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Technology Update

The Ultimate Christmas Gadget List 2006

It's that time of year again when desperation sets in as we attempt to find a suitable Christmas gift for our friends and family. Well, this year, here are a few fun ideas. In the last year's Christmas issue of the Islander I recommended the Skype Du@lphone. A number of people have told me during the year that they have either got one or have been given one and are very pleased with it. So it goes to show not everything I write about is rubbish, although the following could be...

This list has been compiled from a single source, discovered in the seat pocket on a transatlantic flight this autumn. This catalogue is hugely entertaining and contains some absolute crackers. It originates from the USA and their website is listed at the end. I have not actually seen any of these and thus cannot personally recommend them, but they all sound great fun! And please note that most of the descriptions are theirs, not mine!

FOR THE GOLF COURSE

The Automatic Golf Tee

This device automatically tees a golf ball perfectly every time, allowing a golfer to practice chipping, driving or putting on grass or mats *without having to bend over* to set the ball. Sounds great!

The Remote Control Golf Ball

More sophisticated than mundane golf stunts, this is the world's most advanced practical joke ball. Detailed to resemble a real golf ball, it zigs and zags at a touch of a remote control. The joystick on the discrete remote control lets you direct the ball within a 30m range. What they don't tell you is how to substitute your friend's ball on the green without him noticing...

Fix your aim and sink those putts

The Smart Golfer Laser Putting Alignment System training aid is compatible with most putters and attaches in seconds. You'll get instant feedback on targeting, club face orientation and impact zone. Easy to change and long lasting batteries. Jolly handy little gadget!

FOR THAT PESKY LITTLE PET

Persnickety kitties prefer water that's constantly filtered and aerated in this Water Fountain with bowl.

As all you cat lovers already know, cats have to drink plenty of water to avoid urinary tract disease. Make sure they want to drink more by providing cleaner and fresher tasting water. Unlike stagnant water that sits in a typical water bowl, this unique water fountain continually circulates, filters and aerates water so it is always tasting fresh.

Folding safety ramp helps pets in and out of cars and pools

Apparently, jumping in and out of vehicles can be stressful and dangerous for dogs, hamsters, guinea pigs and small ponies –especially for the elderly and small animals. This flexible and sturdy ramp has a non slip rubberized surface to give your pets secure footing. Convenient carry handles. An optional Floatation Kit makes it ideal for use with docks and swimming pools. How useful could that be?

The 24/7 self-cleaning, scoop-free litter box!

Don't get too excited, this doesn't mean you never have to empty a litter tray again! All it means is that, if you have to be away from your cat, he won't have to put up with a soiled litter tray in your absence. The "Litter Robot" self-cleaning litter box features a patented sifting process that's automatically activated just minutes after the cat leaves the box, transferring waste into a hidden drawer, then refilling with the remaining clean litter. Ideal for boats, as it bears an uncanny resemblance to a satdome!

Finally, a decorative litter box you don't have to hide

With its Tuscany handfinish, this new litter box looks like a real clay pot, complete with an attractive, artificial decorator plant. Simply turn the entrance to the wall and no-one will know (if your cat doesn't tell)! This roomy, covered litter box is constructed of durable polypropylene with a removable top section for easy filling and cleaning. Add a blanket and pillow and it can also be used as a secret bed as well or instead of a litter box. Scary - I've seen the picture and it doesn't look anything like a real clay pot!

ENTERTAINMENT

The Portable Inflatable Whirlpool Spa

This portable pool inflates in minutes and has all the vigorous heated jet action of permanently installed units, allowing you to enjoy a relaxing whirlpool spa wherever required. All you require is 4 consenting adults and 250 gallons of water, then sit back and plug yourself into the mains.

The Portable Backyard Ice Rink

This might not be the ideal gift for those of us resident here in Mallorca, but great to send to your friends in northern climes. All they need is, wait for it, a garden the size of an ice hockey pitch without any slopes or hillsides, and a consistent temperature below 0°C for several days. Easy to assemble apparently, and no tools are required. Comes with instructional video and CD of Ravel's Bolero.

USB turntable – Turn your Old 45s & LPs into MP3s!

The ION USB turntable can digitize your treasured vinyl LP collection so you enjoy it on an MP3 player or your computer. The Plug 'n' Play turntable includes full featured software to edit and cleanup your digitized audio files. Very useful for us old audiophiles.

Collect your limited edition talking figurine of your favourite US presidents (and their wives)!

Words fail me here! I've seen what they look like (Barbie and Ken on a bad hair day come to mind) but haven't yet had the pleasure of hearing the "actual voice

recording of 25 authentic phrases". Would love to know what George W. has to say

TOYS FOR BOYS

The Gravity-Defying Boots

These boots have a patented T-spring system that transforms walking, jumping or running into an exhilarating low impact bounce that builds balance, burns calories, creates bruises and the occasional broken bone. For use on dry, flat surfaces while wearing the appropriate safety gear (parachute, life jacket). Not recommended for use on yachts as the high traction, non marking tread damages teak decks.

The Marshmallow Shooter

This clever pump action device shoots sweet edible miniature marshmallows over 10m, and it even has an LED sight that projects a safe beam of red light to help locate a target with pinpoint accuracy. The easy-to-refill magazine holds 20 marshmallows for fast, nonstop action. Dishwasher proof. How brilliant is that? Definitely one for my Christmas wish list!

Lighted Slippers with Headlights (honestly!) Let You See In the Dark

Give your wife a pair of these for Christmas... then stand back and take cover! The idea is that you can easily move around the darkened house without risk of tripping over objects or running into doors, furniture or anything not easily seen in the dark. Simply step into your slippers (if you can find them) and the powerful LED headlights automatically activate. Step out and the lights go out after a few seconds allowing you time to return safely to bed. They cannot be serious!! I've heard that someone in my office has secretly admitted she wants a pair to give to her loved one at Christmas, so that he doesn't have to put the light on and wake her up when he stumbles home from the pub. Perhaps not such a bad idea after all!

I could go on and on. There are 280 pages of so much stuff you never ever knew you needed. So if you want to find out more, go to www.skymall.com.

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

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