing a digital radio for a while, but were worried that they'd get a weak signal. However, they enjoyed perfect reception with a fully extended aerial.

They've also discovered new channels, thanks to the user-friendly electronic programme guide, and Toni bought a cable so that she can connect the iPod and listen to it through the radio's speakers. She said: 'The iPod gives us the flexibility to move our music around the house. In the near future, I can see us having a speaker system in each of the main rooms which we'll be able to connect the iPod to.'

At first, the family weren't quite sure how they could make the most of the Secure Digital (SD) memory card slot on the radio, but Darren had a brainwave: 'BBC Radio 7 broadcasts kids' stories and music from 2 to 5.30pm every day. I record the programme to an SD card I've got and play it back to Sam and Harriet at bedtime – it's brilliant!'

FAMILY UPDATE

The latest news on how expert advice from *Which?* is helping the Joneses

■ The Best Buy John Lewis JLTDC01 tumble dryer has arrived. Darren said: 'We are astounded at how energy efficient it is compared with our old model. According to our energy monitor [see *Which?*, February 2008, p33], it's using about one sixth of the energy of our old one.'

■ Darren and Toni have been busy test-driving the Mazda 5, Honda FR-V and Toyota Verso, all seven-seater MPVs reviewed by *Which?*. Find out more in our June issue.

■ The family are in the process of putting their savings into a Best Buy Isa. We'll be reporting on their experiences in July.

■ Sam (5) and Harriet (3) have really taken a shine

to the diverse channels offered by their newly installed Roberts internet radio, dancing the calypso whenever Radio Barbados is on.

