

top gear

We look at the latest and must-have gadgets from around the world to gauge what might be on the shelves of electronics shops in the months to come



← NTT Docomo Wristomo

Wristwatch mobile phone

Another cool gadget planned for the Japanese market is a mobile phone that takes the form of a watch. NTT Docomo's Wristomo sits snugly on your wrist, placing the phone where the face of a watch would be. The microphone is located at one end of the wriststrap while the earpiece is situated at the other end. When you make or take a call, simply remove the watch, unfold the two straps and use it like a standard phone. The Wristomo is due to go on sale in Japan soon, but there are unfortunately no plans to launch outside the country.

■ www.wristomo.com ■ approx £263

→ Panasonic Karaoke Microphone

Karaoke microphone

The Japanese are kings of karaoke, so it's no surprise to find companies cashing in on this national craze. Panasonic has managed to fit an entire home karaoke system into an oversized SD (Secure Digital) microphone. Simply plug it into a TV and you're away. Songs are stored on the SD card, so you just select the tune you want to croon and the device does the rest. It displays the lyrics on a TV screen, pumping the backing tune out of the speakers. Sadly, though, this is yet another cool device that the Japanese plan to keep to themselves.

■ www.panasonic.co.uk ■ approx £105



← Sony Z1010

3G handset

Sony Ericsson is jumping on the 3G (third generation) bandwagon with the Z1010. Available in the second half of 2003, this handset is optimised for both video-conferencing and video-messaging. The Z1010's main screen is colour, while the front panel features a greyscale display that lets you access information when the phone is closed. Sony's Memory Stick media can be used to store and transfer images and video clips.

■ www.sonyericsson.com ■ price: TBA



↑ Toshiba ApriAlpha

Home-help robot

Toshiba has developed a home-help robot that can chat to its owners, respond to voice commands and even recognise faces. The ApriAlpha, which looks like a funky vacuum cleaner, is designed to work as a user-friendly interface between equipment in a home network and the people who use it. Toshiba hopes to develop the robot to the point where it can act as a 'life support partner' that can handle household chores and help care for the sick or aged.

■ www.toshiba.co.uk ■ price: TBA

→ Nokia 3300

Mobile phone/media device

This funky Nokia device features a digital media player and built-in FM stereo radio, as well as a mobile phone. Music can be transferred to the 3300 via a USB cable and is stored on a 64MB MMC (Multimedia Card). It supports advanced audio coding which Nokia claims lets you store up to nine hours of digital music. It also has a Qwerty keyboard to make texting simple and is preloaded with several Java games. So far the 3300 is only available in the US, but a slightly different design will be launched outside the States using the GSM 900/1,800 frequency band.

■ www.nokia.com ■ price: TBA



↘ Sony Vaio U101

Ultra-portable notebook

Sony's updated version of its ever-so-cool Vaio notebook has been enhanced to include easy-to-reach control buttons. The U101 is powered by a 600MHz Celeron processor, has a 7.1in LCD screen, houses a 30GB hard drive and tips the scales at a lightweight 880g. Its claimed battery life is 5.5 hours and there's built-in wireless Wi-Fi support. The Vaio is on sale in Japan now, but so far there are no plans to launch in the UK. Watch this space.

■ www.sony.co.uk ■ approx £842

