



Technology news

The jet ski for use on land

FUN TRAVEL



Quadski can travel on land and sea

This looks like fun. A quad-bike that you can drive into the water, where it turns into a jet-ski. It sounds very 007 but this is fact not fiction and Gibbs Technologies recently unveiled a prototype of this high-speed amphibious vehicle that it's dubbed the Quadski.

It is capable of travelling up to 50mph on land and water and makes the transition at the flick of a switch – the wheels retract into the body when in aquatic mode.

Alan Gibbs, the founder of UK-based Gibbs Technologies Ltd, said: 'Quadski is both exciting and practical with a multitude of uses.'

'I know consumers will love the fun of driving a Quadski on land one minute and heading straight into the sea or river the next. But there's a very serious side as well. Emergency services and aid workers will be able to reach areas and people that no two- or four-wheeled-drive vehicle could reach.'

It should be out sometime next year but the price hasn't been set yet. Visit www.aquada.co.uk/mediacentre/quadski.php to see more about it now, including video clips of the Quadski in action.

Invention could see rival formats held on the same disc

Dual-format DVD discs

DVD FORMATS

As the rival camps supporting the next generation of hi-definition DVD discs square up to do battle, a new invention could save the day.

At present two incompatible formats, HD-DVD and Blu-Ray are launching with different manufacturers and movie studios lining up on opposing sides, mirroring the VHS-Betamax rivalry of the 1980s.

Microsoft and Sony are also backing rival formats for their latest games consoles, so further complicating matters. Consumer confusion is inevitable and many will put off upgrading until one format looks like it will dominate the market.

But the good news is that a patent for a new type of disc has been filed that could hold both HD-DVD and



The formats may not have to battle for dominance

Blu-Ray versions of films on one disc. This is made possible because each movie format will be held on three different layers within the disc – one for the standard-definition film and one each for the rival HD formats. The laser will be able to 'see through' one layer to the deeper layers when required.

Should this new disc become reality it will mean that one disc will play in all machines – it won't matter what type of player consumers buy and a format war could be averted.

We'll test our first HD-DVD player, the Toshiba HD-E, in November and publish the results early next year.

Back to the future Recording from TV

THEN



1977 Which? tests the first VCR, the Philips N1502.

1979 Betamax and VHS machines go head to head. The winner is a Sony Betamax weighing 20kg and costing £600 (£1,800 today). A three-

hour tape is around £12 (£35 today).

1982 Philips VLP700 laser disc launched. Dinner-plate-sized discs give half an hour of playing time before you flip them over to get another 30 minutes.

It costs £500. Picture quality is 'pretty good' and we like the interactive features such as 'still frame'. We don't know if it will catch on and advise you rent not buy, which ends up being a good call.

NOW



TV recording has come a long way. Quality and convenience have improved enormously and it's a whole lot cheaper to do, too. The VCR is not dead but is looking critical. DVD recorders can be

found for less than £100 and their vastly superior picture quality puts them in a new league.

But we predict that the personal video recorder (PVR), which records digital TV on to an internal

hard disk, will be the way we record TV in future. The Sky+ model even lets you program it using your mobile phone, or online, if you've forgotten to set it before you leave the house.

... AND BEYOND



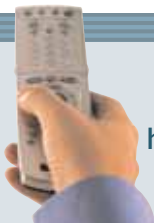
You can currently link a portable MP4 recorder to your set-top box and download programmes to watch while you

commute. Soon you'll be able to download TV programmes you missed to your PC or laptop. TV on your mobile is currently

being trialled and eventually we may be able to record programmes on to our mobile phones, too.



80 million
UK mobile phone subscriptions
will exist by 2010
MOBILE TELECOMMUNICATIONS KEYNOTE 2006



500 million
homes worldwide will have
digital TV by 2011
INFORMA

News in brief

A really cool shirt

A former Sony employee has created a shirt with built-in air conditioning, designed to combat sweltering summer temperatures. Two fans at the back blow fresh air inside to aid the evaporation of sweat and keep the wearer cool. It's powered by AA batteries or you can run it from a USB cable plugged into your PC. The shirt is available only in Japan at present.



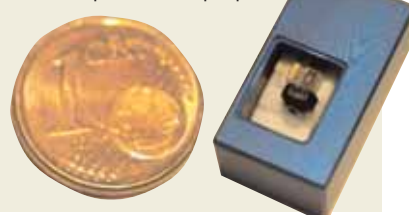
A flying car

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang will become reality in 2009 when Terrafugia launches its Personal Air Vehicle. It will be capable of driving at motorway speeds or, after spreading its wings, taking off and flying for up to 500 miles at 130mph. It's a snip at £80,000, though you'll still need a pilot's licence and a proper airstrip to take off and land. But the idea of driving straight off the runway and on to the local roads is pretty neat.



Mini projector

German researchers have created a tiny projector, roughly the size of a sugar cube. It contains a laser that is fired at a miniature vibrating mirror, which deflects the beam to produce the pixels which make up an image. It could be used to project images from a PDA, mobile phone or laptop.



New prototypes improve the Apple portable music player iPod gets a makeover

MUSIC PLAYERS

Accessories for the iPod are abundant, but now designers have begun to put forward new designs for the player itself.

Designer Peter Burns has come up with the idea of turning the iPod into a smart piece of wristwear. Functionally it stays the same but he's added wireless headphones and a seamless wrist strap.

The iPod Nano is already tiny so we think Apple shouldn't have any trouble shoe-horning its workings into something like this that you could comfortably strap to your wrist. We'd like to see this design making it into the real world.

The second idea has been dubbed the Boom Bag. It's a stylish bag by GRO Design, which GRO says is made of weatherproof fabric that you can carry your iPod around in to protect it. But it also houses a charger and full-sized speaker mounted into the side so you've potentially got a portable audio system, too, albeit with only mono sound.

We can see it catching on, though GRO is currently still hunting for a production partner to make it reality.

Meanwhile, Nike and Apple have joined forces to produce a nifty running gadget which enables an iPod Nano player to record the speed and distance of your run.

The Nike+iPod sports kit – £19 from Apple stores – includes a tiny wireless sensor which fits into your trainers and a plug-in

The Boom Bag is made of weather-proof fabric that you can carry your iPod in to protect it



Boom Bag has a full-sized speaker

receiver that you connect to a Nano. The sensor records running time, pace, distance and calories burned, and sends the information to your Nano to view on-screen.

You get voice feedback such as a congratulatory message from Paula Radcliffe if you get a personal best. And you can choose a 'PowerSong' to get a boost if you feel like you're flagging.

The kit is compatible only with the iPod Nano. Nike recommends you buy Nike+ shoes that include a small slot under the insole to fit the motion sensor. Nike+ trainers cost from £65.

All three of our runners liked the special Nike+ trainers but would rather use their own running shoes. Although Nike says the kit is compatible only with Nike+ shoes, our runners found you could use other trainers if you pushed the sensor tightly under the laces.

Our runners said the sensor is easy to fit into the shoe and is comfortable. They also thought the menus on the Nano were easy to use. One said: 'It takes you through step by step and even people who aren't familiar with iPod controls would find it easy to operate.' For more, see www.which.co.uk.



The £19 kit records running time, pace and distance