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# Broadband revolution

**In Focus**  
Video and still cameras

**GPS units**  
Never get lost again

**Parallel importers**  
What you need to know



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Available from first week of August.

## 04 LAPTOPS

What to look for when buying a laptop computer

## 08 PARALLEL IMPORTERS

What you need to know

## 14 KITCHENS OF THE FUTURE

It's the social hub of most homes and now technology is giving them a make-over

## 17 DIGITAL CAMERAS

Everything you need to know about your next video and still camera

## 20 GAME ON

Spin these and have some fun

## 21 MOVIES & MUSIC

Our choice pick of what to watch and listen to

## 22 HOME AUTOMATION

Control everything by the press of a button

## THE WRITERS

Peter Griffin, Vikki Bland, Adam Gifford, Simon Hendery, Keith Newman, Kirsten MacFarlane, Matt Lucas



# 9

Get the full picture on the latest video projectors, plasma and LCD TVs



# 6

COVER STORY  
The broadband revolution is almost here. Get a taste of the multimedia future that we all want



# 10

The prices of GPS units are coming down so you need never have another argument about getting lost again



# edit...

Steve Hart – Editor

My favourite item in this first edition of Inside Technology & Innovation is one by Peter Griffin on GPS units. For someone with no sense of direction when behind the wheel I can't imagine anyone not having one. Not only do they show you where to go but they speak instructions too (without any sarcastic comments).

As many of you know, we are still waiting for the broadband revolution. Adam Gifford takes a stab at predicting the future we were all promised 10 years ago. It seems on-demand TV and movies – that will be cheaper to download than hire for the night – are not too far away.

In among information on digital cameras, TVs, games and movies reviews, Vikki Bland takes a look at parallel importers and discovers life can get complicated when products go wrong. Everyone should read her report.

We have all worked hard to present the features in a format that is both entertaining and easy to digest. I hope you enjoy what you find and we welcome your comments and suggestions.

## INSIDE SERIES

Editor: Steve Hart  
Designer: James Russell, Justine Sarbutt  
Sales manager: Kerri Tait  
Sales rep: Bianca Lawton  
Sales coordinator: Emily Hancox  
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## ADVERTISE

Contact Bianca Lawton on (09) 3736400 extension 8671  
Email: bianca.lawton@apn.co.nz

## COMING UP

The next edition of Inside Technology & Innovation will be out with the New Zealand Herald on Tuesday 28 November. It will be packed with features such as how to make your home wireless, putting your home movies on DVD, personal hifi, noise cancelling headphones, hard disk video recorders, best microwaves and techie stocking fillers for Christmas.

Lenovo recommends Windows® XP Professional.

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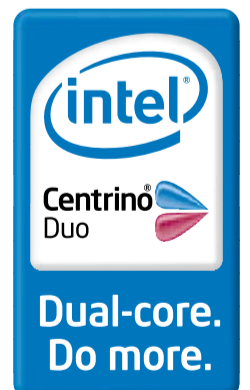
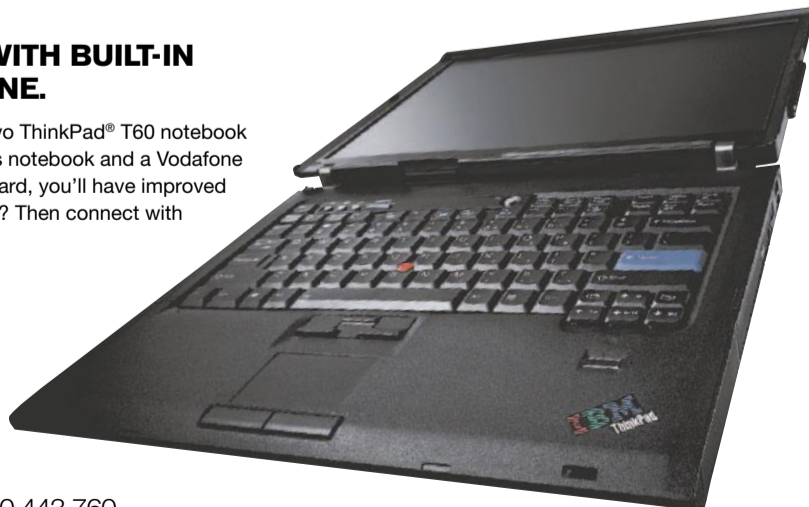
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# Notable notebooks

In the market for a new laptop? Vikki Bland explores some of the possibilities and pitfalls

So you're in the market for a new laptop computer — lucky you. More than ever these computers can act as full entertainment centres — able to play DVDs, CDs, MP3s, surf the net and if you're so inclined — you can do work on them too.

They often come with wide-screen displays for watching movies and playing games and are also called 'notebooks'.

When it's freezing outside, you can take a laptop to bed (or to Bali) and if it's a beautiful day you can take it to a park bench and finish that school or work assignment alfresco.

Small, lightweight laptops are ideal if you need to work while travelling, and any laptop is a good backup around the house — especially if you have a wireless network.

If you have children at school and they need to be online to complete homework, each can use the laptop in turn and in their own space (or you can be really generous and buy them one each.) Just make sure the laptops are WiFi capable.

A laptop computer is less durable than its desktop counterpart and rarely lasts as long because it is carted around and jarred when dropped on to desks and benches — even when the drop is minimal. Laptop warranties are not particularly comprehensive and only rarely will a laptop survive if you spill something sticky or corrosive over the keyboard.

The best laptops have improved their durability through makers using waterproof keyboards, foam-packed internal components and tough magnesium alloy outer cases to alleviate shock damage; however, cheaper brands may side-step these measures to get the price down. To ensure a laptop will go the respectable and reasonable distance of around three years, pay careful attention to strength and durability features and to the materials the laptop is built with. And always pay extra for a good quality carry case.

Laptops are more expensive than desktops because their small components cost more to make.

If you want to run games, play DVDs, listen to music and generally use your laptop as a multimedia centre, you will need to buy one near the top end of the price range because multimedia applications require plenty of memory (RAM), a good-sized widescreen display, fast processing power via 'dual or duo' processors and a top quality graphics card.

If the laptop is used for the internet, and to display documents or photos, a model with one processor, a smaller screen and less internal memory will suffice. Ideally, both types of laptop should be WiFi capable for connection to a home or office wireless network and be able to take a 3G mobile data card (or have internal 3G capability) to connect to 3G networks for internet access when you are away from a WiFi area.

Other factors affecting the price of a new laptop are its brand and the way it is sold. For example, a laptop can usually be bought for several hundred dollars less if you buy from a direct seller such as Dell Computer. This requires you to buy over the phone or internet. These laptops are made to order at its overseas factory and then shipped to your address.

So why doesn't everyone buy a laptop this way? Well, there are a couple of drawbacks. First, when you buy direct you need a pretty good idea of what you want because there's no retail specialist to talk to and no nationwide chain of stores to pop in to get a 'look and feel' of the devices.

Second, decent laptops always cost more than \$1000, and spending that much over the phone then waiting for delivery of an as-yet unseen device unnerves some people. Finally, if something goes wrong you can't run back to the store with it and have the retailer repair or replace it.

When shopping around for the best deals make sure the salesperson knows about the products you want to buy — don't settle for a someone who seems vague about the technology and doesn't know the key features and benefits of the computer you are interested in.

The first thing you should be asked is what you want to use a laptop for. So before you leave the house be sure to think that question through.

Will you use a laptop mainly for internet access, photo editing, music storage, movies, gaming, office applications — or all of the above?

The bottom line is, the more you know about what you want to use a laptop for, the more likely you are to get the one that meets your needs. ■



## WHY MACS?

Why do people in movies always seem to be using Apple Mac laptops? Well Apple probably pays for that. But the Apple brand is renowned within media and entertainment industries for its technology platform — considered superior to the traditional PC and better able to support graphic-intense games and creative applications such as those used in computer-generated imaging (CGI) and desktop publishing. Some people buy Apple laptops because they prefer the Apple operating system.

As a result of its different technology and lower-than-PC sales volumes — and despite the fact Apple laptops now have processors made by PC-champion Intel — Apple laptops are quite a bit pricier than other brands. Apple's most recent laptop range is the MacBook (pictured) starting from \$2359 and available in black and white. The MacBooks have 13, 15 or 17-inch widescreen displays and a video camera for video conferencing on-the-go, optical digital audio input and output, wireless networking ability and swags of multimedia software. They replace Apple's iBook and PowerBook range.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- **How much RAM does the computer have? You'll need at least 512 meg of RAM — but pay for one gig or more if you can stretch to it.**
- **Will the laptop play DVDs?**
- **Does it burn CDs and DVDs? This is a useful feature for backing up photos and important files or for making your own DVD home movies.**
- **How big is the hard drive? Look for at least 80 gig of space. The hard drive is where all your programs and files are permanently stored.**

Arrive fashionably early.



Model shown is the iCN 520. RRP \$999

The smart GPS solution. With enhanced features like 3D map views, full voice guidance, multiple destinations and a touch screen, the iCN 520 will get you to your destination more easily than ever before - giving you plenty of time to avoid the queues!

The portable car-to-car navigation range starts from just \$699. Only from Navman.

Available from Dick Smith Electronics, Harvey Norman, Noel Leeming, Sound Around, Leading Edge Communications and other selected retailers.

 **NAVMAN**  
Ultimate Navigation

# Desperate to



# download

The PC will soon become the centre of all entertainment – able to deliver the latest music, movies and any TV show you want to watch. Oh, and you'll be able to use it for work too. Adam Gifford takes a look at the future . . .

It's 2016 and you're sitting down to start the day's work. No meetings of sufficient importance today to justify the cost of the commute to the office, so all the work can be done at home.

Wake up the screen, and you see a couple of your team members are already at work. You'll have a video-conference with them a bit later, but now it's time to read the overnight emails and check the industry news sites and trusted analysts' blogs that smart software agents have dragged down for you.

The bank balance icon is glowing reassuringly green in the corner, meaning your pay went in. Red would mean a deduction, which, since you haven't authorised any payments over the past few hours, could be cause for alarm.

One of your co-workers sees you're at your desk, and requests a voice call. It all comes over the same fibre network from the utility company, with a wireless back-up from another provider just in case. The copper phone line was mined five years ago, sold off by Telecom's receivers and turned into something more useful.

On your calendar you see a seminar later in the morning for the diploma you are taking. Apart from a two day induction and a fortnightly evening seminar with others in the same city, the course is run by email, web exercises and video links.

You will also take some time to choose a movie for tonight and download it. Or you could choose from any number of soaps or TV series – perhaps a nostalgic look at *Desperate Housewives*, or *Lost*.

Your programme subscriptions are already waiting to be viewed, and you can see the spare screen you keep for news and sport out of the corner of your eye.

Imagining the future is a tricky business. According to Mike Ruettgers, the former chief executive of storage technology giant EMC, predictions about the impact of technology are always too high for the short term and too low for the long term.

There is also the phenomenon that the hive mind, which is how some people see the internet, can behave in different ways than all the well trained Masters of Business Administration would have us believe.

There is also the age factor. Most of the people making the predictions are older than the majority of people making the decisions

about where to go on the internet and what to do with it. That's planetary demographics. What percentage of people over 25 have a MySpace space? It's probably far lower than those with an Amazon account.

Playing "real-time" games online will also be a breeze with hide and seek shoot 'em ups being the most popular. And the recipe for this evening's meal is just a few clicks away.

Elon University in North Carolina and the Pew Internet and American Life Project have conducted predictive surveys of the internet covering the past 15 years.

Reading through the predictions made in the early 1990s by the internet pioneers, it's interesting to see what still seems wise and what has been proved wrong or so last century.

"The computer will increasingly replace the commuter," said Gerald Celente back in 1993, well before Peak Oil became front page fodder.

Tim Berners-Lee, who wrote the source code for HTML that made the world wide web possible, was looking at the technology curve that will bring the internet to every home.

"I'm looking forward to the day when my daughter finds a rolled-up 1000-pixel-by-1000-pixel color screen in her cereal packet, with a magnetic back so it sticks to the fridge," Berners-Lee said in 1995.

The New Zealand Government's digital strategy is over a more modest five years, and a lot of it is about playing catch up from the dial-up drudge that most internet users in this country experience, because of our past telecommunications policy, or lack of one.

"New Zealand will be a world leader in using information and technology to realise its economic, social, environmental and cultural goals, to the benefit of all its people," the strategy declares.

"Affordable high speed access" is the key. For that to happen, and for New Zealand to catch up with countries such as Korea, Japan and the more advanced European countries, it needs to get out of its copper mindset and on to fibre, with wireless to provide mobility.

Peter McCauley, a former Internet New Zealand chief executive and now programme manager for the New Zealand Digital Strategy, says too many people here have bought into the myth that bandwidth is a commodity in short supply.

"The latest episode of *Desperate Housewives* should be streaming from a New Zealand server, not from 3000 streams across the Pacific"

PETER MCCAULEY,  
PROGRAMME MANAGER  
NEW ZEALAND DIGITAL  
STRATEGY

"Bandwidth is infinite, it's just a matter of laying more fibre in the ground to meet demand. It's not like radio waves, where the spectrum needs to be regulated because it gets saturated," he says.

"Traffic is traffic, content is content, and at this stage video is the most significant part of traffic, all the other stuff goes along with it."

The reason we still go out on a cold and rainy night and browse the racks at the DVD rental store is because our internet access is too slow and/or expensive to download a movie or TV show. Take away that limitation and someone's business model just disappears.

Hollywood films and top television shows will account for many of the downloads.

McCauley says that is why New Zealand needs some sort of content provider service, so popular material is not soaking up international bandwidth.

"The latest episode of *Desperate Housewives* should be streaming from a New Zealand server, not from 3000 streams across the Pacific," he says.

Other material starting to appear on sites such as MySpace and YouTube will also become far more important.

"Content that people develop themselves will have a huge impact. People have their digital camera, they make a home movie, then they want to make it available for their friends or anyone else who may be interested.

"This is going to create a huge range of niche markets. People are going to move into community and individual markets for content, and you will be part of 20 different communities."

It's an idea that has taken off worldwide, and the only way you are likely to see the results is by downloading them.

McCauley believes what will really drive the spread of real broadband in New Zealand will be the arrival of a set top box "which will allow you to watch rugby any way you want".

He points to French company Iliad which is giving away set top boxes and offering a range of multimedia over the internet along with free telephone calling to anyone on the network.

McCauley says the subscription revenue from such a model could be enough to get the banks to cough up the \$1.75 billion required to get fibre to almost every New Zealand home. ■

# Straight up?

Parallel importers: Dodgy dealers or kosher businessfolk? Vikki Bland investigates

When parallel importing got the green light around 1998, traditional electronics resellers were upset. Dire warnings of 'cowboy' importers selling sub-standard electronics products and engaging in less than honest sales and service methods were issued. Those in support of parallel importing argued the increased competition and lower prices would be good for the budget-conscious buyer and would sharpen the sales and service skills of too-comfortable authorised resellers and retail chains.

Now, eight years later, is it safe to buy consumer electronics such as computers, MP3 players and digital cameras from a parallel importer?

Sam Reid, 19, says that probably depends on personal experience, and in his case it's one of 'buyer beware'.

"I bought three items from Parallel Imported in Constellation Drive on Auckland's North Shore. One was a Pioneer CD head unit which came with a one-year warranty for an extra \$10. After about four months a pin that held the face plate to the head unit broke so I took it back because it was an obvious design flaw. I was told 'Yep sure, we'll get that fixed for you and it'll take less than two weeks'.

"After two weeks I started calling every week and then after six weeks they called to say I could come and pick up the head unit but I would have to pay \$26 dollars because I had broken the pin myself, which I hadn't. They wouldn't give it back until I paid, so I didn't have much choice," says Reid.

He also bought a Motorola V3 mobile phone which he says has dust beneath the screen - but he's not going to try returning it.

"Parallel importers sell themselves on how cheap they are, but if something goes wrong, a parallel importer just doesn't stand by the product like a normal retailer would," he says.

Tayne Derriman, director of Parallel Imported which has four Auckland stores including the one Reid shopped at, says he'd like to know who was overseeing Reid's repair job and when the repair process was initiated.

"We have 72 staff and about three months ago I decided that if a customer was unhappy I wanted to hear about it personally. So there is now a 'contact the boss' link on our web site," says Derriman.

He says Reid should have received a new head unit on the spot and if there is dust underneath the screen of his mobile phone, it will be replaced.

Parallel importers have to comply with the Consumer Guarantees Act and Fair Trading Act, says Derriman.

"We do between \$50 million and \$100 million of business a year, so we are obviously doing something right. We give people the option to buy something with a warranty and we follow the guidelines of manufacturer's warranties when we create our own warranties," says Derriman.

Derriman is referring to the practice parallel

importers have of placing their own local warranties (usually three to 12 months) on parallel imported goods and setting up their own repair shops, as Parallel Imported has, because the overseas warranties on parallel imported electronics goods are only valid in the country the products were made in.

Parallel importers also can't easily access new parts locally. By comparison, a product bought from an authorised reseller is backed by the length of the original manufacturer's warranty because the product has been shipped to the reseller direct, and because the authorised reseller is provided with parts by commercial agreement with the parent company.

Tony Wills, managing director for Canon New Zealand says Canon recently bought a number of its own brand of cameras from parallel importers because it saw cameras come in via its servicing department and the serial numbers had been tampered with - either cut off or forged.

"When we asked customers where they had purchased the cameras from, we found it was parallel importers so we went and bought a dozen cameras and 50 per cent of them turned out to have serial numbers missing or forged. We are investigating possible causes with our parent in Japan," says Wills.

This is the sort of stuff that gives parallel importers a dodgy image, but it's an image Derriman finds frustrating. He recently took the rare step (for a cash-conscious retailer) of hiring a PR firm to communicate the message that "parallel importing is legal and has to be above board".

"We don't accept cameras with serial numbers removed and while we obviously don't buy our Canon cameras from Canon New Zealand, we do buy them from Canon wholesalers in Hong Kong, Singapore and New York," says Derriman.

He says the serial numbers filed off the Canon cameras were probably because Canon's parent supplied a wholesaler and then stipulated the wholesaler could not export the cameras (a common stipulation, used to protect authorised international resellers). Derriman says wholesalers try to get around these rules by exporting products with the serial numbers removed. In theory, the cameras then can't be tracked back through the supply chain to the wholesaler (they still can, but that's another story).

Derriman admits there have been cowboys in the parallel importing business, but says the New Zealand market is rid of them and he's annoyed that parallel importers doing the right thing aren't recognised.

Canon's Wills says all the arguments for and against buying from parallel importers may end up moot if the price gap that attracts people to parallel importers closes.

"It's fair to say that, due to the decrease in value of the New Zealand dollar, that price gap is closing," says Wills. ■



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## BUYING FROM A PARALLEL IMPORTER

- Check they offer a comprehensive local repair service. Ask where that service operates from, and how many people it employs.
- Ask for the expected time frame if the device you want to buy should need repair.
- Know the name of the person running the company to ensure you can go 'straight to the top' if things go wrong.
- Ensure the parallel importer has a policy of replacing an obviously faulty device with a new one - and make sure you know how much time you have to return the device to qualify for this.



# Big really is beautiful

Peter Griffin explores the latest offerings to replace your old TV set and discovers plenty of options

Walk through the TV showrooms of Noel Leeming or Harvey Norman these days and you'll soon become acquainted with ugly terms like "LCD", "contrast ratio" and "HDMI".

They describe the technologies that go into TVs and while you are more interested in the images your TV plays rather than how the TV itself is put together, it's a good idea to have at least a vague idea of the different TVs available before you put yourself in the hands of a commission-hungry salesman. Here's a starting point - there are two species of flat-screen TVs on the market - plasma screens and liquid crystal displays (LCDs)

The various TV makers have drawn a line in the sand to indicate what technology they think suits different TV screen sizes.

That line has effectively been drawn at 42 inches. Screen options below this size are generally of the LCD variety. At 42 inches and above, plasma technology is a better option for screen makers. In the popular 26 inch and 32 inch categories, LCD is cleaning up. The optimal screen size is now 42 inches but ever larger screens are on the market for those with heftier budgets. So apart from size, what's the difference between LCD and plasma?

Due to the different way LCD screens are put together - a layer of liquid crystals sandwiched between two sheets of glass as opposed to the electrically-charged gas plasma cells used in plasma screens, they tend to offer a brighter picture. Some would say that LCD offers a crisper picture because the screens have higher native resolution than plasma TVs of the same size.

But plasma screens generally have better contrast - making the black in scenes of a movie look darker. LCD technology is improving to the extent that it's hard to tell the difference from plasma when it comes to contrast and detail. Plasma has a wider viewing angle than LCD screens and though LCDs used to be plagued with screen blur, refresh rates are so low now that the screen will refresh to keep the action smooth. Check the refresh rate of LCD screens before buying - the lower the better.

Overall, both LCD and plasma will deliver a beautiful picture, especially from a high-quality source such as a DVD or the Xbox 360. Try before you buy, sit in the showroom and get the salespeople to do some blind tests for you to see if you can spot the difference between LCD and plasma.

## A HIGH-DEFINITION WORLD

By early next year, New Zealand broadcasters will be transmitting digital free-to-air programming allowing for better picture and sound quality, and hopefully, more TV channels. A digital set-top box will be required to pick up digital TV - the Government says you'll be able to buy one for \$200, plus the cost of installing a small satellite dish or UHF antenna if you don't have one already. Further down the track however, high-definition TV will be available. High-definition delivers more information in broadcasts than the standard analogue pictures we receive now, but such broadcasts are years away from reaching our screens. But high definition DVD players are already on the market, offering superior quality when coupled with a high-definition screen. It's important to keep high-definition viewing in mind when buying a flat-screen TV.

HD-ready TV screens do not necessarily have a digital TV tuner built in so require a digital set-top box to deliver high-definition TV signals. True HDTV screens have a digital tuner built-in. The difference is academic at the moment as we don't yet have access to digital TV. But when buying a new TV, check that it can display high-definition images. At least make sure it's "HD-ready". If you can afford a little bit extra go for the screen with a HD tuner built in. ■

## OLD TUBES, NEW PROJECTIONS

There's another option, if the thought of shelling out upwards of \$3000 for a single TV set seems a little excessive. You could buy one of the perfectly good cathode ray tube TV sets on the market at a reduced price and invest in a projector for watching movies and sports events and to keep the kids occupied in another room.



### Some combinations:

Sony Wega 32 inch widescreen TV (\$999) coupled with Epson home theatre projector (\$1999) (NOEL LEEMING)



Philips 100Hz 32 inch widescreen TV (\$1699) with Panasonic home theatre projector (\$3999) (LV MARTIN)

## TOP TELLYS



### SONY BRAVIA 32 INCH LCD

Sony can't be faulted for the design of its new Bravia LCD screens which are easy to setup and use, come with an intuitive menu and remote and deliver superb picture quality. A step up to 1300:1 contrast ratio, PC input, Sony's S-LCD pixel resolution booster and high-definition compatible.

PRICE: \$3500



### PANASONIC VIERA TH-42PV600AZ

The new line-up of plasma TVs from Panasonic are here and looking very impressive with 10,000:1 contrast ratio, SD card networkability, double HDMI terminal, HDAVI control, slim and compact design.

PRICE: \$4999.99



### PHILIPS CINEOS 42 INCH PLASMA

The Cineos is Philips' flagship flat screen TV in the plasma camp and it updates the Dutch TV maker's line for the world of high-definition. There's a HDMI input for connecting true high-definition sources, 1000:1 contrast ratio and the Philips Ambilight system which emits light against a back wall to make viewing easier on the eyes.

PRICE: \$5000 (EARLIER MODEL NOW DISCOUNTED TO \$3500)



# Never get lost again

Peter Griffin has the solution for everyone who needs to travel and thinks a map is just a cruel joke

New Zealand's a small country, so finding your way along our roads and highways should be a piece of cake, right? Wrong.

As our cities sprawl outwards and those tedious road works slowly but surely produce new transport routes, getting around has become more complicated than ever. Traffic lights and roundabouts appear overnight, new subdivisions spring up with their own collection of pretty but unfamiliar street names.

Wouldn't it be nice then to let a computer, which is updated regularly to account for new roads, show you the way to the very building you're looking for?

Thankfully, New Zealand is now well catered for when it comes to in-car and handheld GPS (global positioning system) gadgets designed to act as your electronic guide.

Auckland tech darling Navman developed our most successful global consumer electronics brand off the back of its popular navigation systems and it hasn't forgotten the local market. US navigation giant Garmin arrived earlier in the year with a rival line of devices and comprehensive local mapping. Both companies sell navigation systems you can install in your car yourself. Simply stick your device to the windscreen using the supplied suction cup and plug the GPS unit of your choice into the cigarette lighter. Then sit back and drive.

The advantage of in-car GPS is obvious - no more leafing through the dog-eared map book, squinting at the index as you look for your destination. Instead you select your street name from a database stored on the device. Once the desired destination is selected, the GPS will then direct you to the street using onscreen arrows to point the way. Voice prompting telling you when

The Garmin StreetPilot knows where every mounted speed camera in the country is and will alert you before you reach it.

to turn is a standard feature - you can even choose which accent you want your navigator to speak in.

The GPS devices display information, such as the distance to your destination, your current speed and are clever enough not to send you up one-way streets the wrong way.

They are programmable, letting you enter the street addresses you visit often and they act as route planners, so you can plot the path of travel for long trips. The maps are available in 3D perspective.

That's GPS navigation in a nutshell, but the devices are already capable of doing much more.

The Garmin StreetPilot knows where every mounted speed camera in the country is and will alert you before you reach it. Navman's new iCN navigation device has a digital camera built in; you can take photos with it and overlay mapping information on the images so you know exactly where the shots were taken. All the navigation equipment makers are heading in the same direction - making digital maps more useful by including constantly updated points of interest such as local hotels and restaurants, or the nearest petrol stations. It means that you could be driving past a car park and the per-hour parking rate will flash up on the

## GPS MUST-HAVES

- A removeable storage card slot for adding new maps
- An in-car charger and window suction mount
- Voice and arrow direction prompts
- Colour and 3-D mapping
- Ability to store addresses and enter them automatically

### On the web

[WWW.GME.NET.AU](http://WWW.GME.NET.AU)

[WWW.NAVMAN.CO.NZ](http://WWW.NAVMAN.CO.NZ)



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GPS display.

So-called location-based GPS services require that your in-car device connects to the mobile phone network. They are already in use overseas and will soon debut here. Now, points of interest are pre-loaded and you can add your own.

In deciding whether to take the plunge into GPS navigation, you need to decide if you'll make sufficient use of one. Do you make trips to unfamiliar places regularly? Do you do a lot of driving on your own? Do you spend a lot of time walking unfamiliar streets or going on hikes? If the answers to these questions are 'no', GPS will be of little more than novelty value to you. ■

## STAY IN THE CAR OR GO PORTABLE

The main focus of GPS in New Zealand is in-car navigation and there are two types of devices you can buy – models that are permanently left in the car and handheld computers you can take with you. Navman and Garmin compete fiercely in both categories. Most motorists will prefer the former, models such as the Navman iCN 320 or the Garmin StreetPilot. They sit in the car but can be removed at night for security. They are often battery-powered but also charge via the car's cigarette lighter. They generally have rectangular screens for easy viewing of maps. Look for models that adjust the screen brightness to suit the available light.

Handheld GPS devices are ideal for those who want to use them as a mini-computer when the journey's over. Both Navman and Garmin handheld models are based on the Windows Mobile platform so offer you "pocket" versions of Word and Excel, MS Outlook, an mp3 player and the ability to add other Windows-based software. Couriers and travelling business people love these devices for their dual use as personal organiser, job scheduler and navigation aid. The handheld devices are no bigger than a regular personal digital assistant (PDA) and can be easily slotted into a pocket.



### GARMIN NUVI 300

A compact in-car navigator with touch-screen, turn-by-turn directions and USB interface. With the intelligence of the Streetpilot it also has an entertainment element with MP3 and audiobook player, and 200MB of internal storage.

PRICE: \$1149



### GARMIN STREETPILOT C320

A stylish, compact navigator that fits unobtrusively into the lower right-hand corner of your windscreen. It has 3D mapping, points of interest loaded into its mapping memory and will direct you to the street number you are looking for. There's a USB connection for linking with your computer.

PRICE: \$999



### GARMIN iQUE M4

Garmin's answer to Navman's PIN 750. Styling and design make up much of the difference in price as both are based on the Windows Mobile 2003 platform. The iQue has been revamped to better display icons and allows you to navigate using your finger on the touch screen rather than a stylus.

PRICE: \$1049

### NAVMAN iCN 330

The iCN 330 features easy to read 3D moving maps with a journey progress bar, clearly spoken directions and Navman's 'back-on-track' function means you're never lost even if you take a wrong turn. The rechargeable iCN 330 is also simple, portable, easily transferable from car-to-car, and will work straight out of the box in any car.

PRICE: \$TBC



### NAVMAN iCN 530

The iCN 530 measures just 22 millimetres in depth and weighs less than 200 grams. It features an integrated SiRF Star III GPS antenna and a non-reflective 3.5 inch QVGA LCD touch-screen. There's voice guidance, 3D next-turn map arrows and detailed trip-meter report. It also offers one-touch fuel and park buttons so you can quickly locate the nearest petrol stations and parking places.

PRICE: \$TBC

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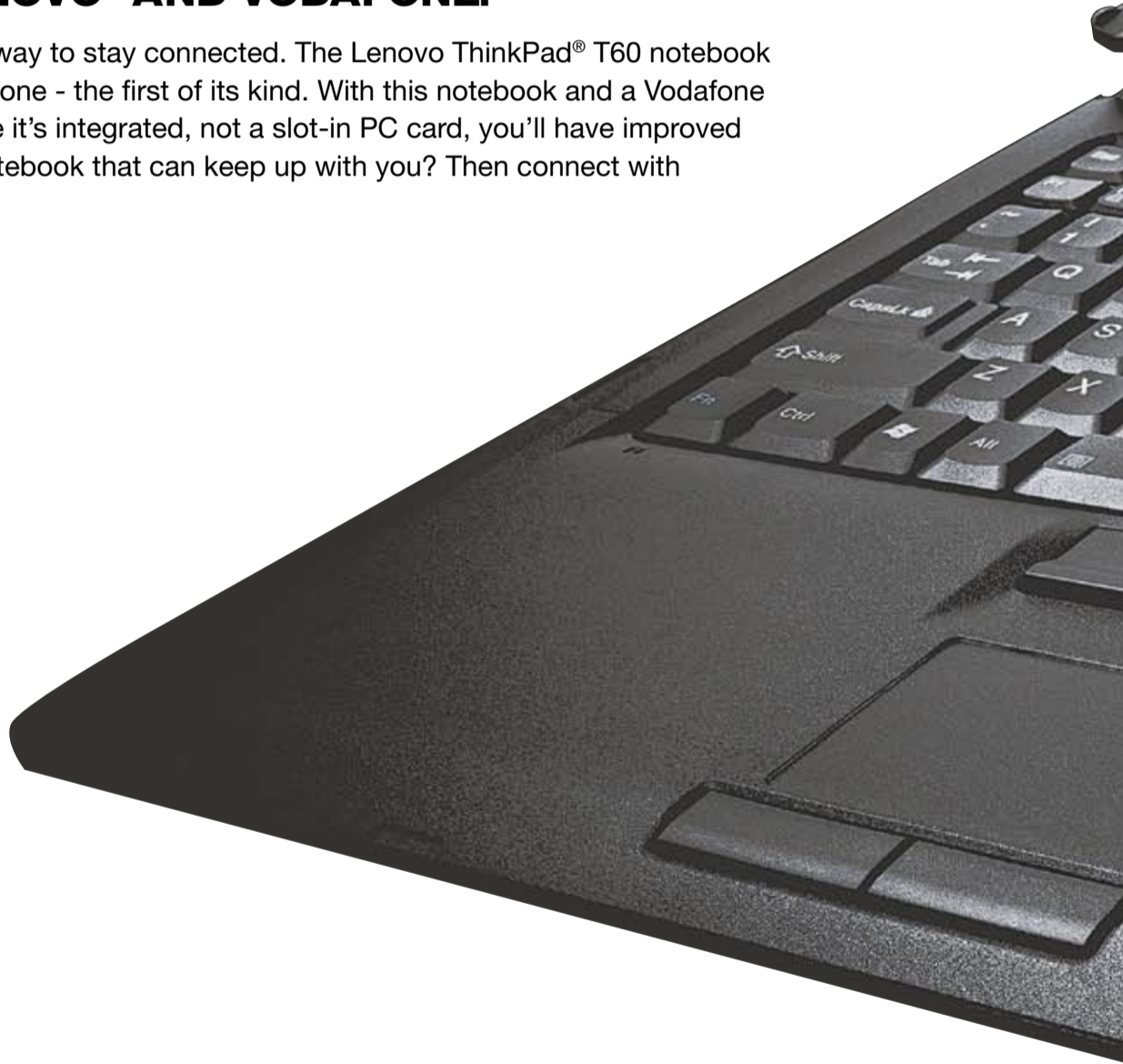
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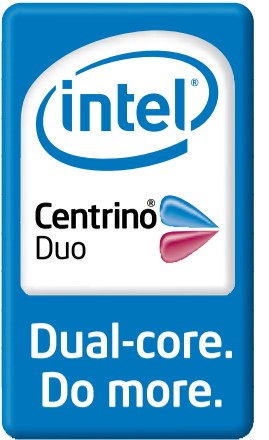
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# Technology gives kitchens

Kirsten MacFarlane speaks with top kitchen designers and takes a look at the innovations that will get appliances 'talking' to each other



## ELECTROLUX CONCEPT DISHWASHER

Rockpool is a waterless dishwashing unit that uses carbon dioxide to clean dishes instead of water and chemicals and so reduces the strain on the environment. This dishwasher is at the concept stage at Electrolux and so not available in the shops - but you saw it here first. Great for those who think twice before polluting the water.



## OVEN AND MICROWAVE

This is a built-in compact oven with integrated microwave from Bosch. All cooking modes can be used separately and in combination with the microwave. It has a retractable rotary control, Ecoclean, 51 automatic programs, 6 memory function and child lock.

MODEL: HBC86K750A

PRICE: \$3499



## RETRACTABLE BURNERS

This Fisher & Paykel cooktop is a head-turning prototype that features gas in glass. The cooker has a frameless piece of black glass, which supports gas burners that rise from the cooktop's smooth surface when needed. It is designed with three burners - you can expect to see it in the shops within 12 months.

Talk kitchens of the future and the fridge is always at the white-hot end of technology. It will morph from a device for storing food, into an on-line multimedia centre; the TV blaring while the vegetables stay chilled. It's just there's been so much talk about net fridges and other 'dot appliances' transforming our lives that we've tuned out. It's technology that hasn't yet landed in our kitchens, and we're not too fussed about the manufacturers' hype. We're far too preoccupied with transforming our kitchens into functional open-plan spaces to think about using a fridge for electronic inventory. Today's kitchen is still the heart of the home but in a whole new way.

If cooking was once a solitary pursuit, today's open-plan kitchen practically elevates you to celebrity-chef status. It's also the new hub for family activities; the dining table now the multi-purpose 'doing table' where families eat, drink and then get down to work on their wireless laptops.

Designer Shane George, this year's NKBA's kitchen designer of the year, says good design is crucial in today's showcase kitchens.

"There is a greater awareness of good design because people realise how important these rooms are. Some people want practical kitchens, while others want a designer look," he says.

"All want the best technology has to offer."

Home owners can spend as much as \$50,000 on a gallery of stainless steel, engineered stone benchtops, exquisitely finished fine cabinetry and the latest European appliances. Fridges and dishwashers are integrated into the total look, hidden behind joinery panels. Cupboards have been exchanged for deep drawers which close silently with a gentle, vacuum-assisted push.

Designer Ingrid Geldof, just back from the Eurocucina Exhibition in Milan, says technology is right at home in today's kitchens.

"We have so many choices compared to 10 years ago

- and technological advancements were evident at Milan," he says.

"Many of the kitchens had lacquered cabinetry, and that's a direct result of improvements in paint technology. Integration was a key feature - and the hardware is improving all the time. I saw one sliding cabinet that sat completely flush against the wall."

Geldof, who has just won her 30<sup>th</sup> design award, says some of the technology was complex and sometimes quite baffling. The new Miele range of kitchen appliances featured integrated electronics: "the oven was 'talking' to the fridge".

The compact kitchen was a notable trend to emerge from the Milan exhibition, widely regarded as the showcase for future kitchens. 'Single', designed by Alberto Colonello, is a free-standing or wall-mounted unit with fixed dimensions that can be equipped with a sink, dishwasher, refrigerator, and cooking surface. The cover snaps shut, returning the kitchen to a compact block.

Increasingly design innovations contribute to the evolution of the kitchen. Although, as George says, many people recoil from a cold and futuristic look in their homes.

"People still want kitchens that are tactile, with hardware and appliances that work together."

Martin Croft from Kouzina Appliances in Auckland says the majority of his clients ask for induction cookers over gas, and functional products such as self-cleaning ovens. He has also noted an increasing demand for steam ovens.

"They are replacing microwaves," he says. "With fast cooking speed as the main attraction." Manufacturers such as Gaggenau, Miele and Bosch all produce their version of a steam oven. Other products, such as the Hoffizaki ice maker - which churns out 20kg of ice in 24 hours - are pure indulgence.

Leading appliance manufacturers have a constant stream of new products for consumers to ponder. Fisher & Paykel Appliances have recently introduced the 'Gas in Glass'

## CLEAN AND GREEN: KITCHENS OF THE FUTURE

### SMART PRODUCTS

Kitchens are turning green in response to our environmental issues. Ameron Coatings has recently produced a paint that has a low level of toxic emissions while it is drying yet is still hard-wearing. Designers are also recommending engineered stone and reconstituted veneers. The Zenith Hydro Tap (BC series) dispenses

boiling water and chilled filtered water. This method of getting boiling water is energy efficient and far cheaper to run than kettles or urns. The best part is that you'll never need to buy bottled water again.

### FUTURE PRODUCTS

Technology and design students from around the globe have developed some space age product concepts for the Electrolux Design Lab. Some of the winning ideas have included the 'Rockpool' dishwasher and the 'soft refrigerator', which expands and folds up to adapt to the amount inside the cooling chamber.

### COMPACT KITCHENS

Unveiled at Eurocucina Exhibition 2006, the 'Sheer kitchen', created by Drag Design, is a provocative spherical shape that neatly wraps up all the conventional and advanced functions of a large kitchen. It's the ultimate kitchen in space: after a perfect landing, Sheer unfolds to reveal the multi-tasking cooking station.



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# a make-over

cooktop; a frameless piece of black glass supporting three gas burners, that rise out of the cooktop when needed.

Rosalie Davison of Electrolux says one of the banes of modern living that frustrate many people are the multi-layered menus on the tiny screens. She says Electrolux is leading the way with intuitive interfaces so customers won't need to consult a manual before setting an oven clock.

The company's latest designs, she says, will achieve this through multiple displays and buttons.

Donald A. Norman, a leading expert in usability engineering, writes about this dilemma in his 1988 book *The Design of Everyday Things*.

"I do not think that simple home appliances ... should look like Hollywood's idea of a spaceship control room," he writes. "The consumer who, often as not, has lost (or cannot understand) the instruction manual, so - faced with the bewildering array of controls and displays - simply memorises one or two fixed settings to approximate what is desired."

But what about the future? There are ambitious plans to connect fridges, and even kettles to the net. When it comes, the internet fridge, permanently online and accessible by you from everywhere, may indeed transform our lives. It's been promised for a long time. In 2002, LG Electronics were promoting an internet fridge with the nous to download recipes and organize them in a digital cookbook - or order groceries on-line through an internet grocery delivery service as items were removed from the fridge.

For our technological advances, good kitchen design will always be based on human culture, rather than technology for technology's sake.

As Kitchen designer guru Johnny Grey recently told the NZ Herald: "We don't use the kitchen much for cooking; it is more a social place for reheating food."



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Making kitchens more efficient is nothing new. Designer Greta Lihotzky introduced the Frankfurt kitchen eighty years ago, and it's regarded as one of the most successful and influential kitchen of the period. This icon of modernism stands as a symbol of scientific attempts to make the domestic workspace more professional.

Codeworks Assistive Technology has just designed a high-tech home for older folk. It's called the 'Safe Home of the Future', and its kitchen is armed with gadgets that

override occasional memory lapse. As a *Guardian* reporter observed during a recent tour of the house: "The sensors in microwaves that read and obey the cooking instructions using RFID chips (radio frequency identification - like a very clever bar code) embedded in the packaging and to make sure your food isn't out of date. Sensors make sure you've turned the gas off, motion sensors turn the lights on when you enter a room, fall sensors make sure someone knows when you've collapsed on the floor."

Most appliances look good...  
...but only one **stands out** from the rest



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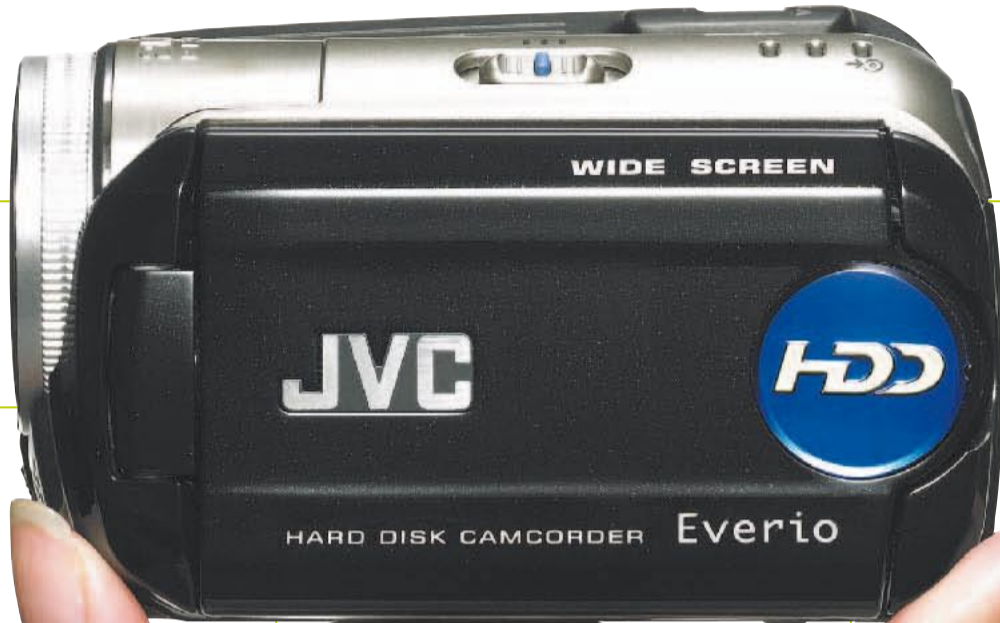
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# Shoot the whole family on holiday

Keith Newman checks out the latest in digital cameras and offers some handy hints on what to look for when shopping for your next camera

A growing awareness of the capabilities of high-end digital video cameras and lower prices over the past year has resulted in unprecedented demand for MiniDV and direct to DVD models.

There's little question that analogue cameras have lost their lustre and digital is the only way forward, particularly for those who want greater control over their footage, including computer-based editing.

While MiniDV media still dominates there's a major format shift going on as manufacturers migrate away from tape-based cameras to hard disk, memory card and direct to DVD recording.

A further shift to the 'high definition' standard is due to hit these shores within the next eight months to align with the latest TV sets and broadcast standards.

DVD-based cameras are quickly moving to the forefront with Sony leading the bunch. Panasonic in an effort to launch and promote its own DVD-based cameras, was caught off-guard when demand for its MiniDV cameras outstripped supply earlier this year. Other brands also felt the surge of demand.

All this attests to the fact that consumers are increasingly aiming for the high end of the digital video market with 3CCD 'near broadcast quality' cameras of both formats now making up around 45 per cent market share.

The CCD (charge coupled device) is the computer chip that processes the colour separation. Single chip cameras have to resolve information from a prism of red, green and blue through a single filter. These cameras are prone to colour smearing and bleeding, particularly in high contrast situations. They're more than adequate for

most home users and sell for between \$600 and \$1500.

A 3CCD camera however has a separate chip for each colour, resulting in far greater clarity, sharpness and colour distinction, delivering what is close to broadcast quality. Prices at this end of the market range from \$1800-\$3000.

And of course high definition (HD) cameras are also starting to appear that add even more to the overall quality of the recorded picture. But to see the benefit you will need an HD compatible television. Also, not all editing software will work with HD footage - so there are some 'early adopter' limitations.

Grant Sandon, Panasonic's product manager for still and movie cameras, says the strong uptake of DVD-based cameras is coming from people who see the benefit of being able to record direct to disk and then play it immediately on their home DVD.

While an entry level DV camera is around \$600 the equivalent DVD-based cameras still cost around \$1000. The DVD camera will record on a range of media from write once to re-recordable disks and typically have a memory card slot as well for additional storage.

There's also demand for hard drive-based camera - for example JVC has three models with inbuilt 20Gb and 30GB drives.

When looking for a new camera consider the overall package of features, not just the looks or the lens. The best advice is to start with brands that have proven their mettle in the market such as Sony, Panasonic, Canon, JVC, Toshiba and Sharp.

Generally the trend is toward smaller, lighter and more versatile video cameras that have automatic settings and a manual over-ride. Most offerings double as still cameras and can capture up to 4Megapixel images.

Always look for optical zoom (eg 10x) as a guide rather than digital zoom. Optical means you are zoning in across actual distance to bring your image closer while digital zoom only looks through available pixels.

The best way to determine quality is to play it back on a high quality monitor. The camera's LCD screen is not the best test of this. Ask the store if you can shoot some footage in various lighting conditions in and around the shop and play it back on a store TV. Look at the cleanness of the image and the colour. Are the colours accurate? Pay particular attention to the blues and how they are reproduced under different lighting conditions.

Most cameras come with a basic editing package to connect your camera to your PC through the USB (universal serial bus) port. However, these low end packages are really only able to handle low resolution edits. For serious film editing you will need to ensure your camera (and your PC) has a FireWire port.

Consider investing in a back up battery that lasts longer than an hour. Look also at the memory card - you should aim for 512Mb minimum and see if you can get a deal on a second card, which, like a spare reel of film, may mean you can take a few more stills or an extra burst of video.

What you buy should be determined by your planned use. Are you looking for an analogue replacement? Or are you hoping to shoot more professional level footage that might have a wider audience? Regardless you need to be confident it will meet your needs and that it has the features that meet your creative ambitions. ■



## SONY

The DCRHC96E MiniDV Handycam includes a 3 Mega pixel digital still camera with built-in flash, Carl Zeiss Vario-Sonnar lens, 2.7 inch wide touch panel hybrid LCD screen, 16:9 or 4:3 aspect ratio.

PRICE: \$1500



## CANON

MV960 DV camera is a widescreen mini DV camcorder with powerful 25x zoom lens (2.6 - 65mm f/1.8-4.4), photo capture and DV/AV input. It has an 800k pixel CCD and 2.7 inch widescreen LCD and real widescreen recording. Shoots photos to an SD card. Quick and easy switching between 4:3 and 16:9 shooting.

PRICE: \$900



## PANASONIC

Panasonic's GS506B DV video camera has 3 CCDs. The mini DV camera incorporates a 4 megapixel still camera with pictures saved to an SD card, 12 x optical zoom, Leica lens, and a 2.7 inch wide LCD monitor. This camera senses when it is in record mode while in an unusual position (upside down in the palm of your hand for example) and stops recording - saving battery life and tape.

PRICE: \$2000

## KEY POINTS BEFORE YOU BUY

### CCDs

The chips that handle colour processing. One chip handling three colours has limitations, three chips (3CCD) delivers clarity and precision in colour separation.

### Memory cards

SD, Memorystick, CompactFlash etc. Current 2Gb cards can store up to 25 minutes of high resolution footage or 100 minutes in lower resolution mode. However 4Gb cards will be here in months and 8Gb cards next year. Next generation cameras will rely on them increasingly.

### MiniDV vs DVD

MiniDV still holds its own with an 80 minute tape in long play able to record 2hours and at higher quality than the 8cm DVD-based media. DVD media costs slightly more for at around \$20 each for 2.4Gb capacity.

# Get snap happy

Digital cameras put the power to take great photos in everyone's hands



## GENIUS

The D613 has an effective 3 megapixel resolution and maximum interpolation resolution can be up to 6.6 megapixels. There's a 4x digital zoom, USB connection, SD memory card, 1.5 inch screen video out and it can record movies (no audio). It has a built in flash and requires two AA batteries.

PRICE GUIDE: \$170



## PANASONIC

The Lumix DMC-FX01 is a 6 megapixel camera with 3.6x optical zoom, optical image stabilizer and 16:9 (widescreen) recording. It has an F2.8 wide-angle 28mm Leica DC Vario-Elmarit lens and a 2.5 inch screen. The battery pack will last for around 320 pictures between recharges.

PRICE GUIDE: 600



## CANON

The EOS 30D is an SLR camera with an 8.2 megapixel CMOS sensor and an DIGICII image processor for low noise and natural colour. There's continuous 30-frame shooting and the body is compatible with more than 50 Canon EF and EF-S lenses and EX-series speedlites. This can be bought as a body only or as part of a kit.

PRICE GUIDE: \$2400 (BODY)

More photographs will be taken over the next 12 months than the total that were snapped around the world in the last 150 years, mainly through the proliferation of digital cameras. In fact, digital cameras now far outstrip film cameras, and that trend has forced a major shake-up in the industry. German-based Agfa, one of the pioneering names in photography, went bankrupt last year and Kodak is laying off thousands of staff as it closes film processing laboratories around the world.

Further evidence of the transition can be seen in the announcement that Konica Minolta is withdrawing from the camera and film business and Nikon is to stop making film cameras except for a few professional products. In May Canon also announced it would stop development of new film cameras to focus on digital models.

However, many of the companies who made their names through the decades when the film camera dominated are still here: Canon, Kodak, Olympus, FujiFilm, Ricoh, Pentax, Nikon and relative newcomers such as Panasonic, Sony, Casio and Genius.

While the majority of households still own a film camera, digital cameras have moved rapidly to mass-market appeal.



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**V** The big drivers are the instant results, savings in film processing, the ability to delete unwanted pictures, manipulate images, and easy sharing of photos on CD or by email.

For those looking to buy digital there are now so many choices it can be confusing. Prices are coming down, performance and features are improving and professional level resolution is now mainstream.

Many of the concerns of the early market, such as the high drain on batteries and painfully slow shutter speeds have been addressed. Most cameras now take good photographs, refresh relatively quickly and are much easier on the batteries.

For those who simply wish to point and click without worrying about settings or reading the instruction book, the compact digital camera, often small enough to fit in a handbag or jacket pocket, is perfect. These can be bought for under \$150 but a camera that will produce much higher quality images costs only minimally more.

If you are looking to replace a single lens reflex (SLR) 35mm camera and want greater control over image-capturing, and you plan on printing good quality 6 x 4 or A4 size photos, you should aim to get at least 4Megapixels resolution.

A robust 4-5Megapixel camera can be bought for between \$200-\$400. This past year new model cameras costing \$400-\$600 will even deliver 6-8Megapixels. Depending on the features such as lens quality you can pay up to \$1500 for a good 7-8Megapixel camera. Most of the SLR cameras enable you to interchange lenses from your old SLR film cameras.

Robert A F van de Voort of Albany Studios suggests you think about how your camera will mostly be used before handing over the cash.

For those who simply wish to point and click without worrying about settings or reading the instruction book the compact digital camera is perfect.

Will you be snapping babies or family members? Will your subjects be indoors or outdoors? Will your subjects be at some distance such as birds in the trees, or will you be shooting landscapes?

He says many digital cameras have wide angle lenses that aren't suitable for capturing objects at a distance. For that you'll need a zoom lens, possibly a 10x or 12x magnification.

You also need to know what kind of settings are available to you and while most cameras have an automatic setting which takes care of lighting and aperture, it's helpful to be able to switch to manual and use the knowledge you might have gained through operating an SLR film camera.

Most cameras come with some built in memory but to store images at high resolution you'll need a high capacity memory card. Entry level used to be as little as 32Mb but don't settle for anything less than 512Mb capacity. Today even 2Gb cards are becoming more affordable. It pays to have two cards, one for back up. You might even get a better deal on memory cards if you negotiate during your camera purchase.

Having an additional battery or batteries to keep you clicking is also good advice. You should get 100-250 shots from fresh batteries. Rechargeable ones are helpful but keep several on hand just in case you end up taking more pictures than you planned.

Your camera should not only be something you enjoy the look of, it should feel good in your hand and balance comfortably. The controls should be within easy reach and the operation should give you a sense that you are in control. If the camera doesn't feel right the chances are you are not going to use it as much as you otherwise might. ■

## JARGON BUSTER

### Megapixels

- The density of dots or pixels that make up the image. The more you have the greater your resolution and therefore the quality of the picture will be.

### Zoom

- Look for the optical zoom specifications such as 10x or 12x. An optical zoom will take you closer to the subject while digital zoom only homes in on the pixels causing the image to blur and become blocky.

### Memory

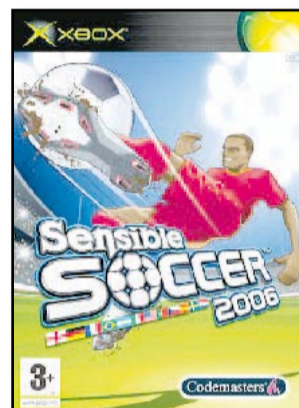
- Some cameras have specialised memory cards and others have settled on CompactFlash, SD cards or MemoryStick which are interchangeable with your computer, printer, video camera or even DVD recorder. Regardless, an external USB card converter will allow you to work with any type of card to transfer pictures to your computer.

# Game on

From shoot-'em-ups to soccer, fast driving, horror and fun – all known life is at your fingertips

## GRAND THEFT AUTO LIBERTY STORIES

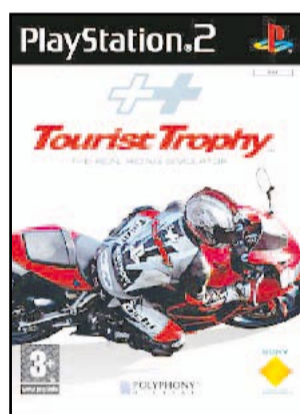
If a PSP is out of your reach and were heartbroken at missing the latest Grand Theft Auto game, consider yourself lucky. Liberty Stories has been ported on to the Playstation 2 and while it doesn't quite match the standards of its predecessors, it's still leagues ahead of most other games on the market. Recasting Toni Capriani, Liberty Stories includes a new storyline and plenty of missions to get your teeth into. There's a whole lot of gun-toting and a large free-roaming city to cause pandemonium in, with stolen vehicles and massive police chases.



## SENSIBLE SOCCER

It has no real players, no fancy motion-captured moves and features cutesy cel-shaded guys with oversized heads. That said, it's the best fix for the beautiful game that you can get outside Germany. The controls are incredibly easy to get into, the games are blazingly fast and with support for up to four players the game is a gem in multiplayer. Customisation options allow the creation of dream teams and players. With the Fifa rights firmly locked away by rival publisher Electronic Arts, the developers have had to make do with rough semblances and fake names, which delivers a caricature heaven.

Platform: Xbox, PS2



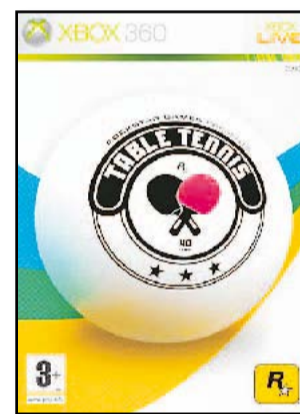
## TOURIST TROPHY

The developers are Polyphony Digital, the team that creates the Playstation's behemoth Gran Turismo racing games. This latest game uses the Gran Turismo 4 engine, but the difference is that you ride the world's greatest bikes instead of driving cars in Arcade or a career-focused Challenge mode. With 125 motorbikes from brands such as Scooter, Suzuki and BMW, Tourist Trophy is essential for anyone who loves petrol-powered two-wheelers.

## ROCKSTAR GAMES PRESENTS TABLE TENNIS

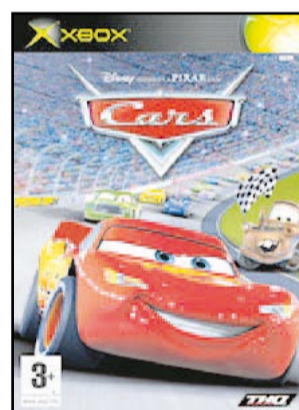
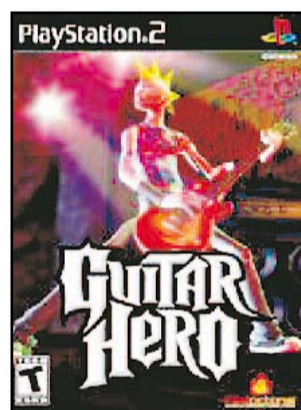
Rockstar, developers of Grand Theft Auto, are usually a magnet for controversy. However, in their latest game they've come out not with guns blazing, but with a paddle. As simple as the name suggests, it's a no-frills title which concentrates on the sport in question with exhibition or tournament modes. Nevertheless, the frantic pace and fun-as-they-come rallies make for some of the best gaming moments available on the new Xbox 360. The control scheme is easy to learn and the game a joy to master.

Platform: Xbox 360



## GUITAR HERO

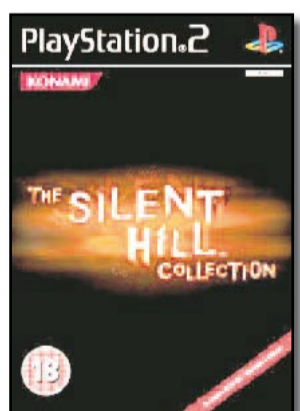
If you enjoyed the likes of Singstar you need to know about the newest game making noise on the Playstation. With Guitar Hero you can get your wah-wahs out with 30 of the most popular hard-rock songs of all time from the likes of Pantera, David Bowie and The Ramones. The highlight of the game is the controller which looks, plays and feels suspiciously like a real guitar. The game has eight distinct characters and a competitive two-player mode. If you're the kind of guy who likes to strum a tennis racquet and pretend you're Kirk Hammett, this is the game for you.



## CARS

Based on the Disney/Pixar film of the same name playing at a multiplex near you, Cars manages to avoid the usual fate of movie tie-ins by being a decent game. Lightning McQueen reprises his lead role and a faithfully recreated Radiator Springs provides a free-roaming, Need for Speed-like environment where familiar faces (or bonnets) reside to be interacted and raced with. The main story revolves around McQueen making his way to compete in the Piston Cup. This is a sure-fire hit for the children.

Platform: PC, PS2, Xbox



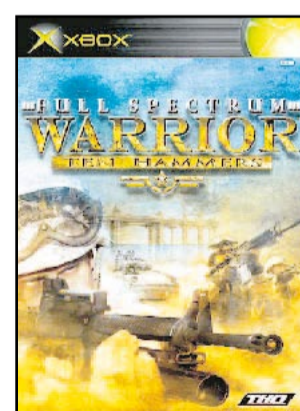
## SILENT HILL COLLECTION

Not just a great game: it's three of the best horror games ever. The set contains Silent Hill 2, Silent Hill 3 and Silent Hill 4: The Room, a trio of grotesquely terrifying games located in the mysterious town of Silent Hill. All are filled with exploration, puzzle-solving and fear-inducing combat. The settings are grim, dark, gory and the creatures within are the stuff of nightmares. Often there's only a torch with a narrow beam of light to see by. Put these games on at night, turn the volume up, the lights down and the scares are guaranteed.

## FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR: TEN HAMMERS

The first Full Spectrum Warrior was based on a training tool developed for the US Army. Two years on a sequel has arrived. Set in the fictional country of Zekistan, the setting and tone of the new game is suspiciously similar to the current mess in Iraq. Improvements include the ability to divide squads, control armoured vehicles and snipe enemies hiding behind cover. The theme of the game is realism and charging at the nearest enemy with guns a-blazing will quickly guarantee a "game over" screen.

Platform: PC, Xbox, PS2



## APE ESCAPE 3

The mad monkey villain Specter is back with yet another diabolical plan to take over the world. In the third game of the series, a plan has been hatched to mesmerise humanity with hypnotic shows and only the twins Kei and Yumi are left unaffected. With a huge array of weapons and gadgets at your fingertips, there's plenty of fun to be found in this third-person action adventure. Each of the game's levels is based on a classic movie and the developers have taken the opportunity to poke fun at films such as *Friday the 13th* and *Indiana Jones*.



## HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY

This game puts the player in control of the menacing assassin, Agent 47, as he takes on 13 missions – or should we say contracts. The game's levels are massive and offer multiple routes and methods to do away with the unfortunate (yet generally unsavoury) targets. The fourth game in the series, Hitman: Blood Money features a new notoriety system. Essentially, a big mess in the form of unnecessary deaths and witnesses leads to smaller pay cheques and an increased chance of being recognised in later missions. Note: not a game about hugs and kisses. Don't buy this for the kids.

Platform: Xbox 360, Xbox, PC, PS2

# Something for the weekend



## WALK THE LINE

Country music legend Johnny Cash gets the biopic he deserves with a loving tribute to an irresistible force of musical influence.

From his troubled childhood to his even more troubled ascension to the spotlight, the film sketches with unflinching detail the instances that created a rock'n'roll icon.

Joaquin Phoenix and Reese Witherspoon turn in wonderful character studies as Mr Cash and his love June Carter, yet even more impressively handle their own singing chores, undoubtedly doing their originators proud.

A solid, well-told story backed by great music, there is not too much more you could ask of a film like this.



## BROKEN FLOWERS

An aging ladies' man reluctantly embarks on a road trip through past relationships when a mysterious, unsigned letter suggests one of his old flames has been raising a son he didn't know he had.

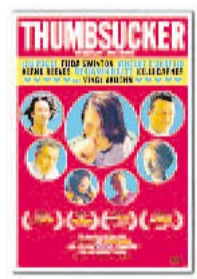
Jim Jarmusch, godfather of American independent film, directs Bill Murray in this measured and thoughtful comedy that sees the veteran funny man giving new meaning to the term deadpan. A rewarding comedy from two of the craft's finest practitioners.



## LORD OF WAR

Balancing serious subject matter with dark humour, this is an insightful journey through the clandestine world of gun-running.

As the ambitious, aloof arms dealer Yuri, Nicolas Cage plays the perfect antihero who establishes his empire on the back of ambiguous morals and intelligent charm. It is a joy to watch him smugly avoid the FBI agents hot on his heels and even more rewarding to witness his inevitable fall from grace.



## THUMBSUCKER

Justin Cobb is a typically confused teenager whose odd form of escapism, thumbsucking, hinders his chances of a happy life.

Well written and confidently directed, the film's strongest suit is its exceptional cast. Tilda Swinton and Vincent D'Onofrio are Justin's unhappy parents while Vince Vaughn and Keanu Reeves nail hilarious supporting roles. All are outshone, however, by the newcomer Lou Pucci in the lead. A delightful story that was most probably passed over at the theatre.

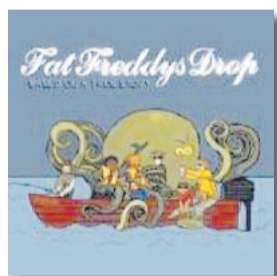


## THE BROTHERS GRIMM

In equal parts dark and silly, this recasts the legendary fairytale bards as con men, vanquishing witches and ghouls of their own invention for the entertainment of and reimbursement from their village victims.

Heath Ledger and Matt Damon turn in playful performances as the brothers, with Ledger's subdued, docile Jacob Grimm stealing the show.

# Music



## FAT FREDDY'S DROP

### Based on a True Story

Writing a recommendation for this is really like preaching to the converted. If you haven't heard the debut studio album from Fat Freddy's Drop and realised how amazing this Wellington seven-piece really are, you should definitely do yourself a favour and give it a whirl. Already a No 1 platinum seller, *Based On A True Story* is a full 70 minutes of sublime soul, reggae, dub and funk, all mixed up and masterfully produced for a slow-burning and satisfying ride. A diverse palette of instrumentation with Joe Dukie's smooth lyricism and vocals make this indispensable.



## VOOM

### Hello, Are You There?

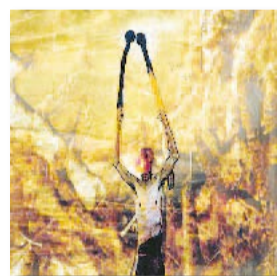
Obviously working on a "quality rather than quantity" schedule, *Hello, Are You There?* is the follow-up to Voom's 1998 debut, *Now I Am Me*. Like the debut album which had hits such as *Relax* and *Beth*, this newie contains the hits *King Kong* and *With a Fresh Line-up* of members from the ashes of Augustino and Goodshirt, Voom are revived and kicking. There are pop songs, rock songs and cool weird songs, all with amazing vocals to rival some of rock's greats. So in the deluge of new releases, don't overlook this local gem.



## TOOL

### 10,000 Days

Tool are far out and on form here on their sixth album release (not forgetting the excellent *Salival* DVD and nine-track CD), creating a tremendous sense of time and space over a wide stereo spectrum, excellent pacing and a sound that's truly their own. No real surprise that the album has dark and intense parts leading into swooping stylish sections that segue into strange bits: Tool are getting very good at being Tool, and with stereoscopic glasses built in to view 3D-like images, perhaps the coolest CD packaging ever.



## CROWPATH

### Son of Sulphur

Henrik, Patrik, Erik, and Dan are Swedish metal band Crowpath. Unknown even to devout metallers, Crowpath's second full album is nothing less than an obscure chaotic metal masterpiece. Many will find this challenging, especially on a first and even second listen; for people who need to like music straight away to deem it valid, Crowpath could be offensive and/or annoying. They charge over vast musical terrain, gleefully off the rails with guttural, growling vocals, jarring production and more than enough edge to divide audiences.



## YEAH YEAH YEAHS

### Show Your Bones

The second album is a notoriously difficult act to pull off. This one shows all the signs of more production money, though you might not have to go far to find someone who'll say their first was better. *Show Your Bones* is still worth the time. Squeak E. Clean's production detracts somewhat from the raw intensity of the band on *Fever to Tell*, but Karen O's more confessional songwriting and at times disarming rather than alarming delivery make this the album that marks the maturing of the Yeah Yeah Yeahs as indie stars. They are confident in creating simple yet compelling songs.



GETTY IMAGES

# Hello home. Hello master

Simon Hendery discovers that automated homes are getting smarter all the time

## IN CONTROL

### The basics of home automation

#### Controller

The "black box" at the heart of a home automation system which makes it possible to control and automate virtually any home function, including home theatre, lighting, security, and in-home temperature.



#### Audio/video

A range of automation devices allow music to be stored, organized, and sent to any room in the house from multiple sources, and can provide a 'cinematic' home theatre experience.

#### Lighting

Wireless light switches and dimmers make it possible to control lighting from a wall switch or remotely from anywhere in the home.

#### Climate control

Wireless thermostats can trigger the system to automatically turn on wall and under-floor heating before a room gets too cold, or close window blinds and turn on ceiling fans before it gets too warm.

#### System Remote Control

One remote can replace the clutter of devices associated with home entertainment equipment.

A step beyond the remote control, a colour graphic touch screen can be used to control a wide range of home automation functions.



It's the dream of every couch potato or weary worker who flops into the couch after a hard day at the office.

The power of just having to snap your fingers to make the lights dim, the room warm up and a favourite DVD begin playing in full home theatre glory.

Well, the snap-of-the-finger stuff may still be in the realm of magic genie land, but if you have the cash you can achieve the same result with the tap of touch screen control.

Home automation is becoming cheaper, smarter and more integrated as the technology behind it improves.

It is now possible to retrofit into your house, or build into a new home, a system that will do even more than control and anticipate your home entertainment, lighting and temperature requirements.

On top of those functions you can even link in moisture detectors to sense when your lawn needs watering or programme the system to flash every light bulb in the building when the burglar alarm goes off.

Home automation suppliers and installers report they are doing a roaring trade as homeowners scramble to automate.

"At the moment everybody is going for home theatre controllers," says Sam Edwards, national service manager for automation equipment supplier Control 4.

"Instead of having different remotes for your TV, DVD, video, and Sky, the home theatre controller means you can put them all in a cupboard and just have the one remote to control everything," he says.

"With that same unit you can also control the projector screen, the blinds on the window and the lighting in a room. Basically it's the cornerstone of an automation system."

Control 4's controllers retail for about \$1500, and Edwards says people who are willing to spend thousands on a giant plasma screen as the centrepiece of their living room have been happy to fork out a bit more on top to make the most of technology.

The device typically sits on the home theatre rack and ideally will be connected to the internet so that when you

pop your favourite CD in, the controller can go searching the web for the disc's cover art to display on the plasma while you listen.

But to really make it to couch potato heaven, you need to spend an extra \$4000 for a decent touch screen that integrates with the controller.

Tony Cook, a home automation specialist at Hawke's Bay electrical company Eastek, says the business has been flat out installing automation systems, mainly in new homes.

He says while costs vary considerably because each home owner has unique requirements for an automation project, a typical full fit-out of audio and video distribution through the house, plus data networking, telecommunication cables and the associated hardware could cost between \$38,000 and \$45,000.

At the top end of the range, Eastek has been involved in home automation projects costing "hundreds of thousand of dollars".

His most important piece of advice is that although wireless devices have grown in popularity, taking the opportunity to install cable into a new home is still worthwhile.

"If you're building a home today, put a cable network in the house that covers your TV, telephone, data communications, and audio."

This saves a much more expensive rewiring job in future, Cook says.

"Later down the track, if you want to instal a little bit of automation, you're pretty much right."

And while automation controllers are already trawling the net looking for CD cover art, in the near future it might be your fridge or stove that's wired to the outside world.

"Some Auckland supermarkets are already trialling a connection to internet-enabled home fridges which monitor their contents and can automatically re-order food," he says.

Sounds like yet another excuse not to get off the couch. My world is under my control. ■



Home Automation | Invention No.7 | Regulated Toast Dispenser

# Life can be a lot simpler.

Control4 can manage your home and make your life simpler. It's a system of equipment that gives you complete control of all audio and home theatre devices including managing your movie and music libraries. It even controls lighting, security and temperature, all from a single

touch screen interface that you can take anywhere in the home. It can be retrofitted into an existing home or designed to fit seamlessly into your new home.

It is home automation made accessible, affordable and easy to use.

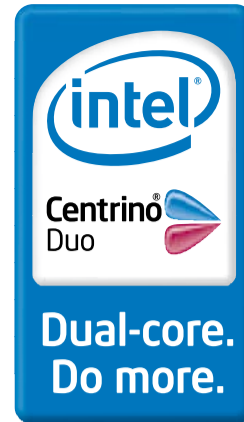
For a demonstration on how to make your life simpler visit a dealer or for more information on products [www.beincontrol.co.nz](http://www.beincontrol.co.nz)

To get more out of your time contact us at Aletro or visit [www.beincontrol.co.nz](http://www.beincontrol.co.nz)

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Control 

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