

## GIZMO

Technology  
killed the  
radio star

A radio that plays only the music you like sounds like a fantasy. Mark Harris explains it's for real

The days of turning on the radio to hear inane DJs rambling, or the same irritating adverts being repeated hour after hour, could almost be over. New gadgets capable of learning your musical tastes and piping relevant songs to you via the internet have arrived. Logitech's Squeezebox Duet (£279, available in March) plugs into your hi-fi and connects wirelessly to your computer using a home wi-fi network. You will then need to set up your computer to receive songs over the

internet from a "personalised" station such as Last.fm (www.last.fm). Older Squeezebox models may also work, though a bit of tinkering may be required.

Last.fm works by tracking what you're already listening to your computer, whether that's on iTunes, on CD or online. It then compares your musical choices to those of 20m people around the world and, when it finds someone similar, automatically selects new songs that you're likely to enjoy from a library of more than 5m, creating a station tailored for you. Other personalised radio stations, such as Mi-Xfm (tinyurl.com/2yubkb), need a little more interaction, asking you to rate each tune they play and altering their playlist to match.

A million Brits are now tuning in to personalised stations online every week, and many are also turning out traditional radio. Logitech's new gadget takes it one step further by allowing you to listen through your hi-fi instead of through your computer. If you want your own personalised programme, though, you'll have to pay Last.fm a £1.50 per month subscription for the privilege.



Radio takes on a new fascination with tailor-made playlists

Making the leap from the PC to the living room will give a huge boost to the new radio services, believes Christian Ward of Last.fm: "The move this year is all about getting personalised radio into the home, in a simple way, and then onto mobile phones and beyond."

The sound quality of Last.fm is acceptable — every bit as good as that of the best DAB stations.

Taking personalised radio fully mobile, although it's available only in the US for now, is Slacker.com's Portable Radio Player (from \$200/£100). Launched this week, it comes pre-loaded with up to 40 stations containing thousands of tracks. As you rate individual tracks, Slacker learns your tastes and refreshes the player's built-in memory with other songs, using your wi-fi connection.

A 4in screen lets you browse playlists and view album artwork — although it will also screen a couple of adverts each hour if you don't upgrade to a \$7.50 (£3.75) monthly fee. The subscription also allows you to skip tracks or save them to the player to listen to again. Slacker.com doesn't yet know how soon its service will be on offer in Britain.

Personalised broadcasts of the future

will probably have either advertising or a price tag attached, just as they do today. But once your radio knows exactly what you want to hear, the idea of a human DJ — however cheeky his banter — might start to sound a little dated.

In Germany last week, Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB), the service that offers easier tuning and catch-up facilities to radio listeners, had its funding cut because of poor take-up. One reason was that consumers were switching to listening online, a classic case of a new technology being overtaken by an even newer one before it has had a chance to take hold (remember how laser discs were overtaken by DVDs?).

In Britain, a survey by Rajar, the research organisation, revealed that one in six listeners to personalised radio were listening to less live radio than ever before. Might this all signal the beginning of the end for music radio as we know it?

★★★★ KO ★★★★★ A-OK  
★★★ OK ★★ So-so ★ No-no

## GAMES



**Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure** ★★★★★  
Nintendo Wii, £40. Age 7+

This ingenious adventure game puts the Wii's motion-sensitive remote to all sorts of weird and wonderful uses. Zack, an aspiring pirate, and Wiki, his flying monkey sidekick, are on a mission to put the scattered parts

of captain Barbaros, the cursed pirate, back together. To reach each part of the pirate requires solving a complex sequence of puzzles, all requiring some grasp of logic, and they grow ever more difficult as the game goes on.

Stealing treasure from dancing natives or avoiding angry mechanical snow-sweepers is never as simple as you might imagine, while using the remote to shake trees, catch fish, turn hand-cranked and lift items takes a lot of practice. Make too many mistakes and you have to start the whole scene again, which can be extremely frustrating.

Nevertheless, with its swish cartoon-style graphics and a loveable sense of humour, Zack and Wiki is one of the best games on the Wii.



**Turok** ★★★  
Xbox 360, PS3. £50; Age 15

Long before Halo, Turok: Dinosaur Hunter was a hit 3-D shooter that pitched a time-travelling Native American hero against hordes of deadly reptiles in a mist-shrouded lost world. This reworked version of the series sets the action in a sci-fi framework, with the new Turok as a

mohawk-sporting scout taking a squad of muscle-brained Gears of War rejects against a clichéd rogue military force.

The result is like Call of Duty meets Jurassic Park but it comes alive only when the dinosaurs appear. Blasting tree-climbing critters and fending off savage raptor attacks in the jungle is thrilling and setting up enemy patrols as dino dinner is good mean fun. However, when all you're doing is fighting the game's dumb human hostiles, it all feels a little uninspired and unchallenging.

Experimenting with the exotic weaponry does improve matters but overall this revamped game lacks pacing and polish. Turok is a decent-looking, competent slice of action but it will take more than that to bring it back from extinction.

Stuart Andrews

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TECHNOLOGY NEWS

## CINEMA FOR ONE

**Carl Zeiss Cinemizer video glasses**  
€369 (£275)  
www.zeiss.com/cinemizer

Thanks to these wearable video glasses from the German lens maker Carl Zeiss, home cinema has just left the building. Connect Cinemizer to your iPod, portable DVD player or games console and you can enter a cinematic virtual reality — or so the manufacturer claims. Lens-mounted displays summon up a widescreen image that appears to be 45in in size and hovering two yards in front of your eyes. It has dioptre adjustments (up to

+/-3.5) for anyone who normally wears spectacles, a replaceable bridge for comfort, and fold-down earphones that provide stereo sound.

The Cinemizer's battery should last for about four hours and can also power your iPod when it's running low. Future developments planned for this device include 3D movies, but film fans should be warned that if they wear the Cinemizer in public they risk making a real spectacle of themselves.

Also, though admittedly immersive, the experience can make you feel a touch seasick. Cinemizer video glasses are available from the end of the month.



## CELL MATE

**Panasonic KX-TH1211 Link to Cell cordless phone**  
\$100 (£50)  
www.panasonic.com

If your home happens to have patchy mobile phone coverage, you may well find that this clever gadget can help. The Link to Cell is a digital cordless home phone system that connects to your mobile via Bluetooth. You simply plug the base unit in where you find reception is good, then place your mobile nearby, after which you should be able to make and receive calls anywhere within several hundred yards — even in basement flats. The handset supports caller ID and ringtones, and will work with two different mobiles as well as with a traditional landline. The KX-TH1211 is due to arrive in shops in the US some time in March.



## SUNNY DELIGHTS



**Chinavasion solar-powered portable video player**  
\$124 (£62)  
www.chinavasion.com

This portable video player promises to be a handy travel gadget for youngsters who are easily bored. With it they can watch digital movies on the 3.5in colour screen, listen to MP3 tunes (for which you'll need to buy some decent headphones) or thumb their way through classic NES and GameBoy games. And when they run down the batteries, which they inevitably will, there's no need to restock at an overpriced petrol station, because you can simply flip the player open to reveal solar charging cells. The panels can also recharge other digital gadgets — from phones to sat navs — via a standard USB socket.

## DON'T PANIC

NIGEL POWELL ANSWERS YOUR WEB-RELATED QUERIES

**Q** What's the best way to send short video clips by e-mail?

Gerry Nicholson, via e-mail

**A** Don't send videos as attachments because they can be too big for e-mail systems to handle. Instead, use a free service such as YouSendIt Lite (www.yousendit.com).

After you upload a video and your friends' e-mail addresses, they will be sent a link from which they can download the video at their leisure. Alternatively, upload clips to YouTube (www.youtube.com), where they can be easily viewed online by everyone or, if you specify, just a private list of friends.

**Q** I'm changing internet service provider (ISP) and am worried about losing my favourites. Can I transfer these to my new ISP?

Christopher Dennison, Co Down

**A** Ask your new ISP to talk you through changing internet settings manually and there should be no problems. If you want to use the ISP's automatic software and are worried, copy your bookmarks to a free online service such as www.backflip.com before you switch ISPs. Once you've swapped, download them again or keep them online and accessible from any web-connected computer — handy if you're on holiday. You can also back up your favourites on Internet Explorer.

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