

Islander December 2005

Technology Update

The Ultimate Christmas Gadget List 2005

It's that time of year again when desperation sets in as we attempt to find a suitable Christmas gift for our best beloved. Well here are a few ideas, all of which are equally suitable for him or her. However, I should warn you that it may be better if the recipient of your gift is a bit of a technology freak, as otherwise your generosity may well be wasted...

This list has been compiled following recent visits to technology exhibitions in search of what's new for 2006. From the extensive range of products which we tested in the name of research, we have only selected those which we consider to be suitable "gadget" technology. Prices range from €120 to €2,000.

Skype Du@lphone

The first and one of the most exciting potential gifts for the geek in your life is the Skype Du@lphone. This is a USB cordless phone for Internet telephony (via Skype) and ordinary telephony (via your standard old fashioned telephone line). I couldn't wait for Christmas for this one and, knowing that I was unlikely to be given it, I purchased it for myself in mid November under the pretext of "technology trials". I now have one at home and a number around the office. It transforms the use of Skype (Internet telephony) by making it much easier to use – in fact it is identical to using an ordinary phone, except for the fact that calls are totally free to all other Skype users. You no longer have to sit by your PC to talk to someone, as you can walk around the house, and your conversation can be private. The Du@lphone aspect means that it also operates as a normal phone, so you can avoid having a multitude of phones around the house. One word of warning – installation is not as simple and troublefree as it says on the label! It is not Plug and Dial, it is more like Plug, Unplug, Try again and Pray. Available now.

i-mate JASJAR

This is on my personal Christmas wish list. It is the first 3G phone PDA, and is exactly what many of us have been waiting for. It is a pocket sized Windows PDA with Word, Excel, Outlook and Explorer that runs at 3G speed but will work on GPRS when 3G is not available, and you can use the same bit of kit as a phone and a 1.3Mpixel camera. If you read my article last month you will know that this is THE technology convergence I was referring to. In fact, this is the "first Windows Mobile 5.0 3G enabled GSM/GPRS mini-laptop phone with Wi-Fi". We recently had our hands on one, but unfortunately the 3G wasn't working.

Still, what a lovely bit of kit! E3 Airtime and Vodafone will have them by Christmas.

3G phones

There are now so many 3G phones available, any one of which would constitute a great Christmas present for your iconically challenged mate. The Nokia 6630 is now considered to be a reliable workhorse. I have personally been using a Nokia 6680 for the last few months. It's pretty bulky, but for an old git like me that means I can almost see the buttons. More importantly, I can get the Test match results faster than anyone else I know. The Sony Ericsson Z800i has superseded the V800 which has been a popular phone over the summer. Then there is the Nokia N90 3G and TV telephone. A novel and interesting shape that is comfortable for watching TV! The Nokia N70 is a more conventional shape and as a result cheaper. There is a new Grundig 6Mpixel video phone due out, but not before Christmas. We witnessed it in action at SIMO in Madrid recently, and it looked superb.

3G router

If you actually consider giving this to someone as a Christmas present, then either you are very sad or your loved one is a total anorak (hopefully both). I have to confess to being the sad person who finds this an extremely interesting bit of kit as it allows you to distribute the Vodafone 3G service throughout your house or yacht, either wired or wirelessly. Still, it won't be on my Christmas list, but is available now if it's on yours.

Designer Notebook

We recently found a very cool Notebook called the Flybook, which transforms into a tablet PC. It comes in a very elegant package and a multitude of awlgrip quality colours from Yellow Cab to Purple Red. At A5 size, it is the smallest notebook available. The XVGA touchscreen display can transform into a widescreen display (16:9) to watch movies. It only weighs 1.2kg but has USB, GPRS (with own SIM slot), Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, GPS, modem, firewire, PCMCIA, Ethernet, video in and out. Available now.

Yacht, office and home 3-D iMax experience

For those of you who would like your own iMax home system, this system which we found from a company called Omnia can create that experience for you. You will have to wear some pretty uncool cardboard specs to achieve it, but the effect is amazing. You will need some space as it uses two screens at right angles to each other, slightly out of synch, with a clear Perspex sheet in between at forty five degrees. You watch the images reflected on the Perspex sheet with your glasses on. It works and is brilliant.

Virtually indestructible, washable, rollupable keyboard

Finally, may I suggest the perfect gift for the man or woman who has everything? This is a full sized rubber keyboard, just in case you need to catch up with your emails from the bath or shower. It could also be a useful addition for the yacht's cockpit. Just roll it out when needed, and roll it up and tuck it away when you're finished. Spill your beer over it to impress your mates. I'm sure the possibilities are endless, and it's available now.

Most of the gadgets above are available from E3 Systems and E3 Airtime.

If anyone has been kind enough to read this entire article, I would like to wish them and their loved ones a very merry Christmas and a technologically enhanced new year.

By Roger Horner of E3 Systems

For further information email on info@e3s.com and website www.e3s.com

Tel: +34 971 404208/400738/702975