

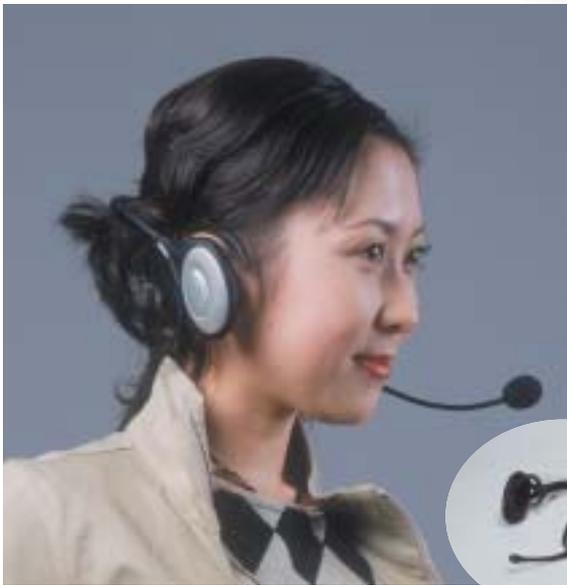


↑ i-Cybie

Artificial pet

Simulating canine responses to human language may not be the zenith of voice-recognition technology, but it's fairly important if you're making a mechanical dog. The i-Cybie is equipped with a range of sensors including motion, sound, touch and orientation. It learns to respond to its owner's voice commands with a range of mutt-like actions. So by repeatedly shouting "play dead" at your new toy you can slowly build up a (battery) life-long bond of friendship and understanding. It's just like having a real dog, but cleaner.

■ www.i-cybie.com ■ approx \$200 ex VAT



↑ Toshiba Ubiquitous headset

Bluetooth headset

Anyone with a Bluetooth network at home or in the office should try out Toshiba's Ubiquitous headset when it's released later this year. As well as letting you listen to music as you wander aimlessly within a 10m radius of your PC or stereo, it also allows you to command any of the appliances in the Bluetooth network. You can even give dictation to your PC or PDA, as long as they have voice-recognition software installed. The time-saving possibilities are many plus you'll have the freedom to dance as you write your letters.

■ www.toshiba.co.uk ■ Price: TBA



→ Partner UT-203

Voice translator

The optimistically named UT (Universal Translator) only works with English, German and Russian but it can still translate 3,000 phrases. Simply speak into the cassette-box sized translator and out comes the phrase in the language of your choice. It's guaranteed to confuse the hell out of you, and possibly raise the suspicions of any conversational partner.

■ www.ectaco.co.uk ■ £175 ex VAT





← Orange Wildfire

Voice-activated answering service

If you aren't part of the new generation of kids with superhuman thumbs then you might like this digit-saving answering service.

Available with any Orange package, Wildfire is a virtual personal assistant which answers your phone, takes messages, keeps your contacts and even sends faxes. You can dictate up to 150 numbers to it and then use the voice-dialling function.

There are also several switchboard functions including a second line and immediate call return without hanging up.

■ www.orange.co.uk ■ £10 ex VAT

Do as I say

↓ Ford Model U

Concept car

Among Model U's host of outstanding features, one of the most interesting is the conversational speech interface. The driver can control the car's navigation, entertainment, phone, climate control and sunroof systems by using natural sentences, rather than monosyllabic commands. If there is ambiguity in the commands, or the car's 50,000 word vocabulary proves inadequate, Model U politely requests clarification using a human-like voice. And the best bit: it only speaks when it's spoken to.

■ www.ford.com ■ Price: n/a



↑ inVoca Universal Remote

Entertainment remote control

If you are disappointed that you don't have a house full of servants to order about, then at the very least you can tell your TV, video and stereo what to do and when to do it. Relieving you of the need to wear a bandoleer of remote controls and exhaust your poor little fingers using them, the inVoca controls devices of any make. You can program it with up to 50 vocal commands for simple or multistep operations. Should this prove too difficult there's a free technical support line, though you may need to use your fingers to dial it.

■ www.invoca.com

■ Price: TBA

