

DISCREET TECHNOLOGY FORGET THE REMOTE – YOU’LL BE LUCKY TO FIND THE TELLY WITH THESE HI-TECH GADGETS, SAYS **CHLOE SCOTT**

Now where did I put the TV?

When you buy techie gadgets, you still have to look at them even when they’re not in use. They can often be stark, boxy and downright ugly. You could once get remote-controlled digital cinema screens, hidden speakers and lighting but they were prohibitively expensive. Now, these items are becoming more affordable, so we’ve rounded up some of the naggiest buys, some of which will be featured in the Smart Homes show.



What is it? A new form of flat loudspeaker, just 40mm thick, that sits in a wall or ceiling. It is skimmed over with a thin coat of plaster, then painted or wallpapered so it becomes an invisible, high-quality sound source.

Who would it suit? The music-loving home-owner and those looking for a multi-speaker home theatre system.

What’s so cutting-edge about it?

The company claims: ‘For the first time ever, it is possible to have the most amazing entertainment systems throughout the whole house that have zero visual impact on space.’

Smart score: 8/10. Tidy addicts will love the absence of wires.

Can I get it now? There are three models priced £400 to £800.

If I can’t make the show, where can I go? www.amina.co.uk



Hidden agendas: Artcoustic’s loudspeakers (pictured on either side of the chairs) double as attractive decorative screens

■ The boxed items featured will be sold at the Smart Homes show (Mar 2 to 5), which runs with the Homebuilding & Renovating Show at NEC, Birmingham. Tickets are £8 in advance for entrance to both events. Tel: 0870 906 2002. www.homebuildingshow.co.uk www.smarthomeshow.co.uk

Metro readers can get half-price entry to the Homebuilding & Renovating Show. Just take this column along to the event, present it to the box office and get up to two tickets for only £6 each.

What is it?

The Brilliance Picture Player is the newest way to display your digital photos and movies.

Who would it suit?

Newlyweds who want to recapture their big day... again and again. And anyone who gets bored with their artwork.

What’s so cutting-edge about it?

Resembling a traditional picture frame, this gadget houses a built-in movie card reader that plays back your images and movies on a bright TFT (thin panel transistors) LCD display.

Smart score: 9/10. Allows you to personalise your own artwork.

Can I get it now? Yes. A 15in Digital Picture Player costs £595. A 20in player and multi-screen options are also available.

If I can’t make the show, where can I go? www.2techvisuals.co.uk



What is it? The Body Robe from USD. It’s a gentle, hygienic way to dry your body without towels.

Who would it suit? Lazy people who can’t be bothered to dry off.

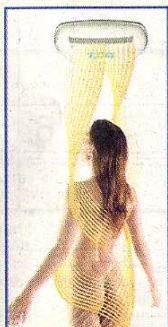
You’ll save time by not having to launder towels and it’s a nice sensation after showering.

What’s so cutting-edge about it? Not only a body dryer, it also acts as a bathroom heater and cuts down moisture in the air.

Smart score: 10/10. It’s not a necessity. It’s an outrageous luxury for nesting in your home.

Can I get it now? It costs £499.

If I can’t make the show, where can I go? Tel: 01525 877 707. www.usd.uk.com



Stylish techno

1. Artcoustic Loudspeakers (pictured left) can be textile or designer fabrics instead of a digital image. From £695 per pair. Tel: 01245 600 529. www.artcoustic.com

2. Aquavision TV, a water-resistant telly (pictured right), lets you watch TV from the comfort of your tub (switch it off and it becomes a mirror). From £1,400, Marata Vision. Tel: 01923 495 595. www.marata.co.uk

3. Sky+ designer collection box (pictured bottom right), £99 plus Sky subscription. Osborne & Little. Tel: 020 7352 1456. www.osborneandlittle.com



What is it? A plasma TV that tucks itself neatly and discreetly into a fireplace so your decor isn’t marred by that obtrusive goggle box. It is operated by a remote control.

Who would it suit? Anyone who doesn’t like the TV dominating their living room.

What’s so cutting-edge about it? David Free, the inventor, says: ‘It combines the two natural focal points of the room – the fireplace and the TV.’

Smart score: 9/10. Men will love its techie cred but women will like the fact that both cables and TV are out of view.

Can I get it now? Yes. Other models include the Classic, Modern and Napoli, with prices starting from £2,000.

If I can’t make the show, where can I go? www.plasmafireplace.co.uk



BARGAIN OF THE WEEK

This week, bargain hunter and interiors expert Alison Cork seeks out value tiles.

‘Tiles are really versatile, which makes them perfect for kitchens and bathrooms. This week, Surface has bargain ceramic, glass, mosaic, porcelain and even metal



tiles. And it has also just introduced its collection of Stontech ‘faux’ limestone tiles. Made of porcelain, they are scratch and stain-resistant, making them low-maintenance and practical wall and floor coverings.’

Exclusively for Metro readers, the Stontech range is priced at £46 per square metre, including VAT

(normally £65.74 per square metre, including VAT). Tumbled marble mosaic tiles in warm cream (30cm x 30cm sheet) are reduced in price to £5.95 per sheet, including VAT (normal price £9.50, including VAT). And Surface’s contract porcelain stone ‘Crema Avorio’ (45cm x 45cm) is reduced to £25 per square metre, including VAT (was £37.54, including VAT). All offers end March

31, 2006. Please quote ‘Metro reader offer’ when ordering. Visit their new showroom at Central Avenue, West Molesey, Surrey. Tel: 020 7819 2300.

www.surfacetiles.com
 ■ Alison Cork runs websites www.homesandbargains.co.uk and www.thetradesmensdirectory.co.uk If you can recommend a bargain outlet or a tradesperson, e-mail alison@alisoncork.com

