

[testing, testing]



38

PRODUCT NEWS

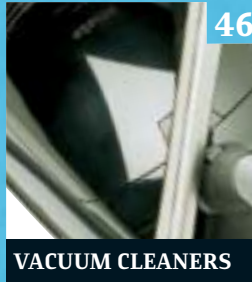
To test a new gadget for ladders, we deliberately set up a number of DIY mishaps



40

BUYING A COMPUTER

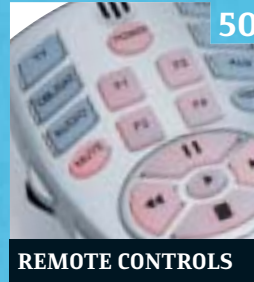
We've surveyed 15,393 readers to identify the best brands of computer



46

VACUUM CLEANERS

This month's tests turned up 12 vacs that we think you should definitely avoid



50

REMOTE CONTROLS

Our testing panel has found the best device to replace all your remote controls



52

HAIR STRAIGHTENERS

The office turned into a salon when we invited an A-list stylist to test straighteners



VACUUM CLEANERS p46

You might think you're pretty house-proud; you might even verge on the obsessive when it comes to dealing with dust – but you've got nothing on our vac-testing scientists.

The peculiar-looking contraption in the photograph (left) is one of their machines for testing vacuum cleaners; they strap in the vac and off it goes. It spreads exactly the same amount of dust over the carpet each time; grinds in the dust to simulate the effect of people walking around; and then moves the vac back and forth to suck the dust up again. We measure how much dust is sucked in when the vacuum cleaner is empty, and then repeat the test with the vac part-full and nearly full.

The differences are remarkable – the best vacs pick up 73 per cent of dust, even when they're nearly full. The worst manage only 17 per cent.

But we don't stop there. The problem with vacs is that many of them suck in dust at one end and then blow it back out through their exhausts. So there's another machine to measure how many particles of dust slip out through the exhaust – and even how big they are.

All this graft lets us spot vacs that aren't up to the job. And it highlights the champion cleaners – even if you aren't as keen on cleanliness as our testers, choose one of our Best Buys.