

[product news]

One-off reviews of recent launches

Roundup

BT FUSION

The Fusion from BT is a mobile phone that automatically switches to a broadband landline when used around the house. The technology is fascinating but we think the charges and pricing may lead to confusion. We'll be looking at the Fusion in our cordless phones article early next year, so we'll give our final verdict then.

MUSIC ON YOUR PHONE

Walkman and Apple are brands synonymous with personal music players. Now they've entered the phone market with the Walkman-branded W800i mobile phone and the Rokr iTunes phone. Both are also music players.

Apple has also introduced the diminutive Nano MP3 player – the latest and possibly the coolest addition to the iPod family.

All are currently being put through their musical paces at our lab and will feature in our personal audio test next month. We'll test the phone functions of the Rokr and Walkman for our mobile phones report in December.

Green cleaning



Cleaning without chemicals is kinder to the environment and healthier for people. So when we came across two new types of cleaning cloth that claim to work without detergents, we were keen to put them to the test.

There are various types of Enjo microfibre cloths for different cleaning tasks. Most of them you wear like a glove – all you do is wet them and get scrubbing. We gave six types to five families to try out, and the feedback was generally positive. Our trialists found them well made and easier to use than their usual cleaners. The dust glove (which you use dry) was the stand-out

favourite for effective cleaning, and they generally liked the all-purpose cloth, too. But one user said removing lime scale in hard-water areas takes time and effort with the bath glove. And most were put off by the price – £11 to £25 each. The cloths are available only from Enjo reps – 020 8349 1444.

Five other families tried four types of E-Cloth, also made from microfibre and used with water. Users were impressed by good results with minimal effort. The window and glass/polishing cloths were the most popular. One user said: 'I could never get a

PHOTOGRAPHY NICK WRIGHT

Speaker bag for music players

This zip-up bag is designed to carry and protect your CD/MP3 player when you're on the beach or in the park. As an added bonus, the Exspect Stereo Speaker Bag EX80085 comes with a hidden speaker system and an inflatable headrest.

Inside there are various pockets for storing your music player and CDs. Unless

you have a remote control, operating your player while on the move is hard as it's tucked up inside with no controls on the outside.

Once you're at your destination, you open up the speaker bag and attach the wire from the battery-operated speaker system to your music player. You can then inflate the headrest, place it on the

bag and rest your head while listening to music through the speakers.

Unfortunately, sound quality is poor. It sounds distorted and muffled (lying on your side or moving the headrest off the speaker bag reduces the muffling a bit). Also, with a portable CD player, you can hear the mechanical CD noise through the casing, and the weight of the

speakers can accidentally press on the controls on some players.

The Exspect Stereo Speaker Bag costs £40 from the Carphone Warehouse and amazon.co.uk. The EX8008 version doesn't have a speaker system and is cheaper at £20.

Verdict A gadget that's not worth the money.

Enjo gloves (below left) and E-Cloths (below) don't need detergents to clean effectively



smear-free finish with a conventional cleaner; the window cloth is excellent.' They also found the sponge cloth effective for cleaning worksurfaces. Most said they'd buy the cloths to save money on cleaning products in the long run – the maker says that, with normal use, the cloths will last 'for years'. They cost £5 to £12 from www.e-cloth.com.

Verdict Well worth considering as they're kind to the environment and can cut cleaning time.



The Exspect Stereo Speaker Bag comes with hidden speakers and inflatable headrest

A mat that makes ladders safer

Ladder accidents may be the stuff of black-and-white comedy genius, but in real life they're best avoided.

Laddermat (£23.50 from online ladder retailers) is designed to improve ladder safety by providing a firm footing on slippery, soft or uneven ground. This simple idea involves a stack of four black rubber mats, held together with an oblong metal loop. Placing two mats either side of the ladder provides an even surface for the feet of a ladder or stepladder. Stacking up to four on one side can help to counter uneven surfaces.

The Laddermat was easy to use and effective with both ladders and stepladders. When we deliberately set up potential ladder accidents, ladders with a Laddermat under both

feet were much less likely to slip on a smooth surface or pivot around on one foot. It stopped our ladders sinking into soft ground, made them seem more stable on uneven surfaces and increased our testers' confidence in using a ladder without a second person standing at the bottom. But it had no effect on the top of a ladder

slipping if rested on a smooth surface. And you'll need a second Laddermat to cope with both sets of legs on a stepladder.

Verdict The Laddermat is an effective accessory for making ladders safer, but no substitute for using a ladder properly. See the DTI's *Ladder Handbook* or *Stepladder User's Guide* for more advice.



Stacking the Laddermat on one side of the ladder can help counter uneven surfaces

the gadgeteer

#13 Aromasteam Harmony

When is a sauna a gadget? When it's just big enough for one, has a built-in CD player, and can be dismantled in just eight minutes. Great if you move house but, even better, you can move it around inside your existing home. Imagine the fun you'll have wiping away the condensation from the glass while you watch a documentary about rainforests on TV in the living room (it's like you're actually there). Alternatively, set it up in the kitchen and take your vegetables in with you for a healthy steaming before dinner. Best of all, it'll be easy to take up to the attic with all the rest of the stuff that didn't fit with your lifestyle in quite the way you thought it would, but was too expensive to throw away. The Aromasteam Harmony costs £2,350 – find details of stockists at aromasteam.co.uk.

