



Awards and Reviews





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CES Best of Innovations



PC Magazine's Last Gadget Standing



Popular Mechanics Editor's Choice



Newstips News Service: Best In Show



Reader's Digest "America's 100 Best"





O-ZONE



Designing Women

Art DURING THE Depression, Arlonzia Pettway's family made quilts to keep the wind from sneaking through the cracks of their mud-and-straw home in Gee's Bend, Alabama. In the 1960s, Pettway sold her handmade quilts for \$5 apiece. Now, thanks in part to art

preservationists Bill and Matt Arnett, Pettway is part of a collective whose quilts have fetched up to \$28,000 each. In 1997 the Arnetts visited Gee's Bend, a tiny African-American community tucked into a curve of the Alabama River. Amazed by the town's vibrant scrap-cloth creations, they assembled an exhibition that toured the country,

arriving at the Whitney Museum in New York City—where a rave review from *The New York Times* and more than 200,000 visitors put the former plantation on the fine-arts map. Since then the collective has built a lucrative industry around their remarkable skills. When a quilt sells, the artist takes home half the profit; the other half is split among the collective. Prices start at \$2,000, but

if that sounds steep, 39 cents will get you in on the action: This month the U.S. Postal Service releases the designs of Pettway and eight of her peers on a line of stamps. “One time we was down—way down,” says Pettway, 83, one of the collective's oldest members, who's grateful to see her hard-luck community thriving. “It ain't nothing but a blessing Gee's Bend came on top.” —W.F.

NUGGET

“There are no right answers. But there *is* a right question. It's the one that rubs up against our self-righteousness, resistance, and fears.... When you ask yourself, ‘Why not?’ you may find yourself in motion, across a vivid and unpredictable landscape, over impossible mountains and beyond the water's edge, where you surprise yourself, once and for all, by getting wet.”

—KAREN MAEZEN MILLER, IN *MOMMA ZEN* (TRUMPETER)

Star Search

Gizmo Now any astronomy rube can identify heavenly bodies with Stephen Hawking-like precision, thanks to Celestron's ingenious (if not terribly pretty) SkyScout (\$399). Simply peer through the handheld viewfinder and press

a button, and the camcorder-size SkyScout reports (by means of an LCD display) the name of—and in some cases the history and mythology behind—any one of the more than 6,000 objects in its celestial database, including all 88 constellations. The award-winning device employs GPS technology to figure out where on earth you're standing, then calculates which stars are visible based on the date and time you're there. SkyScout even compiles a list of 20 must-see objects each night in your area. If they could only program the thing to explain black holes. (celestron.com)

—NOAH ROTHBAUM



THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, JULY 30, 2006

SUNDAY MONEY

NOVELTIES
ANNE EISENBERG

A Guide To the Sky For Galactic Tourists

SUMMER evenings are the classic time to look skyward and identify the stars. Except I can't. They all look alike to me — I am incapable of spotting even the North Star, the one object that stays more or less in place.

But at last there is a point-and-click gadget, the SkyScout, that may help even hopeless duffers like me enjoy the delights of astronomy. It's a hand-held device the size of a camcorder but much lighter, packed with sensors, computer power, databases and an L.C.D. screen.

Standing on Hudson Street in Lower Manhattan, I aimed it at a bright spot in the heavens and pushed its Target button. Instantly the word "Vega" appeared on the screen.

I stared from the screen to the sky. Yes, the star was there, twinkling away. Vega. It was absolutely the first time I'd identified it.

I pointed the device at a different bright point in the heavens. "Murphrid... 37 light years from earth, yellow white, twice as hot as the sun," said the text that scrolled across the screen.

The SkyScout offers many ways besides the Target button for beginners to search the heavens. For instance, it lists "Tonight's Highlights," 20 objects of interest in the celestial neighborhood that can be located by name.

I selected "Jupiter" from the list and raised SkyScout. Twinkling red dots immediately appeared in the viewfinder. I followed their lead — when they bounced up, I raised the device; when they bounced right, I turned it right. Suddenly all the lights twinkled in a perfect glowing circle around a bright object. Bingo. It was Jupiter, right there in the center of the viewfinder. It was huge. How could I ever have missed it?

The device comes with headphones and an audio feed describing Jupiter and many other heavenly bodies. Users who prefer silence can read text descriptions of the 6,000 or so stars, planets, constellations and other objects visible to the naked eye, all backlit in red on the screen (red preserves the user's night vision).

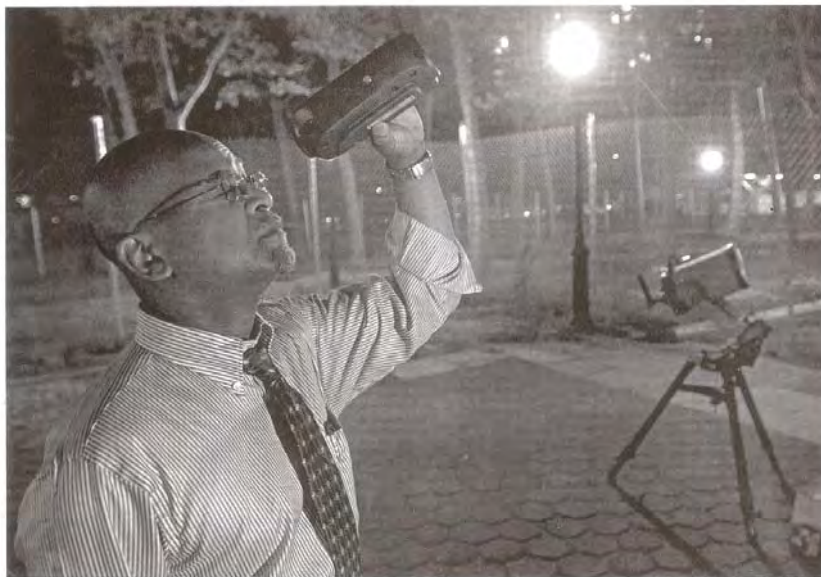
SkyScout, which is priced at \$399, is the invention of Mike Lemp, an engineer who had the idea in 1995. Mr. Lemp always enjoyed looking at the stars, but found it difficult to point them out to his children. "It was hard, even when I knew where they were," he said. There had to be a better way, he thought, than "Left of that telephone pole. See that tree? Go up from there."

Mr. Lemp is chief executive of Yamcon, in Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif., which has licensed his technology to Celestron, a manufacturer of astronomical equipment, which has engaged Mr. Lemp to further develop a SkyScout product line.

SkyScout weighs a bit less than a pound, including two AA batteries. It uses a global positioning system chip, Mr. Lemp explained, "to give us the current daytime and your location on the surface of the earth."

To calculate where the SkyScout is aimed, Mr. Lemp used two other sensors — one to

E-mail: Novelties@nytimes.com.



Photographs by Ramin Taheri for The New York Times

"I love it," Ron McCullough, a member of the Amateur Astronomers Association of New York, said of the SkyScout, below.

detect the magnetic field of the earth; the other, the gravitational field. "I need to know where the earth's magnetic and gravitational fields are to figure out which way you are pointing the device," he said.

Unlike a telescope, SkyScout does not magnify the view. It is meant for what can be seen by the naked eye, identifying stars up to the faintly visible fifth magnitude, said Jennifer Adams, marketing manager at Celestron, in Torrance, Calif. (The moon is first magnitude.)

The combination of G.P.S. sensors, database and microprocessor tells users where celestial objects are, even if clouds or buildings obstruct the view. SkyScout is not a viewer that depends on lenses, but a calculator

that depends on stored data, software and the dependable paths of heavenly bodies. It knows where it is pointed, not what mortals can see.

For instance, when I selected "Moon," I followed the flashing lights in the viewfinder down, then down some more, straight into the asphalt of Hudson Street, for the moon had not yet risen, and was below the horizon — indeed, below Hudson Street.

The Amateur Astronomers Association of New York discovered the X-ray-like ability of SkyScout to locate the planets behind obstacles when the group assembled recently for an evening of stargazing at the Brooklyn War Memorial on Cadman Plaza.

The sky grew cloudy, but that was no deterrent to these astronomers, who had arrived knowing roughly where Jupiter and Vega were. But did SkyScout know? Members of the group put the device through its paces. Then the measured calm of the astronomers evaporated in enthusiastic approval.

"Wow! It's magnificent," said Rich Rosenberg, president of the group and a Brooklyn resident.

"Pretty cool," said Joan Ross, also a member from Brooklyn.

Ron McCullough, who is on the group's board and lives in Park Slope, had brought his telescope along, but he too tried out SkyScout. "I love it," he said.

Ms. Ross said SkyScout would be a useful adjunct to a telescope, especially in the



country on a dark night when thousands of stars dot the sky. In the city, where only the brightest stars and planets shine through the light pollution, a program on her PC that tells what's in the evening sky is usually adequate. "But in a night sky in the country, it's harder to find anything," she said.

The device would make it much easier to locate the small area of the sky that she would then target with her scope. Ms. Ross has a traditional telescope, not a computer-assisted one that can easily put users in the area of objects they want to observe.

Mr. McCullough said he thought the \$399 price was reasonable. "Astronomers pay a lot more for esoteric gadgets," he said.

Mr. Lemp, the inventor, who also developed the commercial technology, said that many of the components were inexpensive off-the-shelf items used in other computer-based applications. For example, the gravity sensors are similar to ones used in air bag deployment in automobiles.

Making the prototype was one thing, Mr. Lemp said, "but making 100,000 that worked perfectly is another project."

The device was initially expected to be shipped in March, but was delayed for four months of fine-tuning. Orders have been piling up, but shipping began last week, and orders are being filled as quickly as possible, said Ms. Adams of Celestron.

Joanie Kozak, a product specialist at Op-

ticsPlanet Inc., in Northbrook, Ill., said demand for the SkyScout was brisk. "We had an immediate response within hours when we put it on the Web site. We have a ton of orders."

The device has a U.S.B. connector so that users can add updates — for example, the coordinates of a space shuttle they might want to observe. The machine requires almost no setup. Once activated, it looks for a G.P.S. fix — this may take several minutes. It also warns if you are standing too close to metal that might interfere with the magnetic sensors. (A magnet icon appears on the screen.) Other than that, it's point and click all the way.

At the War Memorial, the astronomers were enthusiastic about the SkyScout, but Mr. Rosenberg said his heart belonged to the telescope. "I don't want to miss the aesthetic experience of seeing details" like the moons around Jupiter, he said. He would like one day to see a telescope incorporating SkyScout's technology.

But rank beginners not yet ready for a telescope may want to follow Walt Whitman's advice, who when he tired of the "learn'd astronomer" wandered off in the moist night air and "look'd up in perfect silence at the stars." Of course, if they take along SkyScout, they should ignore the audio feed. □



The Ultimate Summer Fun Guide outdoor fun

Need a pick-me-up? Grab a kite!

Pick the perfect flyer. Look for a lightweight, durable (and colorful!) kite. Delta- and diamond-shaped kites fare best in light to medium winds (6 to 15 mph). For heavier winds (15 to 25 mph), a box shape is better.

Test the wind. Go to weather.com to check gusts' strength and see where the wind is blowing: Waving flags give it away, or throw a fistful of grass in the air to see which way it flies.

Keep it up. Go to an open area, like a beach or field, and stand with your back to the wind. That way, if there's enough of a breeze, you can launch your kite without taking a step (much safer than running blindly to launch that puppy—and then slamming into a tree). Hold the kite with both hands above your head, and toss it lightly. When you feel the wind catch it, slowly let out some slack in the string until the kite is 50 to 100 feet in the air. —TARA RUMMELL BERSON



DELTA



DIAMOND



BOX



sleep under the stars

Three essentials to make a casual camper cozy—whether you're at Yosemite or in your own backyard.

● **S'mores** No need to set the neighborhood on fire: Your barbecue grill or a copper fire pit, like the Coleman Back-Home (\$99, walmart.com), is perfect for roasting marshmallows. Give the gooey classic a kick by swapping dark for milk chocolate or spreading two graham crackers with peanut butter and jelly and wedging a 'mallow in between.

● **A starry sky** On a clear July night, face north to find the Big Dipper. (There are three stars in the handle and four in the ladle.) For other celestial sights, peer through the lens of the Starscope Star Finder, an all-in-one map and magnifier (\$32, zebrahall.com), or the high-tech (and equally high-priced) Celestron SkyScout, with press-of-a-button technology that's stargazing for dummies (\$399, celestron.com).

● **A makeshift bedroom** Forget fancy tents—you're not camping in the Arctic! Try an easy-to-pitch, A-frame model like the Eureka Timberline II (\$120, sportsauthority.com), suggests Cliff Jacobson, author of *Camping's Top Secrets*. Then zip up in a lightweight sleeping bag (\$59, REI Travel Sack; \$59, REI Kids' Kindercone). Line the bag with a cotton sheet to make it sticky sweat-proof. —PENNY WRENN

get soaked!

Make the neighbors jealous with these cool water toys: Hasbro's Mt. Tikisoki Water Volcano (\$17.99) sprays like crazy and erupts with a blast from the top for an extra soaking. The Six Flags Banzai Blast Water Slide (\$200) will turn your backyard into a water park with a splashy-splashy water slide. Younger kids can join the fun with the Little Tikes Ultimate Beach Ball Sprinkler (\$14.99), which shoots water every which way. —J.D.



GOOEY GOODNESS Half of all marshmallows eaten in the U.S. (90 million pounds, to be exact!) are toasted over a barbecue grill first. Grab a long stick and some charcoal!



HOW TO CATCH A FIREFLY To bag the most bugs, head outside at dusk after a late-day rain. That's when the most fireflies (a.k.a. lightning bugs) are abuzz because the ground is damp. 1. Turn off the lights and head out with a net, a jar, or just your hands to nab a few of the 200 different species found in North America. 2. Want to keep Tinkerbell as a pet? Pad your jar with wet paper towels, says firefly expert Helen Ghiradella. 3. Don't poke holes in the lid—fireflies don't need much air and holes only dry out the atmosphere. 4. Check them out with a magnifying glass (did you know that fireflies are actually beetles?), and after a day or two, let them go. —L.P.

GADGET

Star Search



Sky navigator

What it is: Celestron's SkyScout (\$399; available at www.amazon.com and Discovery Channel stores in late July).

What it does: Part viewfinder, part GPS, it locates and identifies planets, stars, and constellations.

When to use it: An hour or two before sunrise on July 20, the crescent moon will pass in front of the Pleiades, a cluster of jewel-like stars, according to Joe Rao of the Hayden Planetarium in New York City. Also circle August 13, when the Perseid meteor shower peaks between 2 a.m. and 4 a.m.

—STEPHANIE FLETCHER

TV'S BEST BETS by STEVEN RUSSELL

Chappelle's Show: The Lost Episodes

(Comedy Central; Sunday; 9 p.m.) Before he quit his show, Dave Chappelle taped enough skits for three episodes. Who needs reruns?

Brotherhood (Showtime; Sunday; 10 p.m.)

So how much political and criminal intrigue can there be in little Rhode Island? Find out in this hard-hitting family drama set in Providence.

Nightmares & Dreamscapes (TNT; Wednesday; 9 p.m. and 10 p.m.)

The Stephen King scare-athon continues with an end-of-the-world plot.

Project Runway (Bravo;

Wednesday; 10 p.m.) A new crop of designer wannabes tackles the second sartorial challenge, while Heidi Klum (right) helps decide who makes the cut.



LIFE
AMERICA'S WEEKEND MAGAZINE

PERFECT ESCAPES FOR A SUMMER WEEKEND
Eight Great Excuses To Take Monday Off

	4		3	9
	7			

HERE'S HOW YOU SUDOKU

Fill in the grid so that all nine rows across, all down, and all nine 3 x 3 boxes contain the 1 through 9, each used only once. Solution on page 100.

For more sudoku, check out our interactive puzzles at www.LIFE.com, where you'll find new puzzles every week.

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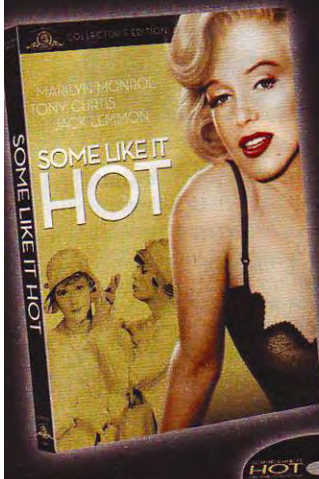
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NO PURCHASE NECESSARY TO ENTER. The "Red Hot Weekend" Sweepstakes is open to legal residents of the United States who are at least 18 years old at the time of registration. Ends 7/18/06.

SUMMER TECH SPECIAL

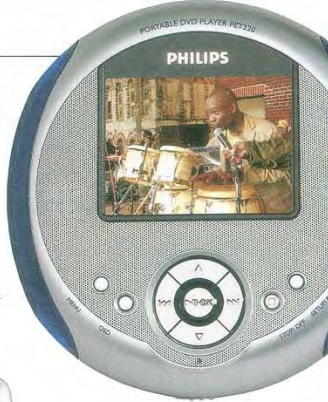


[CELESTRON SKYSCOUT] The same technology that helps you find your way around town can now help you find your way around space. Using GPS, the SkyScout makes it easy to identify planets and constellations; just point it at any star and it will tell you what you're looking at. Or it'll help you locate a celestial destination from a menu of 6,000 stars. \$440, celestron.com

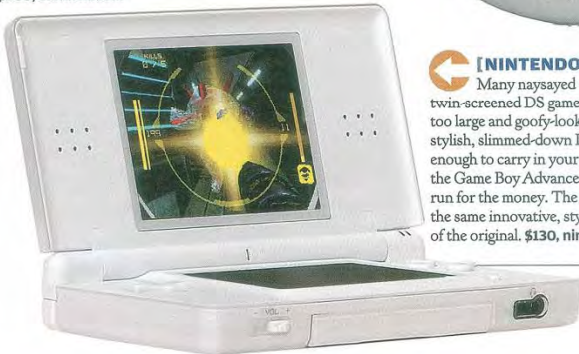
[SANDISK SANSa E270] Sure, it may look like a Nano wanna-be, but SanDisk's sleek new music, photo and video player holds up to 500 more songs than a top-end Nano, thanks to a generous 6GB flash memory. That space comes in handy—it's compatible with services like Napster, Rhapsody, Yahoo! Music Unlimited and Urge. \$280, sandisk.com



[PHILIPS PET320] Most portable DVD players are as bulky as a laptop, but Philips' spiffy new device is no bigger than a standard portable CD player—yet it features a built-in 3.5-inch LCD screen and decent stereo speakers. Better still: It delivers more than three hours of battery life, enough to watch an actual movie. \$130, philips.com



[NINTENDO DS LITE] Many naysayed the original twin-screened DS game machine as too large and goofy-looking, but the stylish, slimmed-down DS Lite is small enough to carry in your pocket, giving the Game Boy Advance its first serious run for the money. The Lite delivers the same innovative, stylus-based play of the original. \$130, nintendo.com



[ECLIPSE SOLAR BAG] The inconvenient truth of most solar chargers: They're a major pain in the ass to haul around. Eclipse has solved this by building solar panels into a lightweight bag. Using a car adapter cord, you can power anything from cell phones to audio players (sorry, no laptops). \$130, eclipsesolaregear.com



[PANASONIC CF-74 TOUGHBOOK] Go ahead and pour your PBR over this laptop's keyboard: Spill-resistance is just one of the features of this latest member of Panasonic's rugged portable line. The magnesium-alloy-covered computer has a glareproof screen, wireless capability and a whopping seven hours of battery life. \$3,000, panasonic.com/toughbook



[KLIPSCH IGROOVE HG] Klipsch clearly knows from speakers, and its curvy all-in-one portable system has the clarity and depth of competing offerings from Bose and Apple, for substantially less cash. Bonus: A port in the back bounces low-end frequencies off walls to supply some extra bass oomph. \$250, klipsch.com



[BOSE SOUNDDOCK] This was the first serious iPod speaker system to hit the market, and it still remains the benchmark, thanks to stellar, full-bodied sound and sleek, trendsetting looks. Now it comes in black to match your latest-generation video iPod. Like everything else from Bose, however, great sound doesn't come cheap. \$299, bose.com



[APPLE IPOD HI-FI] Apple seems to be positioning its first iPod speaker system as a would-be SoundDock killer: It's not only simple and sophisticated-looking, it also performs just as well, which means it'll fill up a decent-size room with crisp and clean sound. \$349, apple.com

MICHAEL PIRROCCO (5); COMEDY CENTRAL ("DAVE CHAPPELLE'S BLOCK PARTY")

SMART & WIRED Trends and Technology



larger telescopes that feature bigger mirrors to capture more light. (The more light you can capture, the farther you can see into space.) Obsession Telescopes, based in Lake Mills, Wis., offers high-end telescopes that range from \$3,000 to \$17,000. The hand-fabricated models are often two stories high, yet still portable. One Obsession Telescope model breaks down into smaller units, a piece of which is moved around with wheelbarrow handles and wheels.

"The telescopes are portable, so people can haul them out to where it's really dark, like national parks," notes Dave Kriege, the company's owner.

Of course, not everyone wants to lug around a giant telescope, and there are portable options far superior to the \$60 telescopes found at toy stores. This past January, Celestron International introduced the SkyScout, a small device that allows you to examine the sky and tells you exactly what you are looking at, including name, location, mythology and scientific data. The \$399 SkyScout also features an audio program for 200 of the 6,000 objects it identifies.

"You can read about the item on the screen and then hear it in your ear," explains Adams. "It's two different sets of data, so you can really learn a lot about what you're looking at."

Garriott says it is this type of information that compels him to study the skies. Although he uses his observatory only three or four times each year—light pollution often makes it difficult to see all but the brightest stars and celestial objects—Garriott says the time he spends stargazing really brings him back to Earth.



Previous page: Celestron's CPC GPS Series telescope can identify more than 40,000 objects and starts at \$1,999. Above left: Also from Celestron, the more portable SkyScout is priced at \$399. Above right: A home observatory in Germany built by Observa-Dome.



"I've always been a person who enjoys exploration. I've been to all seven continents, but space represents one of the most profound potential places of exploration that exists," says Garriott. "For those unfortunate people who have lost their sense of wonder at the world, the telescope is a great window into all that can be. When you get caught in the mundane, practical realities of sustaining yourself on Earth, a telescope helps reimplant that sense of wonder, beauty and amazement." □

Celestron International, 310.803.5955, www.celestron.com
 Observa-Dome Laboratories, 601.982.3333, www.observa-dome.com
 Obsession Telescopes, 920.648.2328, www.obsessiontelescopes.com

Fabulous Finds |

3811D



ROLL WITH IT

Wheelabugee, the Australian ride-on toy that has children Down Under abuzz, is now available in the States via modernmini.com. It comes in three designs and two sizes to accommodate kids 18 months and up, \$89.

HAPPY TRAILS Just summer: Fisher-Price Sleepover Nap Sac perfect for slumber camping trips. The backpack holds an air and foot pump and room for your child's belongings; fisher-price.com



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FUN! FATHER'S DAY GIFTS, FRAGRANCES MOMS LOVE & THE HOTTEST BEACHWEAR

➤ **REMOTE CONTROL TiVo** is offering a new service called KidZone that provides a password-protected space where parents can make their own decisions about what their child can watch. Also available: access to a menu of programs approved by the Parents Television Council and other leading family groups.



What's Hot
Now!

AHOY MINI MATEYS! The July release of *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* has made all things pirate hotter than ever. Children of all ages can enjoy the trend: Manhattan Toy Pirates Bounty Treasure Hunt (above) is a five-piece plush set perfect for swashbucklers 18 months and older, \$25; manhattantoy.com. John Matthew's new book, *Pirates* (Atheneum, ages 6 and up), explains their history and culture through illustrations and interactive pull-out maps and posters, \$20. Three major resorts on Grand Bahama Island are also offering pirate-theme packages, complete with fishing excursions and treasure hunts the whole family can enjoy; 800-BAHAMAS.



WISE GUYS Fatherhood just got funnier with two witty new dad-authored guides, both from the Penguin Group. In *Bringing Up Baby*, Sam Martin offers step-by-step instructions for the basics like how to dress and hold an infant. And in *Pop Culture: The Sane Man's Guide to the Insane World of New Fatherhood*, Christopher Healy expresses his playful view of what a modern man goes through when he becomes a dad.

Sky Search

Stargazing has gone high-tech. Using point-and-click GPS technology, the **Celestron Sky Scout** allows astronomers-in-the-making to locate and identify more than 6,000 celestial objects with the push of a button, \$399; celestron.com.



PHOTO: TED MORRISON/CLARE AGENCY (BOTTOM LEFT).

Innovaciones >>

Escrita por Julia César Rivas



SkyScout de Celestron

Utilizar un sextante es un arte. Manejar el SkyScout de Celestron es un placer. El SkyScout es un aparato de mano que utiliza la tecnología GPS (Global Positioning System) para identificar de forma instantánea estrellas, planetas, constelaciones y otros objetos celestiales. Simplemente hay que apuntar SkyScout a través del visor y apretar un botón para tener de forma instantánea la información deseada. Pero el aparato también incluye información, en forma de texto y audio, educacional y para entretener, como preguntas sobre historia y mitología. El SkyScout tiene una bahía para tarjetas SD, un puerto USB para conectarlo a un PC y una entrada para auriculares estéreo.

- >> www.celestron.com
- >> US \$399

Toughbook de Panasonic

Hay situaciones en las que un ordenador portátil convencional no es aconsejable. Panasonic tiene la solución con la serie de portátiles Toughbook. Las ventajas de estos portátiles son muchas. La pantalla y el teclado resisten humedad, polvo y temperaturas extremas. En el exterior, su pantalla de 10,4 pulgadas es fácilmente legible, mucho más en el caso del ToughBook 18 que gira 180 grados para convertirlo en un Tablet-PC. La pantalla es sensible al tacto por lo que utilizarse con un lápiz o el dedo. Y para los que viajan, a pesar de su ligereza (sólo 2 kilogramos), el exterior del portátil está hecho con una aleación de magnesio que funciona como maletín protector. Y el disco duro es removible y montado de forma que absorbe vibraciones para evitar daños.

- >> www.panasonic.prasysis.com
- >> desde US \$3.465 hasta US \$5.109



JUNIO/JULIO 2006 27

Calendar

Hospice Calgary's 3rd Annual Meaning of Life Luncheon

May 1
This annual fundraising luncheon is designed to create greater corporate and community awareness of Hospice Calgary's Outreach Programs and the value they contribute to the community. Michael Kerr, a leading authority on how humour can boost morale, lower stress, and motivate employees, will be guest speaking.
www.hospicecalgary.com

An Evening With Neil Sedaka

May 6 - Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium
Presented by the Owen Hart Foundation and The Calgary Foundation, this concert will raise funds for both foundations.
www.ticketmaster.ca

Henry Burris' All-Star Weekend

May 13-14
Professional CFL, NFL and Olympic athletes from across North America arrive in Calgary to participate in Henry Burris' All-Star Weekend in support of Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Calgary. This event includes an exclusive Saturday night fundraiser called the End Zone Experience and a family-focused Celebrity Softball Game on Sunday.
www.bbbscalgary.com

The Rainbow Society of Alberta and The Bounty Cellars Present: The Second Annual Wine & Wishes

June 2 - Metropolitan Grill
Enjoy a four-course meal paired with The Bounty Cellars' fine wines at the Metropolitan Grill. There will be a silent auction and 'The Coach' from Lite 98 will emcee. The Rainbow Society has been granting wishes to Alberta children diagnosed with chronic and life-threatening illnesses for over 20 years. Call 403.252.3891.
www.rainbowsociety.ab.ca

The ROMA MS Bike Tour

June 10-11
Gear up for the challenge! Support the MS Bike Tour by joining or sponsoring a rider. Your efforts will help find a cure and enhance the quality of life for people affected by multiple sclerosis.
www.msocalgary.org/msbike.htm

Spruce Meadows National

June 7-11 - Spruce Meadows
Spruce Meadows' tournaments attract virtually every Olympic, World, European, and National Show Jumping Champion. This year be sure to catch the National Competition as well as all the sights and exhibits available with your admission ticket.
www.sprucemeadows.com

Luciano Pavarotti

June 11 - Pengrowth Saddledome
If you wish to see Luciano Pavarotti you have two options for this show. You can either purchase a ticket to the show, or you can upgrade your experience by purchasing the VIP option. With this you receive floor seats to the show as well as a pre-show reception, Champagne and appetizers will be served.
www.ticketmaster.ca

Let us know about your event: events@clearquest.ca

Biometric Bolt

Fingerprint scanners are the future of security, and the future has arrived. Smarthome's fifteen-user Fingerprint Deadbolt Lock is the ideal security solution for your home or office. It also provides the convenience of keyless door locks and entry systems for today's active lifestyle.

Up to fifteen people can be programmed into the deadbolt. It is recommended that you program two fingerprints for each user for a total of thirty prints.

After matching the fingerprint to one stored in memory (average scanning time is one second), the lock body releases, and the system powers off to save battery power. Four AA batteries are required to operate the deadbolt. They will

last for approximately 300 uses. When they run low, four beeps will sound when the lock is used. Change the batteries ASAP to retain all inputted fingerprints and other set-up functions.

The LED display and simple buttons allow for easy operation and programming. Three mechanical keys are provided for emergency entry.

The deadbolt weighs 2.5 kilograms and can be installed on right- or left-hand doors. It is designed to fit either side of any standard wooden door with installation holes for a deadbolt. A template is included for doors without predrilled holes.

By using the fingerprint deadbolt, you are assured that only people you al-



-Toby Welch



Scout's Honour



The Celestron SkyScout is an amazing little invention. While it doesn't play DVDs and isn't compatible with your MP3 player, the SkyScout is on every gadget guru's top ten list.

The SkyScout uses GPS and gravitational sensors to identify over 6,000 stars, planets, and constellations. Simply point at an object in the sky, press a button, and listen to information about that celestial body. Or choose an object you would like to view (say a planet or a Dipper), and using directional arrows, it will show you where to look. The

device allows you to see stars and galaxies as far as 2.8 million light years away.

The SkyScout is equipped with entertaining audio and text information about the most popular celestial objects including facts, trivia, and history.

Built-in field guides include an introduction to astronomy, a glossary, bios on astronomers, descriptions of man-made space objects, and a comet guide. There is also a built-in help menu and a USB port to update the database when new objects are discovered.

A fun learning tool for all ages, the SkyScout is like having your own personal astronomer. It is easy to use and portable. The SkyScout's durable construction, light weight (430 grams), and small size (19 x 10 x 6.5 centimetres) make it easy to take anywhere. It comes with a two-year warranty.

Retailing at \$499, the Celestron SkyScout is available online from EfstonScience at www.escience.ca, or you can call them at 1.888.777.5255.

-Toby Welch



Light the Way

This Essential Gear Luxeon Star One-Watt Alkaline Series Aluminum Hand Torch is ten to 15 times brighter than a standard flashlight and will light your way for up to 50 hours. It's also lightweight and water-resistant. \$50. CampMor.com

Summer Shower

Camping doesn't mean you have to stink. Before you and your girl climb into that double sleeping bag, clean up in Cabela's Shower Shelter. It's easy to assemble—and it might convince your lady to sleep in the woods more often. \$100. Cabelas.com



Stargazing

Keep yourself entertained all night long. The SkyScout can locate a specific star in the sky by showing you directions through the viewfinder, or it can identify the star you're looking at with the touch of a button. \$399. Celestron.com



TRAIL LOG

BUZZ

OUR HOT LIST OF COOL STUFF

One of the obligatory pleasures of camping is gazing at stars—but once we ID the Big Dipper and Orion, most of us are skunked. Finally, aspiring astronomers with some disposable income can explore space with the ultimate celestial crib sheet: **Celestron's Skyscout**, a "smart" telescope. Just select an object's name from the menu—Scorpio, say—and follow the arrows in the viewfinder to locate it. Or just point to a collection of stars, and hit the Target button to find out what the heck you're looking at. Skyscout's database has the skinny on more than 6,000 stars, planets, and constellations, and if camp conversation dries up, it fills the gaps with audio trivia, history, and mythology. \$399; www.celestron.com



You've heard the low-impact mantra, "Take nothing but pictures; leave nothing but footprints." But what about being so low-impact you leave nothing at all? Dude, that's deep. And a new initiative spearheaded by the Conservation Fund, called **Go Zero**, is a way to do just that. Go to www.gocarbonzero.com to calculate your annual CO₂ footprint, which is measured in tons and based on factors such as the size of your house and the distance of your commute. The tool will also compute exactly how many trees it will take to cancel out your CO₂ output. Donate \$2 per tree, and the Conservation Fund will plant them for you.



Maybe it's just us, but French Rabbit sounds more like a bistro special or an adult product than a camping innovation. Yet the vintner with the provocative name seems to have created its **ePod** with backpackers in mind. The box, similar to those used for soy milk and juice, holds a liter of vino—two more glasses than a traditional bottle. The resealable box folds flat, and the company claims a 90 percent reduction in packaging waste. If that isn't crunchy enough, French Rabbit will plant—you'll never guess—a tree!—for every four ePod wines sold. Choose from vintage-dated cab, merlot, pinot noir, and chardonnay; the white is our favorite. \$10; www.frenchrabbit.com

Leave it to PBS to come up with a reality show that teaches us something more valuable than what a grub tastes like. Premiering in May, **Texas Ranch House** is part reenactment, part time-travel: Fifteen people are transported to Texas, circa 1867, and charged with keeping a ranch in the black. A raft guide from California and a camp counselor from Vermont sign on for a life of hard work and basacamping, showering once a week and eating nothing but camp food. Oh, and scouring 47,000 acres for lost cattle. It's rough, but it beats 6 weeks on Exile Island with a bunch of poseurs. www.pbs.org/ranchhouse



PHOTO BY PHILIP TOPY FOR BACKPACKER; DESKTOP PHOTO: MICHAEL NEW YORK



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TODD WELLS, 30
 DURANGO, COLORADO
 US cyclocross champion and 2004 Olympic team member

"When you go to places where no one speaks your language and everything is different, it's nice to have a little slice of Americana with you. So I always pack some *Seinfeld* episodes on DVD. I've seen every episode at least 20 times, but I still laugh as if it were the first. My favorite? The one when Kramer turns his apartment into *The Merv Griffin Show* with the old set he finds in a dumpster."



Seinfeld DVDs
 [\$50/season; sphe.com]

PERSONAL PLANETARIUM Celestron SkyScout

If your knowledge of constellations begins and ends with the Big Dipper, here's hope for your next camping trip: The SkyScout identifies any object in the sky using a combination of GPS technology, internal sensors, and a database with more than 6,000 astronomical destinations. Or you can tell it what you'd like to view and it will point you in the right direction. [\$399; celestron.com/skyscout]



TRUNKS Quiksilver Morning Sun

Surf trunks like Quiksilver's Morning Sun are standard issue for many a world traveler. But they aren't just for swimming or surfing. Made of lightweight nylon oxford, these trunks dry quickly and wear comfortably in hot and sticky climates. You'll also want a few compartments for your goods, and this pair has two buttoned cargo pockets and a zippered security stash for valuables. [\$55; quiksilver.com]



HEADLAMP Black Diamond Spot

Headlamps face the unenviable task of trying to excel in two very different categories: They need to be small and light, for easy sleeping, and they must deliver enough shine to find the latrine on a moonless night. At 3 oz (with 3 AAA batteries), and equipped with four LED bulbs (one of which is larger and hyperbright) that can bust through as much as 130 feet of post-midnight dark, Black Diamond's new Spot will help you find your way in and from the can. [\$43; blackdiamondequipment.com]



EATING UTENSIL Snow Peak Titanium Spork

Part spoon, part fork, Snow Peak's spork does the work of two utensils — maybe even three, considering the edges are sharp enough to cut vegetables. Crafted of lightweight titanium for durability, this spork will keep you chowing no matter what your travels spill onto your plate. Nor will its teeth snap, the way they do on the plastic sporks you pillaged from Taco Bell. [\$9; snowpeak.com]



HAT Outdoor Research Element Bucket

A classic wide-brimmed bucket hat updated with space-age fabric, the SPF 50+ Outdoor Research Element Bucket does more than just shun the sun. Made with Schoeller's dynamic 3XDY material, the 2.1-oz hat repels moisture, resists stains, and fights odors, while the Coolmax headband wicks sweat away from your brow. [\$30; orgear.com]



Bouldering near Leavenworth, Washington

PACIFIC COAST

Drift the High Desert

OREGON • The John Day River can't compete with the nearby Upper McKenzie for nonstop white-water thrills. Its high-desert charms are of the understated variety, told in the geologic upheaval that created bizarre basalt formations inside a 2,000-foot-deep canyon. Rafters don't run the John Day through central Oregon; they float it. This month, otherwise serene hillsides are dappled in blue phlox and red Indian paintbrush. "The John Day is a perfect family river with excellent campsites, just enough Class II rapids, and a calmness that comes from its seclusion," says David Loos, owner and guide of Oregon Whitewater Adventures. His company leads three-day trips down the 47-mile section of the river between Service Creek and Clarno (\$345; www.oregonwhitewater.com). Persuade your guide to tow along an inflatable kayak to bump up the fun factor during the rapids.

Climb to the Sun

WASHINGTON • Trade the muck in Seattle for the warm, sunny granite crags around the neo-Bavarian enclave of Leavenworth. Here, in the rain shadow of the Cascades, rock climbing season starts early. Instructors from the American Alpine Institute will meet you in town to tailor a weekend itinerary around your abilities and interests (\$225 a day; www.mtnguide.com). If you hope to improve technique, expect to drill down low on Castle Rock, a spaceship-shaped rock beside rollicking Tumwater River. If you're up for a challenge, follow your guide up Outer Space, a seven-pitch, 5.9 classic. "The last 300 feet have a perfect hand crack that splits the headwall. The wall itself is covered with chickenheads, which are like the handholds in a climbing gym," says guide Andy Bourne. Toast your success at Gustav's, in town, with the three B's: brats, burgers, and microbrewed beer.

NEXT WEEKEND | IDEAS & ACT

EAST

Swing From the Treetops

GEORGIA • Spend a night high in a white oak and a certain nursery rhyme boughs breaking and babies falling will likely spring to mind. But don't fret—cradle—a big-wall climber's canvas port-a-ledge—may rock, but it won't fall. Her base, northeast of Atlanta, Genevieve Summers, owner of Dancing W coaches her clients on the basics of roped tree climbing then guides them into the leafy reaches of Tonya, a spreading oak (\$235; www.dancingwithtrees.com). For the next 18 hours they'll remain aloft, yielding plenty of time to (see "Pack This," below) through the sturdy boughs.

Tap a White-Water Bounty

MASSACHUSETTS • When the maple sap flows, the snow-fed rivers of western Massachusetts surge. One of the finest and shortest-lived white-water rafting runs in the region is Millers River, a powerful torrent with no time to waste. Millers charges through a nearly unbroken train of Class III rapids spiked by "The Funnel," a Class IV soaker. "Some days the big waves build to ten feet; hitting them head-on is tremendous," says Kevin McMillan, a guide for Zoar Outdoor. Zoar offers one-day outings on the Millers (\$49; www.zoaroutdoor.com), saving Sunday for a visit to Blue Heron Farm (www.blueheronfarm.com), a working farm and sugar shack outside Charlemont.

Escape the Beltway

VIRGINIA • Before there was Shenandoah National Park, there was Skyland Resort (\$99; www.visitshenandoah.com), a rustic retreat perched at 3,680 feet on the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains, 92 miles from Washington, D.C. Though crowded in summer, the lodge makes a peaceful outpost for long day hikes in spring. Worth the short drive are six-mile Buck Ridge-Buck Hollow loop, where big oaks and hemlocks line a pretty stream, and ten-mile Hazel Mountain Loop, which is long on Blue Ridge views and short on company. ▲



TARZAN 2.0: Getting fresh with Tonya the tree, in Georgia

PACK THIS

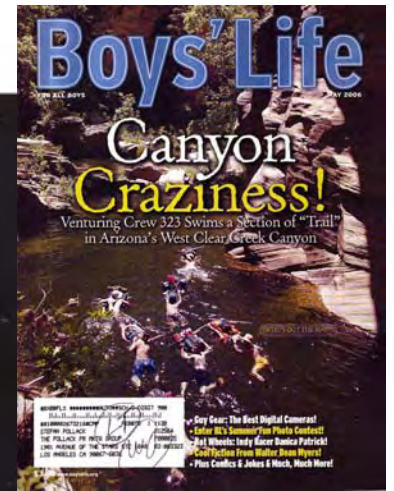
Celestron SkyScout Invented constellation names are no longer acceptable. That's right, no more Totally Awesome Major or Looks-Like-My-Dog Minor. Merely point the GPS-equipped Celestron SkyScout (\$399; www.celestron.com) at a heavenly body and its name will appear on-screen. Looking for a particular subject? Locate it within SkyScout's internal database of more than 6,000 stars and 88 constellations and then follow the viewfinder's directionals to within half a degree of your prize. —Stephen Neill Holland



PHOTOGRAPHS, THIS PAGE: FROM TOP: TIM MATSUI/IN STOCK; COWLEY RICH; COURTESY OF CELESTRON

HEADS UP!

The Boys' Life guide for the things you need to know.



THE SKY'S THE LIMIT ☼ Astronomy Week is May 1 to 7. Celebrate with Celestron's new SkyScout. Point and shoot this handheld viewer at a star or planet, and get an instant ID of what you're looking at. Or, enter something you want to find, and SkyScout will spot it. You can get audio and text about the most popular of more than 6,000 celestial objects. It also offers a top 10 of what to see on a given night. \$399, www.celestron.com

Get lower-tech – and free! – skywatching tips from the BSA "Fieldbook" or the new astronomy book on page 7. ☼



Between battles, the art of baking - The Boston Globe

boston.com

THIS STORY HAS BEEN FORMATTED FOR EASY PRINTING

PERSONAL TECH

Between battles, the art of baking

The Boston Globe

By Mark Beard | May 8, 2006

Mobile gaming

For the wireless Nintendo DS portable gaming system, "Cooking Mama" should keep you slicing and dicing, rolling, mashing, and peeling for hours with its all-in-one cooking tool: a stylus.

The game, released in Japan a few weeks ago, offers dozens of challenges to players, from tossing pizzas to seasoning and frying fish. Every task is performed under the watchful (and judgmental) gaze of Mama, who grades your skills at rolling dough and slicing vegetables.

"When Mama gets unhappy, she gets fire in her eyes," said Liz Buckley, senior product manager at Majesco Entertainment (www.majescoentertainment.com), which will release "Cooking Momma" in the United States this fall.

Mama is not a dowdy matron who wields a rolling pin. She's more of a cute anime character. Majesco expects "Cooking Mama" will appeal to every generation, from X to the Greatest, because it challenges the intellect in addition to the reflexes.

"We see this as the type of game that belongs in the same category as BrainAge," said Buckley, referring to Nintendo's brainteaser package for the DS.

"Cooking Mama" starts you off with 15 recipes. Additional recipes are unlocked as you progress. The game, which is expected to sell for less than \$20, takes advantage of the DS's coolest features. You can share recipes wirelessly with other DS players, for example. And, when Mama tells you to lower the temperature of your tofu as it cooks on the stove, you have to blow into the DS's microphone to cool it.

Telephony

Hands-free Skype conferencing

Each new phone designed for Skype tempts me to ditch my cellular service and my landline for the dirt-cheap voice-over-IP service. Only two things hold me back: WiFi is not as widely available as cellular service, and you can't call 911 from Skype.

The Polycom (www.polycom.com) Communicator, a compact Skype speakerphone, doesn't overcome those reservations. But it will look good on any conference table -- or, in my case, dining room table.

It is much smaller and more attractive than those contraptions that take up half the table and look like

http://www.boston.com/business/personaltech/articles/2006/05/08/between_battles_the_art_of_baking?mode=PF (1 of 2) 5/8/2006 4:17:56 PM

Between battles, the art of baking - The Boston Globe

they were designed by H.R. Giger.

The Communicator, due out by early summer, is the size of a PDA and props up on a kickstand for use with your PC. It has buttons to control volume, to pick up and release calls, and to launch the Skype application.

The Communicator has a headset port if you need to do the "cone of silence" thing and discuss private information with someone at the other end of the line.

A USB device, the Communicator also doubles as a 22kHz hi-fi speaker for making presentations and playing video games on your PC.

Stargazing

SkyScout helps amateurs hit the bull's-eye on targeting celestial bodies

There's no joy like pointing at a constellation in the sky and saying, "Look son, there's Orion." There's nothing as embarrassing as having someone come up behind you and say, "No, Orion is over there."

But a new viewing device called the SkyScout should help amateur astronomers improve their accuracy.

The SkyScout "personal planetarium" (www.celestron.com/skyscout) is like a GPS navigator to the stars. Resembling a camcorder, the point-and-click device has a viewfinder through which arrows point you toward the exact spot in the sky you are looking for. It will also instantly identify -- with a single press of a button -- any object you are pointing at, as long as it is one of the 6,000 in the device's library.

SkyScout has a side display screen and audio outputs, through which you learn a bit about a particular planet or comet.

The device, which will retail for about \$400, is a bit of an engineering marvel. Two accelerometers acting as tilt sensors work in conjunction with a GPS receiver and a magnetic sensor to determine exactly which object you are looking at. ■

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http://www.boston.com/business/personaltech/articles/2006/05/08/between_battles_the_art_of_baking?mode=PF (2 of 2) 5/8/2006 4:17:56 PM

Free! http://canada.com/network



'First star I GPS tonight'

Emily Mathieu
Financial Post

Saturday, May 06, 2006

If packed summer patios prove anything, it's that Canadians love spending a night under the stars. But unless they've read up on astronomy (or astrology, for that matter), not many people know what they're looking at.

Celestron, a California manufacturer of telescopes, binoculars, spotting scopes and microscopes, has created a "personal planetarium." The SkyScout is a hand-held GPS system designed to help the astrologically-challenged navigate the universe.

It's simple: Plant yourself under the starry sky, aim the SkyScout at the constellation in question and hit a button.

Based on your location, the SkyScout will identify 6,000 stars, 1,500 binary and variable stars, 88 constellations and more than 100 galaxies, nebulae and star clusters.

It offers audio descriptions for several hundred of them. It also guides users, with little red arrows on the viewfinder, to the celestial body of their choice. In other words, it is like a crash-course on one of the most complicated hobbies in the universe.

"There is a big interest in space phenomena, constellations and the stories behind them," says Jennifer Adams, marketing manager with Celestron.

Because it's a GPS unit, the SkyScout offers a Top 20 list of constellations the user can enjoy based on where he or she is standing at a given date and time. Say you are standing in China and a star in your field of view is particularly bright that evening, the SkyScout will let you know.

A built-in field guide offers information on famous astronomers and the "coolest" objects man has sent into space, such as the Hubble telescope. However, Ham the "Astrochimp," the first primate launched into orbit on Jan. 31, 1961, is not on the



CREDIT: AFP, NASA, ESA
An artist's impression, released by NASA, depicts a star-birth region seen in the universe.

Monday - May 8 - 2006

list.

While the SkyScout offers a dizzying amount of information, it's also a primer. "Once you learn the constellations, that is really how you learn to locate things on your own," says Ms. Adams.

You can order the SkyScout from Celestron's Web site (US\$399, celestron.com). The unit will start appearing in stores in June.

You can also learn more about the night sky by picking up a copy of *Starmap for Beginners: 50th Anniversary Edition* by I.M. Levitt (amazon.com, \$11). Or, visit the StarLab at the Ontario Science Centre in Toronto (ontariosciencecentre.ca).

The Telus World of Science in Calgary offers adult-level astronomy courses (403-268-8307). In British Columbia, you can visit the H.R. MacMillan Space Centre (hrmacmillanspacecentre.com).

Or, you can take a trip through the universe on your home computer with *Starry Night*, an interactive guide to the galaxy. (see starrynight.com for prices, program and ordering details).

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http://www.canada.com/celestroprint/story/3d-06b744-50b9-49b9-b2-c0-00214151943-7416_17_012006_4_16_14.PM

52 | best smoothie

Aging is one of those things we can't control. But those fine lines around eyes and mouth caused by external stressors—UV rays, pollution, smoke—can be minimized with the antioxidant idebenone, which prevents free radicals from beating up the skin. It's available over the counter in a compound called **Prevage**. A firm, fresh face isn't free: 1.7 ounces of the "dream cream" costs about \$150.

53 | best bionic arm

A functioning prosthetic arm, created by **Todd Kuiken, MD**, at the **Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago**, is being tested by 59-year-old Jesse Sullivan of Dayton, Tennessee, who lost both upper limbs after suffering electrical burns. Doctors connected residual nerves to healthy chest muscles and attached

electrodes to his chest. The electrodes send signals to a computer in the 12-pound arm telling it how to move. The model is expected to be widely available in 2008.

54-55 | best tell a tubby

Skipping workouts because *American Idol* is on? No way! With the **EnterTrainer** (PowerUp Fitness; \$100), a monitor lowers the TV's volume if you drop below your target heart rate. Quit a workout; your TV quits too. And with the **Exer-station** (Powergrid Fitness; \$200), your body, not a joystick, runs the video games. Who said TV isn't good for you?

56 | best medicine

Finally, a pill bottle with a label that's easy to read and understand, with a clear list of cautions on the back, and sporting a customized patient information pullout card. Plus **Clear Rx** fits in the palm of your hand. Graphic designer Deborah Adler has stood the traditional round pill bottle on its head. Available exclusively at Target.

57 | best star finder

Love to gaze at the night sky? The celestially curious can aim **Celestron's handheld SkyScout** at a star, and it will ID it in a snap, using its built-in GPS and database of 6,000 stars and planets. Includes an LCD screen and earphones for gee-whiz info. Price for the fun? \$399.

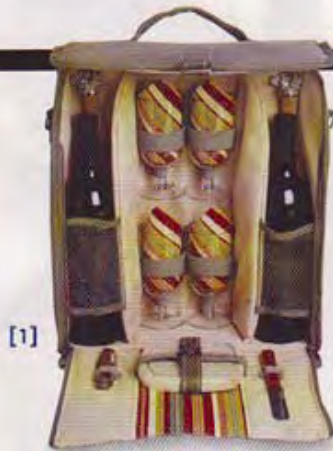
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[1]



[2]



[3]



[4]



[5]



[6]



[7]

[1] Vintage Picnic for Two Picnic at Ascol's insulated wine satchel holds two bottles and comes with all the accoutrements—wineglasses, napkins, corkscrew, cheese platter—required for a petite picnic. \$35; at shoplovene.com.

[2] SkyScout Personal Planetarium Can't tell your Venus from your Big Dipper? Point the SkyScout at any of 6,000 celestial objects and it will identify them, using GPS and other wizardry. \$399; at Scope City. 800-235-3344 or scopecity.com.

[3] Victorinox Global Tracking ID Tag When you fly to Phoenix but your luggage turns up in Aruba, Victorinox will handle the arrangements to reunite you with your bags. \$15; at swissarmy.com.

[4] Garmin nüvi 350 Park it in your pocket or above the dash. The portable touch-screen GPS calls out street names, plays MP3s, and views JPEGs. It also displays maps in 2- and 3-D and with additional software acts as a language converter. \$799; at Best Buy, bestbuy.com; and Circuit City, circuitcity.com.

[5] Handycam DCR-DVD405 Sony's latest features a built-in flash and 5.1 surround sound and records directly to DVD. Clip the pager-size ECM-HW1 Bluetooth-enabled wireless mic to your beloved, and you can pick up the dialogue from way yonder. Handycam, \$1,099, and mic, \$199; at Sony Style, sonystyle.com; Best Buy, bestbuy.com; and Circuit City, circuitcity.com.

[6] Pocket Crusoe Bike Friday's light touring cycle rides like the serious two-wheeler it is. Each is custom-built and folds down in less than a minute to fit in a car trunk or in about a half hour to fit into a standard-size suitcase. \$1,495-\$1,450; at Bike Friday, 800-777-0258 or bikefriday.com.

[7] Tod's Men's Gym Bag It's just the right size for a weekend away, and the classic rope shoulder strap provides a comfortable way to schlepp your stuff in style. \$950; at Tod's, Beverly Hills, 310-285-0591.

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Navigator



Stuff For shopping details, see page 106.

➔ **Mix It Up** Dad will feel James Bond—suave when he mixes martinis with this stainless steel bar set. Best of all, the six utensils and ice bucket are dishwasher-safe and tarnish-resistant. \$40, from Lenox.



⬆️ **Star Search** Point the SkyScout Personal Planetarium at any star, planet, or constellation and it'll not only identify it; it'll give you a fact-filled astronomy lesson. \$399, from Celestron.

Great Gifts for Dad

Please, please, please—don't give him a necktie



⬆️ **Sun Bursts** Now you can juice your gadgets—from iPods to cell phones—anywhere you want with this solar charger. Also available: a mini-USB for charging BlackBerrys. \$99, from Solio.



⬅️ **Grill Thrills** If Dad's big on beef, give him this much-loved spicy steak sauce from New York's Peter Luger Steak House. It's like a steak sauce/cocktail sauce mix, and it's even fat free (though we can't say the same about your 16-ounce T-bone). \$45 for six bottles, from Peter Luger.



⬅️ **Fore Play** The best part about the Golf Launchpad: the realism. Smack the tethered ball and your shot appears onscreen at top courses using EA Sports Tiger Woods PGA Tour software. \$199 for Playstation2, \$249 for PC or Mac, from Electric-Spin.



⬆️ **Frame Show** Why have one measly photo in a frame? This sleek digital receiver uses a broadband adapter to receive pics from friends and family anywhere in the world—and runs a slide show of as many photos as you want. \$129, from Ceiva.

TheEYE

APRIL | 2006

●●● STAR SEARCH

THE SKYSCOUT PERSONAL PLANETARIUM SEEMS TO DEFY LOGIC.

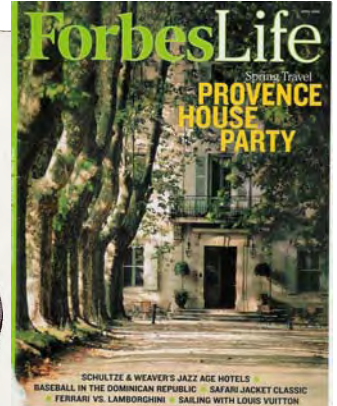
Go outside, aim it at a celestial object and the device will instantly identify it. Or ask it to locate, say, Orion's belt, and blinking arrows in the viewfinder will guide you to its location. This is not accomplished magically, the manufacturer insists, but with GPS, magnetic and gravitational sensors and a hefty database of 6,000 stars, 88 constellations and more than 100 deep-space objects like galaxies and nebulae. \$399. www.celestron.com/skyscout.



Secret Passages

Anyone who's ever fantasized about the sliding Bat poles behind the bookcase in Bruce Wayne's drawing room or Webster's secret passageway in the grandfather clock knows that a house is only as good as what it conceals.

The Hidden Door Company offers unseen entryways behind which you can securely stash a vault, gun collection or superhero cape, and the Elk Grove, California-based company can create more imaginative opening mechanisms than that switch hidden in a hollow Shakespeare bust. All doors are custom-built, so an entertainment center, a bookcase or even a wine rack can serve as your ruse. Prices start at \$1,910. (877) 218-5434, www.hiddendoors.com.



Add video life to your iPod

An add-on device called the iSee can turn your iPod into one that plays recorded video from the TV or DVR.

The iSee from Advanced Technology Office (ATO) slides onto your iPod, records the content, and after you have converted it to MPEG files on the computer and downloaded them to the iPod, you can watch the video on the iSee's 3.6-in. LCD screen.

The iSee hooks up to your video source using cables to record shows. It can also be connected to your TV to view your recorded video. You can even display photos on the iSee that are stored on your iPod.



The iSee can also be used on video-playing iPods—which have 2.5-in. screens but aren't able to record your favorite shows.

ATO says the iSee works on most fourth- and fifth-generation iPods, though a \$20 adaptor is required to use the iSee with the Nano, iPod mini and 30GB video-playing iPod.

The iSee has a rechargeable battery that delivers a minimum of 4 hours of video play and has a suggested retail price of \$249. Visit isee-ato.com for more information.



The sky's no longer the limit

If you've ever watched the sky on a clear night and wished you could point out Mars or the Big Dipper to your kids but weren't sure where to point, check out the Celestron SkyScout. This handheld device utilizes GPS technology to identify, locate and educate users about more than 6,000 stars, planets and constellations.

The camcorder-size SkyScout uses two AA batteries and weighs less than 1 lb. Simply point it at an object in the sky, press a button to identify the celestial body and listen to com-

mentary on the earbud headphones, which are included.

You can also select an object you wish to view, and the device points it out with illuminated arrows in the viewfinder. The LCD display is 3 inches wide and 1 inch high, with a red LED backlight.

SkyScout combines data from sensors measuring both the magnetic and gravitational fields of the Earth, along with internal GPS.

Because it figures out what it's aligned with based on how you're holding it, the SkyScout doesn't have to be level and stationary like a conventional telescope, says Jennifer

Adams of Celestron. And it works just as well with cloud cover or indoors as it does outside on a clear night.

Users can also upgrade the SkyScout's built-in information database by connecting the device to their PC via the USB port and downloading additional content for free from Celestron's Web site.



Further, Celestron is developing SkyTour content cards that fit into the unit's secure digital (SD) card slot. The cards will be sold separately and cover such topics as astronomy for children and the history of specific constellations.

The SkyScout sells for \$399. For information, go to celestron.com.

—S. Bady

SUV's roof liner disperses speaker sound

The 2007 Toyota FJ Cruiser has become the first mass-production vehicle to use a roof-liner speaker system that uses NXT's Surface-Sound technology.

With the system, an electrical signal is converted from an amplifier into force, creating bending waves that move across the entire panel of the roof liner. The waves create sound that travels down from the loudspeaker, enveloping the driver and passenger.

The roof-liner system works differently than traditional conical speakers, which simply make vibrations that ripple from the center of the speaker outward.

"(The NXT system) fills the vehicle cabin with sound easier than with conical speakers," says NXT communication director James Bullen. "It creates a richer sound."

For information, go to nxtsound.com. ●

Consumers Digest has not rated the products listed in the What's New section. The selected items are detailed as a service to our readers. Statements about product performance or functionality are representations made by the manufacturers and not necessarily the opinions of Consumers Digest magazine.

ROCKET MAN-CHILD

SPACE RACE

Affordable ways to feel cold, airless, and alone.

OUTER OUTERWEAR
Stroll the streets (or the *Battlestar Galactica* FanCon) in your Deluxe Apollo Astronaut Full Space Suit Replica and your lame hometown instantly transforms into an alien paradise, with you at the center being treated like the special creature you've always known you are. Complete with snoopy cap, space helmet, and Velcro-attached air hoses, your personal bubble-suit is made from heavy-duty denim twill—durable and machine-washable, so Mom can shout out the Mr. Pibb spatter that comes from every envious nerdling within 10 parsecs. Our associate editor/time traveler Scott Stein took it out for a walk, and we haven't seen him for weeks. (Not that that's unusual.) (spacetoy.com, \$2,250)



SKY MALL



STAR JONES
Ever since *Australopithecus* first walked upright, man has been exploiting his knowledge of the stars to impress the Vaginaed Ones. Identifying (then attracting) heavenly bodies has never been easier thanks to the Celestron SkyScout Personal Planetarium, a handheld viewfinder that, when pointed skyward, quickly locates and identifies celestial objects. Before you know it, you'll be talking Big Bang like the pros. (celestron.com, \$440)



HUBBLE UP!
Bring back a souvenir from space without actually spending the jack to get there. Fueled by a high-powered Estes D black-powder engine, the three-foot, injection-molded Digital Video Rocket launches up to 600 feet in the air. A parachute allows for gentle reentry, while an impact-resistant digital video camera—built into the nose cone—records the star-man's-eye action for replay on a PC. It's great for getting into trouble with the FBI or recon over the neighbor's backyard to find out where he stashed your Garden Weas. (hammocher.com, \$120)

TOP BEAR

MEANWHILE, ON EARTH...

RESIDENT ALIEN

Associate editor Scott Stein proves the public loves a man in a sharp suit.



"Darned NASA budget cuts!"



"One small leak for mankind."



"Not Tang, but it'll do."



"One of those men isn't union."



8 CELESTRON SKYSCOUT PERSONAL PLANETARIUM

Point this pint-size Copernicus at any heavenly body and a built-in GPS identifies it. Even better: Like the universe's largest self-guided museum tour, it'll spurt out encyclopedic info about the most spectacular, using scrolling text and audio. \$400. celestron.com

7 GARMIN FORE-RUNNER 305 GPS WATCH

This watch-based GPS measures your speed, distance, calories burned, pace, and heart rate—all without the wind resistance of its Ping-Pong-paddle-size predecessor. Our favorite feature: You can download your friends' courses and times, then race them virtually. \$375. garmin.com

9 NETGEAR SKYPE WI-FI PHONE

This isn't the first portable Wi-Fi phone, but it is the first that doesn't feel like 8-year-old Chinese girls were in charge of manufacturing it. The eBay-backed Skype service lets you call other network users for free; other calls start at less than a penny a minute, and international calls are just 2 cents a minute. \$250. netgear.com

10 LG FM30 PORTABLE MEDIA PLAYER

Optometrists, rejoice: This matchbook-size 1-gig media player isn't just squint-inducing—its 1.7-inch screen plays back MPEG-4 videos in addition to the MP3, WMA, OGG, and ASF audio formats—but its battery lasts through 2½ days of tunes, thanks to an ultraefficient OLED screen and souped-up li-poly battery. \$200. lgusa.com

Moving Pictures

Apple's iTunes video service played catalyst to the newest online frontier by selling more than 8 million TV-show and music-video downloads in its first few months of existence. But is the technology worth the price of admission? We ranked and rated the services available at press time to see how each on-demand downloading option measures up.

	ITUNES VIDEO STORE itunes.com	GOOGLE VIDEO video.google.com	CINEMANOW cinemanow.com	MOVELINK movielink.com	VONGO vongo.com	BITTORRENT bittorrent.org
WHAT IT IS	The reason the video iPod exists.	Mostly just a library of home movies shot and sold by Woody Allen wannabes.	Downloads that "expire" 24 hours after first viewing.	Downloads that "expire" 24 hours after first viewing.	Monthly service that allows for unlimited movie downloading.	Ultrafast peer-to-peer file-sharing service.
PROS	Built into ubiquitous iTunes software, seamless iPod integration.	Lots of free content.	Big library, with lots of new releases.	Easy to use; lets you buy full-length movies as well.	Reasonably priced, unlimited on-demand viewings; subscription covers up to three devices, including portable media players.	Alexandria-size collection of content, no restrictive copy protections.
CONS	Limited selection, need an iPod.	Short on stuff you might actually want to watch.	Can't keep movies or transfer them to portable player.	Can't transfer to a portable player; does not support Mac platform.	Small selection; somewhat arbitrary pay-per-view classifications.	Plethora of pirated material leaves your door open to viruses and lawyers. (Is that redundant?)
SELECTION	Music videos and first-run shows from ABC, NBC, and cable. Just not very many.	Amateur videos galore, some music videos, NBA basketball, MacGyver, Survivor, Star Trek.	Several thousand full-length movies, lots of porn.	Several thousand full-length movies, no porn.	About 1,000 movies at any given time. Rotating library keeps films fresh.	You name it, it's here.
COST	\$2 per video or TV show.	Varies—free to about \$4.	\$3 to \$4 for 24 hours.	\$1 to \$6 for 24 hours; buy for \$9 and up.	\$10 per month for unlimited usage, plus \$4 per premium pay-per-view film.	Free
BOTTOM LINE	★★☆ Best for TV lovers, but still not enough content to please everybody. Library will surely grow as Apple flexes its muscle and more networks come onboard.	★★☆ Currently more of a clearinghouse for Britney Spears lip-syncers than first-run hits. Still, the eBay-esque freedom to upload anything and sell it could be a secret sauce of sorts for Google.	★★☆ Decent choice for people who can't wait for their Netflix mail to arrive, but it's probably faster to run to Blockbuster.	★★☆ If you think you'll want The Dukes of Hazzard on your hard drive a month from now, you're probably kidding yourself.	★★★ The flat-fee, buffet-style structure pays for itself after a few movies. As the catalog grows, this will be a winner.	★★☆ A mind-boggling array of free content that makes it easy to break the law. Use at your own risk.

GEARLOG



EYE ON THE SKY

Feel frustrated with your personal attempts at space exploration? Take Celestron's \$399 SkyScout Personal Planetarium for a space-walk. It was one of the award-winners at the recent Consumer Electronics Show. SkyScout instantly identifies over 6,000 objects in the night sky—from planets to constellations. Built-in GPS sensors know precisely where you are and what you're pointing at, be it comet or constellation. Aim it toward Mars and hit the Target button, and you can get scientific information about Mars via text or audio. Select Mars from the menu and move the device around, and it will tell you when you're on target. You can update the database to add comets or spacecraft—or even E.T. if you spot him.—*Sebastian Rupley*



MORE ON THE WEB

For more products like this USB beverage cooler (we all need one!), head to www.gearlog.com

WHAT'S NEW | RECREATION

STEP BY STEP

MASTER THE UNIVERSE

Find, observe, and photograph anything in the visible universe with these new tools that take the guesswork out of astronomy



Celestron SkyScout
\$300; celestron.com

STEP 1: FIND

The first handheld star-finding device, the Celestron SkyScout doesn't need to be on a fixed mount and aligned with several objects in the sky to function. The SkyScout uses GPS, accelerometers and magnetic sensors to establish exactly where it's pointing and what it's looking at. Just gaze through the unmagnified viewfinder to tag your unidentified object, or follow blinking arrows as the device guides you to a preselected target. Its database catalogues more than 6,000 stars, galaxies, nebulae and planets and offers information through earphones or the LCD screen.



William Optics ZenithStar
\$800; william-optics.com

STEP 2: OBSERVE Zoom in with the William Optics ZenithStar Fluorite Doublet. This portable 80-millimeter-aperture telescope's lens assembly is specially tuned to eliminate the color errors and fuzzy halos many scopes produce around bright stars and planets. Its geared focuser makes precise adjustments a snap.

STEP 3: CAPTURE The 8.2-megapixel Canon EOS 20Da is the first digital camera optimized for astrophotography. It uses a modified low-pass filter that increases the transmission of hydrogen alpha light—a wavelength that can create higher-contrast images of dim objects.

—ERIC ADAMS

Canon EOS 20Da
Price not set; canon.com



THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2006

CIRCUITS

There, With a Musical Backdrop

Portable navigation systems that sit on dashboards can be moved from car to car, but they typically have small screens and controls that can be hard to reach. Built-in navigation-entertainment systems have bigger screens and convenient controls, but they can't be transferred to another car. The PMD-B100 Blackbird from Alpine combines features from both types.

As a stand-alone dashboard unit, the \$750 Blackbird, available now through Alpine car stereo dealers, sits in a cradle that provides power, an amplified speaker and an FM modulator that conveys its instructions, turn by turn, through the car's radio.

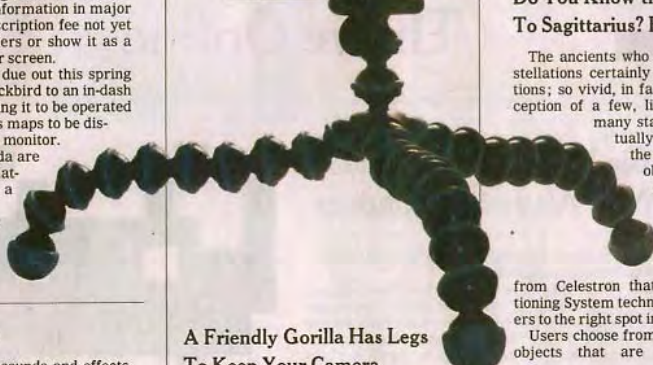
A tuner can pick up traffic information in major metropolitan areas (for a subscription fee not yet set) and play it through speakers or show it as a map overlay on its 3.6-inch color screen.

An optional docking station, due out this spring for about \$200, will link the Blackbird to an in-dash Alpine DVD/CD system, allowing it to be operated by the system's controls and its maps to be displayed on the system's large monitor.

Maps of all 50 states and Canada are already loaded, and can be updated via a U.S.B. connection to a home computer.

The Blackbird also plays MP3 and WMA audio files.

IVAN BERGER



Do You Know the Way To Sagittarius? Here's Help

The ancients who first described constellations certainly had vivid imaginations; so vivid, in fact, that with the exception of a few, like the Big Dipper, many star clusters bear virtually no resemblance to the creatures, people or objects they supposedly represent.

To make identifying them easier, stargazers can use SkyScout, a hand-held device

from Celestron that uses Global Positioning System technology to direct viewers to the right spot in the sky.

Users choose from 6,000 objects that are in

SkyScout's database and are listed on the display screen, then look through the lens. Blinking lights direct the viewer to move the device until the star, planet, constellation, asteroid, star cluster or comet is in view.

The SkyScout can also end debates about which celestial object is being viewed. Point the device at a star (or is that a planet?), push the Target button, and the name of the object is displayed.

The \$399 SkyScout, which will be available this May (Amazon.com and B&H Photo are taking orders now), also contains audio clips with information on 200 important objects.

When astronomers find new objects, data can be downloaded.

ERICA A. TAUB



Mixer and Video Editor, All in One

To make music on a portable media player, is a computer and a whole lot more. The MiKo, a portable multimedia editing console — has a 64-bit and Windows XP faceted hood.

a library of 5,000 preset sounds and effects. The MiKo, which can work with third-party audio and video editing programs, includes its own suite of multimedia software.

After editing, audio and video projects can be burned to a CD or DVD, or uploaded directly to the Internet through the console's Ethernet or Wi-Fi network connections.

Basic configurations of the MiKo work center start around \$2,000; it can be ordered



A Friendly Gorilla Has Legs To Keep Your Camera From Blurring Your Shots

Browse a photo album by any beginning photographer and you're likely to see blurry shots. The Joby Gorillapod, a 1.59-ounce tripod, can help budding photographers get a steady shot.

The Gorillapod is malleable and as cute as a chimp. Each of the three legs bends and twists in different ways, al-

Internet Calls,



Day is coming when your phone will get you a parking spot

Continued from 1B

"It opens up innovation to all new things no one ever thought of," says Irving Wladawsky-Berger, in charge of IBM's technical strategy.

"There's an interesting pattern now — everything is an accessory to everything else," notes Mick McManus, CEO of Maya Design.

Cover story

The parking meters, for instance, are at the University of California, Santa Barbara. IBM devised the system and will try to sell it to other campuses and cities. In the near future, a "smart," networked parking meter might be able to talk to all the other parking meters in the neighborhood and feed that information to a website. That way, as you drive to an area looking for a place to park, your cellphone could tap the parking website and display a map showing open spaces.

You might even be able to push a button and reserve a space. The meter could flash a "reserved" sign and refuse to accept payment from any other cellphone for five minutes. After that, you'd lose the space.

The challenges

Such a level of integration isn't here yet. In fact, there are significant challenges to getting there, as anyone knows who has tried to get two incompatible gadgets to work together.

Still, the movement toward smart stuff keeps picking up steam. Research firms haven't yet put a value on the "smart stuff" industry because it's so scattered and new. But companies are clearly making plans to move in that direction. A survey by research firm Aberdeen Group found that more than half of executives plan to pump more money into radio frequency identification (RFID) projects in the next 12 to 24 months, even though half of those surveyed also said they don't yet know the "value proposition" of such investments.

One way or another, though, fascinating developments keep popping into view. Some recent examples:

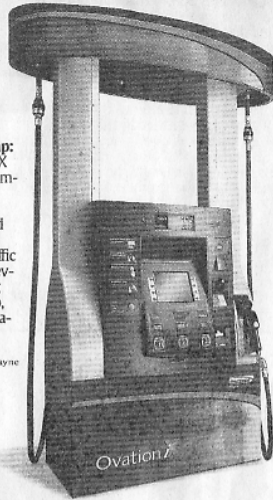
Home goods. Consumer electronics companies keep pushing the idea of the "digital living room" — a holy grail where high-end TVs, PCs, video recorders and stereos link up and share content. But while we're waiting for that to happen, a number of companies are digitizing less-glamorous appliances.

Whirlpool's Duet Sport washing machine has embedded sensors that can set the water level depending on how big a load you put in. Down the road, Whirlpool and others plan to include sensors that can read bar codes or RFID tags on clothes so the machine can program appropriate wash settings.

Another appliance maker, Salton, has introduced the Beyond Microwave. When you need to heat packaged food, swipe the bar code past the microwave's reader. Stored inside are 4,000 settings for different products. A wireless Internet connection allows the microwave

Gas pump: Ovation IX lets customers order coffee, download MP3s or check traffic without ever leaving the pump, the company says.

Dresser Wayne



By Jan C. Holtz, AP

Stargazer: Using GPS technology and a built-in database, SkyScout can locate more than 6,000 stars, planets and constellations.



Fabric typist: The wireless ElekTex roll-and-stow keyboard is full-size but weighs only 2.4 ounces. It's made out of "smart fabric."

to download new ones all the time. Salton's microwave reads the bar code, sets the right time and power level, and all you do is push start.

Maya Design is bringing out a layer of technology it calls Home Heartbeat. It connects sensors on washing machines, microwaves, doors and other fixtures in a house. The system, in turn, can generate text messages that can be sent to a cellphone. So a homeowner can program the system to tell her every time the front door opens and the TV turns on — a good sign the kids arrived home from school.

On a more futuristic scale, researchers at the University of Pittsburgh and New Jersey Institute of Technology are working on nanotechnology that could change the nature of paint and carpets. Both could be connected to the home network, so you could use a computer to instruct the paint or carpeting to change colors. The nano-engineered molecules would do just that. The military is already beginning experimental use of the smart paint.

Fun stuff. At the Consumer Electronics Show in January, telescope maker Celestron rolled out its \$399 SkyScout — a gadget loaded with global position satellite (GPS) technology and a database of star and planet

positions. Aim it at a part of the night sky, and the device picks up its position via GPS, cross-checks with its database, and tells you what you're seeing.

Also at CES, Brother was showing its Innovis 4000D sewing machine, which can store and download images, and then embroider them on fabric. Wearable technology is a hot concept. ElekTex makes "smart fabrics" — clothing and backpacks with soft, built-in controllers and a Bluetooth wireless connection for an iPod or cellphone. Drop the gadget in your pocket, for instance, and use the buttons on your sleeve to control it.

Swim goggles from start-up Inview add a computer chip to plain plastic goggles for competitive swimmers. The chip keeps track of time and number of laps and displays it on the inside of the goggle lenses.

Industrial stuff. Computer and networking technology is even making its way into the least glitzy of places — like the gas station. Gas pump maker Dresser Wayne in January unveiled its Ovation IX — a prototype pump with a flat-panel screen and a network-connected, Windows-based computer inside. "In addition to dispensing fuel, the Ovation IX lets customers (order) a cup of coffee, download MP3s, or check traffic

conditions without ever leaving the pump," the company's literature says.

In a popular IBM commercial, the boxes inside a truck notify a help desk that the truck is off course. Though it's a dramatization, the technology is real. RFID tags and cheap GPS units today are being tacked onto crates. That lets the crates "talk" to the network and lets operators know where they are. If they get lost — or stolen — the crates can be located.

"We have already recovered over \$7 million of goods illegally diverted last year," says Mark Eppley, president of SC-integrity, a company formed to build this kind of technology. "I had no idea how large the supply chain 'shrinkage' problem was."

Then there are cows. When asked about this trend of making mundane stuff smart, Matthew Szulik, CEO of open-source software company Red Hat, points to the DeLaval Voluntary Milking System. It's a milking machine — running on Linux open-source software — that lets the cow request to be milked by stepping into the milking area through a gate. A radio tag identifies the cow, and the system knows when the cow was last milked. That way, the system knows whether to attach the robotic milking arms — or keep the gate closed, blocking the cow from getting in.

That kind of development, Szulik says, "is just the tip of the iceberg."

Why now

Why is stuff getting smart now? Some of it is straightforward: The technology has finally gotten good enough and cheap enough to put into everyday items without driving the cost sky-high. Inexpensive microprocessors add smarts. Wi-Fi, now nearly ubiquitous, allows appliances to get on the network without wires. Tiny RFID can add small bits of data and communications to any item. GPS is getting cheap and reliable.

"The entire process and mindset of product makers now is to have a tech component," says tech research analyst Gary Arlen.

As the technology falls into place, integrators such as IBM, Maya and SC-integrity can do their thing — putting pieces together to create applications and services never before possible.

Of course, it's not all smooth seas ahead. One huge hurdle is getting different technologies to work together. Just as Apple's iTunes doesn't work with a Dell MP3 player, various pieces built on different standards can't communicate. Some industry leaders such as Google's Vint Cerf, who helped create the Internet's TCP/IP standard, are pushing for new standards that would help solve these problems.

One other possible hitch: "Everyone runs the risk of making products soooo complicated and off-putting," analyst Arlen says.

Still, as the next decade unfolds, more of our stuff will get smarter.