

new products

As ever, there are some great new gadgets on the market this month, so you might want to consider adding some to your home or office setup. To help you sort the duff from the desirable, we share our views on some of the more interesting product releases



O2 XDA

Personal digital assistant/mobile phone

The newly formed O2 has launched its take on the PDA (personal digital assistant), the XDA. Using O2's mobile web service, this handheld device lets you surf the web, listen to music, write documents and, of course, make phone calls.

The XDA combines the Pocket PC operating system and GPRS (general packet radio service) networking to provide always-on internet connection.

The XDA offers adapted versions of Excel, Word, Internet Explorer and other Microsoft applications, such as its latest Media Player. You can use the programs and make and receive calls at the same time, so you won't have to keep reconnecting to the web each time the XDA rings. Its reflective TFT (thin-film transistor) touch-screen means that the display can be read even in bright sunlight. The PDA has a built-in SD (secure digital) memory card slot, while a stereo hands-free kit and keyboard are optional extras.

O2: www.o2.co.uk

Price: TBA

IBC Pontis SP600

MP3 player

According to the manufacturer, the Pontis SP600 is the first MP3 player capable of supporting memory cards in different formats. It has two slots, one for multimedia and one for CompactFlash cards. This flexibility is combined with a 4GB memory capacity, letting you enjoy up to 66 hours of CD-quality music. At 90x65x20mm and just under 100g the Pontis should prove easy to cart about – you may even forget you're carrying it.

The SP600 comes with a removable 64MB flash memory card as standard, and there is even the option of playing a selection of preloaded games via its integrated games interface. The graphic display clearly shows the name of the tune and the artist, with battery and volume alerts displayed across the bottom of the screen. A backlight is incorporated to improve visibility and the device is supplied with Sennheiser earphones. In case you get bored with the standard silver casing, interchangeable coloured covers are available as optional extras.

IBC: 01344 752 700

Website: www.ibc-ltd.co.uk

Price: £149 ex VAT



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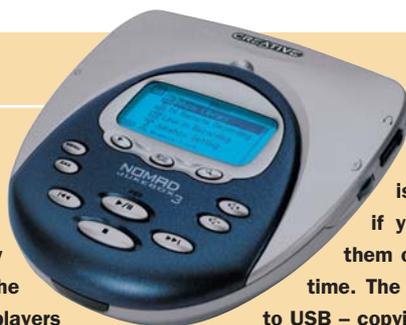
Creative Jukebox 3

Digital audio player

Creative's first Jukebox, reviewed back in November 00, was a truly groundbreaking product. Addressing the lack of internal storage offered by MP3 players using solid-state memory, Creative packed in a hard drive providing acres of space. However innovative it was, though, the Jukebox was not without its niggles.

One thing to note, there is no Jukebox 2. The new model, according to Creative, is named version 3 to 'represent the giant leap in technology that the player has attained'. The most noticeable difference is that the Jukebox has been on a diet. It's still relatively large compared to flash memory-based devices, but it's lost a fair amount of bulk, measuring 123x130x35mm.

The four AA NiMH (nickel metal hydride) batteries have been replaced with a thin lithium-ion unit, increasing playback to an estimated 11 hours and cutting down the weight. There's also a second bay available, so if you purchase an additional battery you can boost playback to 22 hours.



The transfer speed of USB (universal serial bus) is adequate if you're ripping CDs one by one, but if you've already got a large amount ready getting them on to the original Jukebox device could take some time. The new version, however, sports FireWire in addition to USB – copying 90MB of MP3s over FireWire took 32 seconds, compared to nearly two minutes for USB.

You can now also record MP3s directly to the device itself, via analogue or new digital optical line-in. This removes the necessity for a PC, although you'll still need one if you want to make the most out of the Jukebox 3. You can't, for example, rename recordings without a PC.

Verdict

Not as groundbreaking as the original Jukebox, this version is still a worthy update. With 20GB of space you should fit up to 500 CDs on it, depending on compression, which will satisfy most music lovers.

Creative: +353 1 433 3200

Website: www.creative.com

Price: £297 ex VAT

Brain Boxes Bluetooth card

CompactFlash Bluetooth wireless networking card

This plug-and-play CompactFlash card supports any device running on Windows CE.Net (real-time operating system for mobile devices) that is Bluetooth-enabled.

The Bluetooth 1.1-compliant Type 1 card is designed for use with handheld PCs, PDAs (personal digital assistants) and laptops. It features onboard flash memory, making it easier to upgrade to the latest Bluetooth specification, and is currently available in 3.3V and 5V versions. Along with its integral antenna, the CompactFlash card weighs in at 14g. Once it is inserted into a mobile device you can wirelessly synchronise data or exchange phone numbers with your Bluetooth mobile phone or any other enabled device. Alternatively, you can access the web by connecting your PDA to a Bluetooth mobile phone.

Brain Boxes: 0151 220 2500

Website: www.brainboxes.com

Price: £147 ex VAT



Olympus DS-330

Digital voice recorder

This digital voice recorder, Olympus claims, removes all those excuses for you being disorganised. The DS-330's USB (universal serial bus) docking station makes transferring files to your PC straightforward and virtually instantaneous – perfect for busy professionals who need to keep records of business meetings. The device measures 108x41x21mm and weighs just 75g with batteries, so it's ideal for carrying around in your jacket pocket. It offers storage space for up to 330 minutes of continuous dictation in long-play mode.

Advanced DSS (digital speech standard) file format provides high-quality data compression while a noise cancellation feature removes unwanted hiss and unnecessary background noise. Notes and messages can be stored in one of five separate folders, each with a 199-message capacity. As this is digital recording, all individual files can be moved, deleted and transferred and additional information can be inserted into a file at any point. When connected to a PC, the DS-330 conveniently functions as a USB microphone and speaker, with the help of the supplied software.

Olympus: 020 7250 4600

Website: www.olympus.co.uk

Price: £169.99 inc VAT



Hyundai ImageQuest LM1510A

Flat-panel display

This TFT (thin-film transistor) 15in monitor from Hyundai has built-in speakers tucked away in the base of the screen, meaning you won't need to shell out for an extra sound system. The ImageQuest's detachable blue plastic stand allows the screen to be used standing or attached to a wall. It has full plug-and-play capability, making it easy to hook up to your PC, and two USB (universal serial bus) ports to attach additional peripherals, such as digital cameras. The LM1510A has a maximum resolution of 1,024x768 and a 0.297mm pixel pitch, and the TFT screen provides perfect pictures even in strong sunlight thanks to its antireflective and antistatic coating. The controls are placed along the edge of the machine, keeping the front panel flat and uncluttered. The unit measures 387x388x201mm and weighs just under 5.4kg.

Hyundai: +49 (0)6146 904 112

Website: www.hyundaiq.com

Price: TBA



Hitachi DV-MV230E

Camcorder

The DV-MV230E is part of Hitachi's new range of camcorders that record on to 8cm DVD discs, making it easier to find and edit footage once it has been shot.

It also makes playback easier, as the discs can fit straight into your home DVD player.

The 1.1Mp (megapixel) CCD (charge-coupled device) offers digital stereo surround sound and recording times of up to two hours in standard quality mode, which is a fair amount of footage. The sleek silver Hitachi weighs just 730g and measures a tiny 88x101x155mm. The 2.5in colour TFT (thin-film transistor) monitor screen flips out from the side of the camera to provide a clear view of what you're recording.

One of the major advantages of DVD camcorders is that reliability is greatly improved, with a disc boasting an average lifespan of 30 years with a re-recording life of 100,000 times. Plus there is the advantage of instant access – it creates a table of contents while recording, so the camcorder always knows exactly where everything is on the disc.

Hitachi: 01628 643 000

Website: www.hitachidigitalmedia.com

Price: approximately £1,000





Samsung DVD-H40

DVD player with hard drive

Among the clutch of innovative new products Korean consumer electronics giant Samsung launched this spring is the DVD-H40, a DVD player with a 40GB hard disk. This is enough space to store 40 hours of television, 10 DVD titles or to build an archive of camcorder movies by copying them via the hard disk to VHS tape. You can also watch TV while recording the broadcast to hard drive for viewing again later, a feature known as 'scene again'.

The Samsung DVD-H40 features a Sony Memory Stick slot so, if you use a Memory Stick-equipped digital camera, you can show digital photos on your TV, the 21st century equivalent of an evening around the slide projector.

Samsung: 0800 521 652

Website: www.samsungelectronics.co.uk

Price: £699 inc VAT



Kodak EasyShare LS420

Digital camera

This sleek, ultra-portable 2.1Mp (megapixel) camera is designed for ease-of-use, weighing in at just 160g. The EasyShare LS420 has an all-glass aspheric lens with continuous 3x digital zoom and incorporates Kodak's colour science technology. The device is supplied with a docking station through which pictures can be transferred to a PC at the touch of a button. The five-way joystick allows you to scroll through photos with minimum fuss, selecting images for printing and deleting any bad ones.

The EasyShare offers 8MB of internal memory and an MMC (multimedia card)/SD (secure digital) expansion slot. The LS420 also allows users to capture and review video clips and has a built-in microphone, which provides high-quality sound to accompany the footage. All EasyShare cameras are supplied with Kodak's handy picture software, which includes plenty of useful tools. Its One Touch to Better feature, for example, colour-matches the image and automatically changes the printer driver settings to ensure the best prints possible.

Kodak: 0870 243 0270

Website: www.kodak.com

Price: £249.99 inc VAT



Sony Vaio-U

Notebook

The Vaio-U is the smallest Windows XP notebook to date, according to Sony, and the first device of its kind that can be used as a DV (digital video) recorder. Measuring just

185x36x139mm and weighing 860g, the Vaio-U offers 128MB of memory running on a Transmeta Crusoe processor. The tiny unit packs in a 20GB hard drive, two USB (universal serial bus) ports, a four-pin iLink IEEE 1394 port, PC Card and Memory Stick slots and an ethernet port.

Sony has incorporated thumbgrips just below the screen so that it can be held easily with one hand. Under the right thumb there's a pointer, which is used to control the cursor, while under the left thumb are two buttons that mimic left and right mouse-clicking. The ThumbPhrase system makes use of a shadow keyboard arranged like a mobile phone, whereby one button represents several characters or letters. This is used by the left thumb, leaving the right thumb free for other functions. Sony: 0870 542 4424

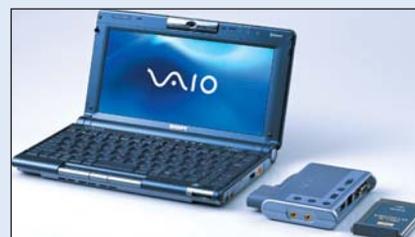
Website: www.vaio.sony-europe.com

Price: approximately £800

Sony Vaio C1

Notebook

This month sees not one but two launches by electronic giant, Sony. The Vaio



C1 is the company's second attempt at a miniature notebook, although this device is expected to be more expensive than its cheaper sibling, the Vaio-U. The device runs at 867MHz and offers 128MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM. It has a widescreen 8.9in display with ultra-wide SXGA resolution (1,280x600), topped off with a video camera with 3.5-pixel resolution. The Sony's dimensions are 249x28x152mm and it weighs in at 998g, making it an extremely portable device. It can also double up as a digital video recorder – simply hook the unit up to an external TV tuner and install the bundled GigaPocket software. The Vaio C1 is then ready to record TV programmes straight on to its 40GB hard disk drive.

This is the first time Sony has bundled its GigaPocket with a notebook because of the processing capabilities it demands. But developments in mobile technology, coupled with a hardware Mpeg-2 encoder chips, which relieves the CPU of much of the heavy work, means the C1 is powerful enough to run it.

Sony: 0870 542 4424

Website: www.vaio.sony-europe.com

Price: approximately £1,222