



# Technology news



A quick peek at the latest technology

## Gizmo update

### FIRST LOOK

**F**ind out what happened when we turned an iPod into a radio station, and tried out the latest mobile phones.

### Audiax DGT-202 £30



The ban on low-power radio transmitters, which enable you to 'broadcast' music from an MP3 player to a nearby radio, was recently lifted, so we tried one out. The Audiax plugs in to an iPod's headphones' socket. You tune it in to an 'empty' radio channel, and then tune your car radio in to the same channel to listen to the music stored on your iPod. It didn't take us long to do this, but our experiences on the road were mixed.

When driving in cities, pirate radio stations caused so much interference that they made the Audiax virtually unusable. But once in the country, we suffered far less interference and the easy-to-use Audiax delivered a reasonable sound quality.

We'll fully test five low-power radio transmitters in May.

### Sony Ericsson W850i £280

The latest phone to be released under the Walkman brand comes with two cameras – a two-megapixel one for photos and video clips and a secondary one for video calls. You can also plug this Sony Ericsson into an optional stand to use the built-in digital music player and radio like a mini hi-fi system. We found it pretty easy to use, but a few of the keys required a fair bit of pressure to operate.



### Nokia 5300 Xpress Music £130

This new Nokia phone is great for music lovers, as it comes with both a built-in MP3 player and radio. It also has a slot for an optional memory card that increases the 5300's storage space, which gives you more room to store all of the pictures and video clips taken on its 1.3-megapixel camera. We found this an easy phone to use and its voice command feature is particularly intuitive – you can make calls by speaking a contact's name.



### Get more

For full results on these and many other new phones, visit [www.which.co.uk](http://www.which.co.uk).

## Back to the future Computers

### THEN

**1981** IBM launches its first personal computer, the 5150. It doesn't have a hard disk and its 4.77MHz processor is about a thousand times slower than a modern PC. And its 5.25-inch floppy disks' capacity is so small that even if digital music tracks existed, you wouldn't be able to save one to a disk.



### NOW

The Apple Mac Mini is just 6.5-inches square and two inches high. Its 80GB hard disk is about 84 thousand times the capacity of the IBM 5150's floppy disks.



### ... AND BEYOND

HP predicts we'll be wearing PCs on our wrists. Containing all our personal information, the 'hubs' will be able to wirelessly stream data from the internet to nearby devices and will even, HP claims, 'take on your personality based on info stored in your hub'.



## We predict the next generation of technology Welcome to tomorrow's world

### FUTURE

**T**amar Kasriel's job, as Head of Knowledge Venturing at the Henley Centre, is to predict how technology will shape the way we live our lives in the future. We asked Tamar to tell us about the types of technology we'll be testing in future issues of *Which?*.

Tamar told us: 'Voice recognition software will become much better and far more ubiquitous.' This will give us the ability to control devices around the home by talking to them. You could even phone home if you wanted to, say, record a

TV programme or water the plants.

Also on the horizon are devices that can be controlled by the power of thought. 'We're already seeing prototype artificial limbs that respond to brainwaves picked up by sensors, and in 30 years this type of

technology will be far more advanced', said Tamar.

Tamar also believes that home medical diagnostics will become part of everyday life. 'In Japan there's a toilet that analyses your urine to see if anything is amiss – that kind of technology will be built into other everyday items.' So fridges could respond to tags in food packaging and assess how healthy your diet is or warn you when food is due to expire.

Based on Tamar's predictions, it looks as though in years to come we'll have our work cut out testing some truly remarkable products.



Tamar Kasriel, futurist

# 3billion

number of text messages sent  
in the UK every month

TOTAL MOBILE



# 1.5 tons

what today's computers would weigh, according  
to *Popular Mechanics* magazine in 1949

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Why is technology in Japan more advanced than in the UK?

## Land of rising gadgets

### OVERSEAS TECH

**P**aying for your morning coffee with your mobile phone, widespread take-up of high definition TV and watching your favourite films on a mobile are all still in their infancy here in the UK – but these are the norm in Japan. So why are we missing out?

Well, one reason is that big business is the main buyer of technology in the UK, so manufacturers cater for companies' needs rather than those of consumers, whereas in Japan, development is largely driven by what consumers want.

For example, the skyrocketing prices of land in Japan have resulted in cramped apartments and a culture where young people end up living with their parents instead of paying rent or buying a home. This means that the average consumer needs small, integrated devices and that young men and women have lots of disposable income. To fill this need, Japanese manufacturers have become experts at miniaturising, and they also have a guaranteed market for expensive gadgets.



Technology in Tokyo is streets ahead of the UK

**We can only read about Japan's gadget bonanza with envy**

But that's not all. Japanese companies (aided by government subsidies and cheap loans) have spent billions of dollars building key infrastructure, such as widespread ultra-high-speed mobile phone networks and broadband internet access.

When we asked electronics manufacturer Sharp why Japan gets hold of gadgets before the UK, a spokeswoman said: 'In order to release certain kinds of technological products, the social environment and infrastructure must be ready. In Japan, the market is more advanced.'

All these factors have created a market where technology thrives, making Japan the Mecca for gadget fiends. But above all, the infrastructure in Japan is key, as without it many gadgets cannot proliferate.

## News in brief

### Fiction becomes fact

Scientists have developed a device that uses detectors attached to your face to decode what you're saying. This then translates your speech into German, Spanish or Chinese, much like the famous babel fish in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.



### Whizzy Wi-Fi

UK wireless technology is about to get faster, thanks to the telecoms regulator Ofcom releasing licences for a previously unused radio frequency. Speeds fast enough to transfer more than 300 digital music tracks a second should see all sorts of exciting new products, such as wireless computer monitors, on future shop shelves.

### CATS Eye £250

Enter the world of 007 with a new tracking device the size of a matchbox. The Covert Asset Tracking System, dubbed 'CATS Eye', can be attached to a valuable object and uses a combination of satellite and mobile phone technology to pinpoint its location. The CATS Eye should be in shops shortly.



### Huge-capacity disk

Get ready to store massive amounts of data, as Hitachi is set to release the world's first one-terabyte hard disk. The equivalent of a thousand gigabytes, the disk will be included in future PCs and a DVD recorder that will be able to record 500 hours of television.



## Gimmicks we can do without

Japan may be king when it comes to cool gadgets, but there are a few we don't mind missing.

**Sound Princess** detects when you sit down on the toilet and creates a loud flushing sound to mask the sound of your ablutions.



**The Nap Alarm** fits behind your ear and vibrates if your head movements indicate that you are falling asleep.

## Our verdict

Until the government and big business ensure that our infrastructure is up to scratch, we can only read about Japan's gadget bonanza with envy. Our mediocre digital

foundation means that devices like leading-edge phones capable of such feats as mobile videoconferencing wouldn't work here, even if they were available.