

tokyo journal

Recovering from the new year festivities, J Mark Lytle samples Tokyo's latest ultra-cool devices. A new GPS mobile handset ensures he'll never get lost again, advertising takes a new twist with talking posters and the crowd goes wild for a footy-themed subnotebook

As we lurch toward the cherry blossom-filled springtime that Japan is rightly famous for, it's likely to be around now that Tokyo retailers start taking down their festive decorations. Shops aside, Christmas came and went last year with scarcely a whimper, while the new year festivities reached their usual Bacchanalian heights of excess. *Bonenkai*, as end-of-year parties are known here, provide an important sense of closure to the passing 'twelvemonth', whereas Christmas is just another day for the average Tokyo Joe.

Big business, of course, never misses an opportunity and the yuletide banner was as glitzy and enticing as they come, even if it is a meaningless import to most Japanese folk. My local shopping centre did its best to milk the maximum fiscal juice from the season by splitting it into 'Christmas, parts I and II'. The point of such an affront to western sensibilities is to sell, sell, sell – and there was no shortage of intriguing products this time round.

Sunny side of the street

In the ever-whirling mobile phone frenzy, innovations have finally started to forge a certain level of differentiation between handsets. Although generally excellent, previous models have tended to be somewhat similar to each other. This is due, in part, to a complex form of restrictive trading (known as *keiretsu*) by the networks in collusion with manufacturers, leaving punters with simple choices between case colour or form factor.

Now things are looking up. Au, for example, used the end-of-year period to launch three new handsets equipped with a GPS (global positioning system) chip. It uses three satellites to pinpoint your location with 100-metre accuracy indoors and 10-metre accuracy outside. This is a service whose value cannot be overstated, as – apart from the very biggest roads – Japan is a place where the streets really do have no name. One of the handsets can even download and play video clips – all without a sniff of 3G (third-generation) telephony.

Line Up
C5001T by TOSHIBA

見たい動画をスムーズに美しく再生。先進機能満載のムービーケータイ。

- 手の中で気軽に動画が楽しめる
azmovie対応。動画の再生をサポートする数々の機能で、これまでのアニメーションとは異なる滑らかなスムーズかつ臨場感のある映像が楽しめます。
- 高精細ポリシリコンTFT液晶搭載
トップクラスの解像度(144×176ドット)と美しい色合いを実現。また、液晶の反応速度が速くストレスのない動画再生が可能です。
- “デジタル・ステレオサウンド”の高音質
標準セットに付属のスイッチ付きステレオイヤホンマイクを使えば、動画再生もクリアな音質で存分に楽しめます。
※ステレオ再生は、ステレオ対応コンテンツ再生時のみとなります。
- 大容量のデータフォルダ約800KB
★動画を満喫
ダウンロードした動画は保存して、好きなときに再生することができます。
★アセット済みの消去可能なazmovieサンプル(168KB)をダウンロードしてください。
- 専用コンテンツ「TOSHIBA User Club Site」
東芝オリジナルサイトで多彩な動画コンテンツ

※商品をお持ち帰らせてご覧いただけます。
●動作環境
Win: Internet

↑ James Bond would be jealous of this GPS-enabled mobile phone

→ As if advertising wasn't invasive enough, make way for the talking poster

Speaking of which...

On sale at the same time as the seductive mobiles was a somewhat less appealing – but altogether more peculiar – piece of kit called Poster Sound. A company by the name of Item-16 is offering to stick a 2cm-thick speaker on to the back of a poster, turning it into a 1ft-square flat speaker.

Poster Sound 1 PATHE

よろこびポスターサウンドのページに
ポスターから音がでる面白いな製品をご紹介します。

Innovative patented technology "Poster Sound" that enables to transform your poster to plane speaker that make sound or music from their surface.
It can be used any applications as wall mount, ceiling hanging, or floor standing.
Combination of the plain speakers and your favorite art posters or any attractive art posters will make totally new decoration or promotion of the commercial/public/private space that could not be achieved by ordinary loud speakers.

●ポスターから音がでる。
お好きなポスターや壁に入ったポスターから音がでる特別な技術の面白いスピーカーです。壁にかけた時、スタンドで立てておいたりお部屋の広さで部屋の演出ができます。

My local shopping centre did its best to milk the maximum fiscal juice from the season by splitting it into 'Christmas, parts I and II'



↑ You know it's all over when they start selling football-themed subnotebooks to get the ball rolling for World Cup 2002

The maker's website claims that this revolutionary device can be fixed to the wall, hung from the ceiling or self-standing. Wherever it's situated, the Poster Sound is sure to thoroughly annoy folk everywhere before long.

Football crazy

Finally, in a nod to the imminent World Cup, Toshiba has launched a football-themed version of its Libretto subnotebook PC. This Crusoe-powered mini-marvel sports FIFA's official World Cup logo on the lid and features World Cup animations and footy-based sound schemes and screensavers. Should you fancy becoming the envy of both gadget freaks and fans of the beautiful game, it's only available at www.toshiba.co.jp/soccer. But be warned – you'd better brush up on your Japanese before surfing in that direction. ■