AWARDS ISSUE THE TECH OF THE YEAR

Stuff

WHAT'S NEXT



CLEVER TICKS
The sleekest new smartwatches wrist-tested
p84



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hugoboss.com

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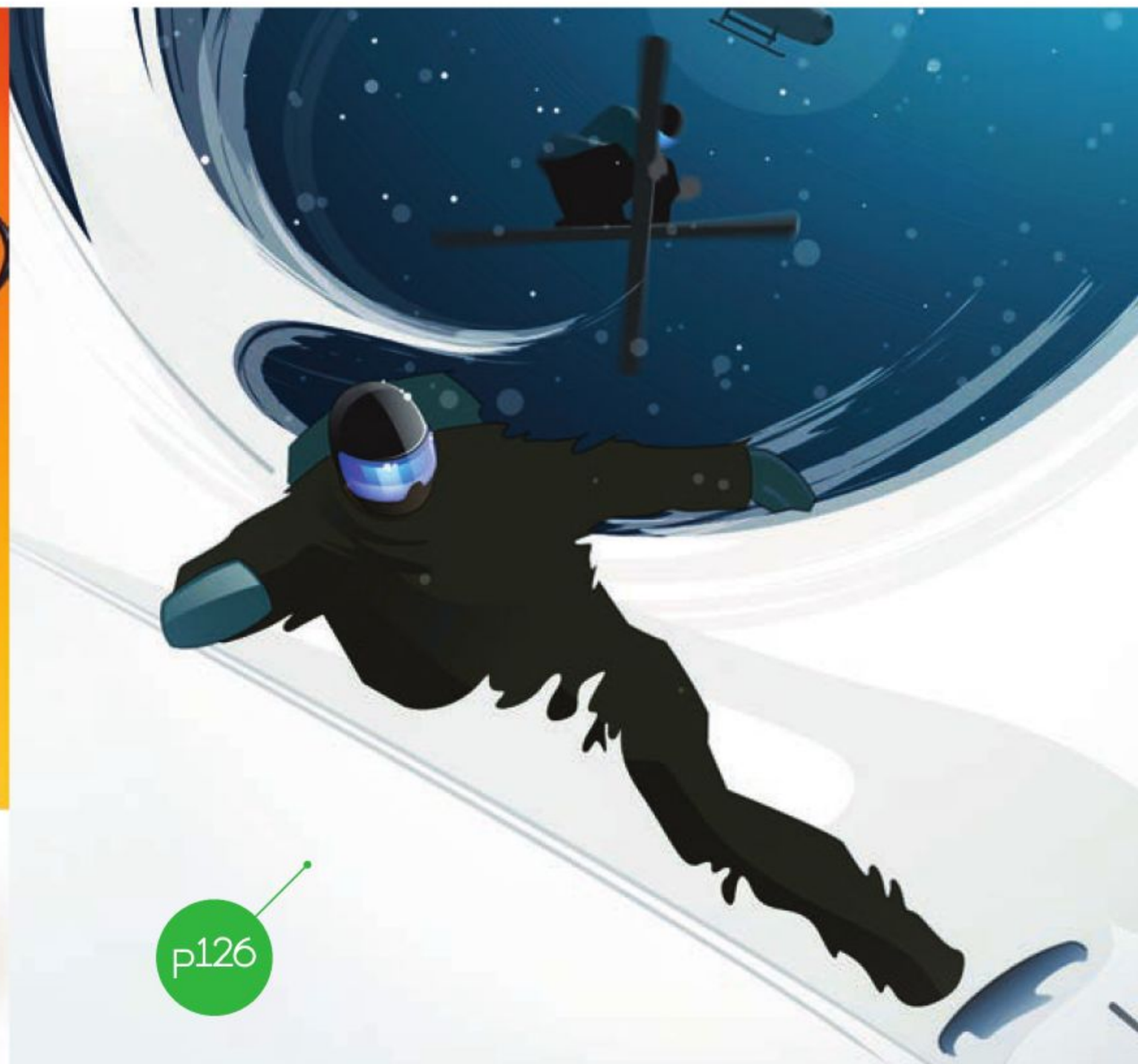
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TOP 10 OF EVERYTHING

Looking to buy something but need a bit of advice? Turn to our *Stuff* Top Tens: our expert listings of all gadgetry, from **p131**.

NEW shop S

The *Stuff* Top Tens are now shoppable on your phone!
Find out how on **p131**.

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No.1

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2010, 2011, 2012, 2013

* Based on global Braun value share in electric foil shaver market from May 2013 to April 2014.
Source: Leading market research institute ** Compared to previous Braun generations

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*Calls cost 7p per minute plus your phone company's access charge.

WELCOME



To quote Jerry Seinfeld: "Awards are stupid. Every real estate office has some framed Five Diamond President's Award thing by the desk; every hotel check-in has some Gold Circle Service thing; every car salesman is a Platinum Jubilee Winner. It's all a big jerk-off! It is! The hotel sucks, the real estate person is stupid, and the only thing the car salesman is good at is ripping you off."

When awards are given to people, Jerry's right. Does my being shortlisted for New Editor of the Year this year mean I'm better at my job than the people who weren't? Clearly not. Does the fact that I didn't win – I was robbed, by the way, but as you can tell I'm not making a fuss about it – mean someone else should be in this job? Okay, maybe. But the thing is, we're all just people. We have three-star days and we have five-star days.

Technology, on the other hand, is predictable. It's there to help, to ensure your two-star days at least have a good soundtrack and your five-star days are recorded in 4K. How well it does that can be measured. And that's what this issue of *Stuff* is about: our team has spent an entire year testing every gadget on the market for weeks at a time. We've distilled thousands of hours of research and picked the best in each field, to make your life easier. For the price of two cups of coffee, that's not stupid. That's genius.

Will Dunn, Editor / willd@stuff.tv / @willydunn



THIS MONTH IN STUFF'S DIGITAL EDITION

- Animated, interactive pages
- Extra high-res pictures and videos

Android fan? *Stuff* is also available on **Google Play**, **Zinio** and **Exact Editions**

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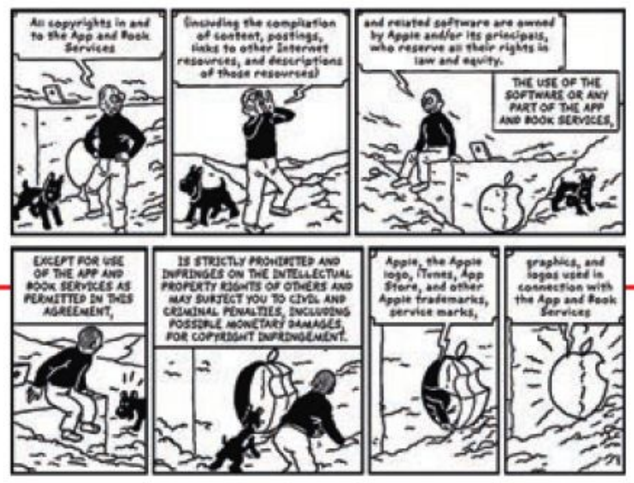
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I READ THE iTUNES Ts&Cs

Well, not all of them. But a damn sight more than I've ever read before, thanks to the efforts of cartoonist R Sikoryak. He's created a Tumblr blog (itunestandc.tumblr.com), upon which approximately once a day he is releasing a new page of the famously inscrutable terms and conditions, set as a graphic novel. Each of the pages is drawn as a tribute to famous artists, referencing sources as disparate as *Calvin And Hobbes* or *Hellboy*, with the only constant being a Steve Jobs-alike polonecked protagonist.
Fraser Macdonald, Consulting Editor





I MADE OUR TOP TENS SHOPPABLE

It wasn't really me, it was some app developers, but someone's got to hold all these crazy projects together. Honestly, it's like wrangling leopards sometimes. Anyway, the upshot is that you can now buy any product in the *Stuff* Top Tens simply by hovering your phone over the relevant page. Download the free Shop Stuff app (iOS or Android), scan whichever list you're interested in (from p131), and you'll be able to browse and buy direct at the best prices from major retailers.
Richard Purvis, Production Editor



OUR MONTH

What this issue has brought us by way of geekery



I WAS UPSTAGED BY A ROBOT

I once interviewed a dachshund, and last year I interviewed Jimmy Wales in a monkey cage, but this was my first robot interview. As part of *Stuff*'s Innovators 2015 I took to the stage with Pepper, the emotion-sensing robot from Aldebaran Robotics, for a live Q&A. Pepper's mood-sensing eyes correctly spotted that I was "excited" and "nervous", emotional states that developed further when Pepper stopped talking and just stared at me for about ten seconds. That's some serious stage presence.
Will Dunn, Editor





I BUILT A ROCKET AT DAWN

Inspired by the SpaceX Falcon Heavy (Gigapixel, November 2015 issue) and by British astronaut Tim Peake, who sets off to the International Space Station for six months on 15 December, my son and I built this 88-piece Saturn rocket – putting 'tab B' into 'slot B' while discussing planets that are less dense than water. And all this, as is the way with four-year-olds (and astronauts, probably), earlier on a Sunday morning than most normal folk ever see.
Chee-Chiu Lee, Brand Art Editor



HOTS T

Out back

BlackBerry spotters will recognise this carbon weave material from the Q10. It's arguably not as classy as glass, but it is nicely grippy. The 18MP camera has optical stabilisation, like the one in the iPhone 6s Plus.

HOT FOUR #1

BLACKBERRY WANTS ANOTHER GO ON THE SLIDE

BlackBerry Priv

Something weird is happening: for years everyone's been trying to make gadgets that are just featureless screens, but now things are getting physical again. The newest iPad (the Pro) has a stylus and a keyboard. Samsung's new Serif TV has legs and sticky-out bits. This is great news for BlackBerry, the master of fiddly parts, and accordingly it has brought out a new Android phone with a slide-out QWERTY. We only need the keyboard to slide the other way to reveal media control keys and we're right back to 2006's Nokia N95.

In reality, while it's not the first slider BlackBerry has made, the Priv is no nostalgic throwback. It's an Android for business types who want a proper selection of apps, but who also need proper typing for their memos and proper security for their emails. And it's actually really quite nice: the 5.4in, 2560x1440 AMOLED screen has subtly curved edges, and beneath the hood a Snapdragon 808 processor, 3GB RAM and a 3410mAh battery provide plenty of muscle. Fond as we are of nonconformity, we rather like it.

As hot as... the underfinger crunch of freshly fallen keys

£560 / blackberry.com

UFF

24 PAGES OF THE BIGGEST STORIES FROM PLANET TECH

Wait, I know a shortcut...

For time-poor execs, each of the keys can be assigned a long-press shortcut. Maybe 'h' for 'speed-dial home', 't' for 'activate the LED torch', or 'b' for 'compose email to Babycakes'.



Fingers-on with the new 'Berry

Esat Dedezade



I must admit, it's been fun seeing people react to this phone keyboard. But it is brilliant. Like the BlackBerry Passport, the keys double up as a trackpad, letting you scroll through web pages, insert typing predictions with a flick and delete words with a swipe. I found myself using it a lot.

The Priv's default on-screen keyboard is also excellent: it tracks where your fingers tend to land and adjusts the sweet spot, resulting in fewer mistakes. If BlackBerry sold its software keyboard on the Google Play Store, I'd buy it for my Nexus.

The screen is superb, too. It's one of the best smartphone displays I've ever seen; only the Samsung Galaxy S6 can beat it for contrast, colour and crispness.

The Priv is expensive, but if you're a business type it's worth a look.



HOT FOUR #2

LEICA MAKES A PRO COMPACT SYSTEM CAMERA

Leica SL

The Philippine tarsier is one of the world's smallest primates, a fist-sized monkey-type-thing that looks like a small, worried squirrel. But while a tarsier's head is not much bigger than a walnut, its eyes are huge – bigger than its brain – and its night vision is 1000 times better than yours. And you know what tarsiers use to take pictures at night, without a flash? The Leica SL. That's not true, obviously: tarsiers are smaller than the Leica SL, they're very shy animals and they don't have £5000. But Leica's astonishingly fancy new system camera does have fantastic low-light smarts, with an ISO range that goes up to 50,000. It's also extremely fast, taking 11 full-frame, 24MP shots per second and shooting absolutely sumptuous 4K video. Its 4.4million-pixel viewfinder confers tarsier-like vision on the user, and you don't need to have eyes that are bigger than your brain. That alone has to be worth the five grand.

As hot as... wearing fur in the Philippines

£5050 (body only) / leica-camera.com

What big eyes you have

While most lenses sip at light like a straw, Leica's new 50mm f/0.95 Noctilux is a bucket. It may be the nicest 50mm lens you can buy, if you can buy it – the price is a non-trivial £7000.



Engine upgrade

This is the first smartwatch we've tried that runs on an Intel Atom chip. We'll see what advantages – if any – this will give it, but top of our wishlist would be a battery that lasts more than a day.

HOT FOUR #3

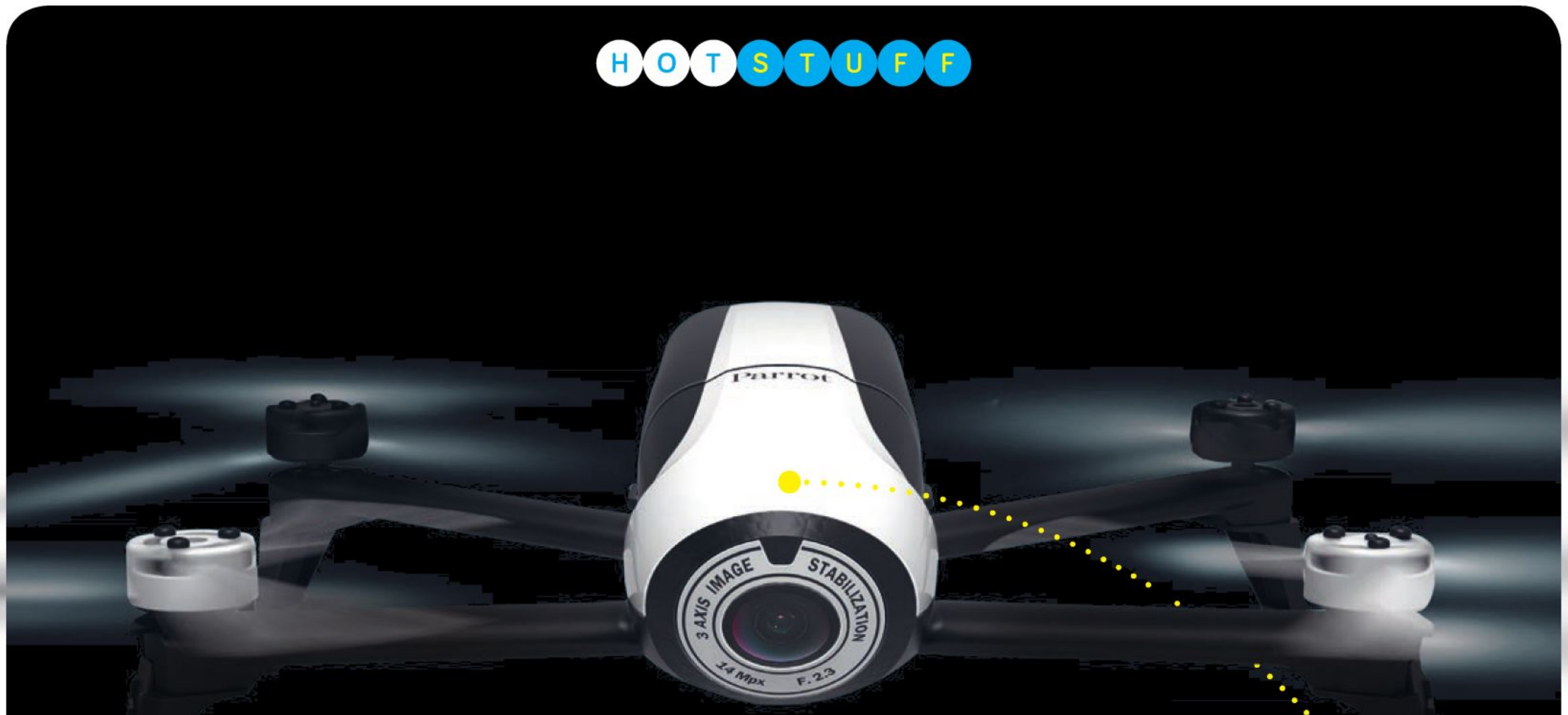
THE FIRST LUXURY ANDROID SMARTWATCH

Tag Heuer Connected

Something you may have noticed about Android Wear is that it's pretty darn affordable. In fact, it's basically impossible to spend more than £300 on a Google-powered smartwatch. Or, it was. Clearly, the chuckling Swissmen of the luxury watch industry have also noted this point. Their response has been to dress Android Wear up in something a little more formal – titanium and crystal sapphire, with some custom watch faces that echo Tag's classic watch designs but add nifty smart touches like sub-dials that relay info from apps – and to bump the price up by about four times. It won't give your bank balance the beating that Apple's gold Watch Edition would dish out, but the Connected certainly isn't cheap. Interestingly, Tag Heuer is offering anyone who buys their Connected smartwatch the chance to trade it in (with some more of your money) for one of its mechanical Carrera watches after two years. Sounds like they're still keen on selling plenty of those, if this whole smartwatch thing doesn't work out.

As hot as... Iron Man's handshake

£1100 / tagheuer.co.uk



HOT FOUR #4

BEBOP STRIKES BACK

Parrot Bebop 2

Time waits for no man – and it doesn't hang around for drones either. More often than not, by the time you've got your quadcopter in the air, narrowly avoided colliding with the tops of some trees and shaken off the attentions of any nearby dogs, there's a 'low battery' warning on the controller and it's time to return to base for a top-up. Parrot's new Bebop ekes every last spin of its four propellers out of the battery, boosting the flying time to 25 minutes, which is more than long enough for it to get all tangled up in some branches and keep the kites company.

As hot as... a prop blade's leading edge

£tbc / parrot.com/uk

With flying colours

Keeping track of the new Bebop in the UK will be tough with this distinctly 'British sky on a dreary day' paint job. We might have to bribe a kid from Games Workshop to give it a custom paintjob. #flames

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DEDICATED TO PERFECTION

A PHONE FOR ALL YOU LITTLE SMASHERS

Moto X Force

£500 (32GB), £535 (64GB) / motorola.co.uk



It may be shatter-proof but it can also match your manbag, with various material options available in Moto Maker.

This phone comes with a four-year warranty against its screen cracking or shattering. Smashing!

Five-piece of mind

Motorola says the Shatter Shield display of the Force uses a five-layer system consisting of a very hard outer lens, an internal lens designed not to crack or shatter, a second touch layer in case the first one is damaged, and then the AMOLED display and an aluminium chassis behind it. If it does crack during normal use, including drops and falls, Moto will replace it. "Not through deliberate misuse," it said, while the PR officer encouraged us to repeatedly thrash one on the corner of the desk. If you're a serial smasher, someone for whom the online world is lensed through a spider's web of screen cracks, this could be a sound investment.

Style and substance

Otherwise, this is a very similar handset to the Moto X Style. It has a smaller 5.4in screen but the same Snapdragon 810 chip, 3GB RAM and 21MP back camera, and a healthy 3760mAh battery with support for the two main wireless charging standards, PMA and Qi. It'll come in 32GB and 64GB versions, with a microSD card slot for up to 2TB of expansion. Moto Maker customisation is also available, including an LG G4-like leather and a unique 'ballistic nylon' cross-hatch material.

Help, I can't swim!

With a name like 'Force' and all this talk of shatterproof screens, you could be forgiven for thinking this is a full-on rugged phone. We certainly did. But while it has the same hydrophobic coating as other Moto X phones, it's not fully waterproof. Secured against the smash, then, but Achilles'd by the splash.



THE FORCE'S DISPLAY USES A FIVE-LAYER SYSTEM AND IF IT CRACKS MOTOROLA WILL REPLACE IT FOR YOU



Countryfile

SUUNTO KAILASH

''Alfred.'' It's no good. ''Alfred.'' No matter how many times you try to make contact, Bruce Wayne's trusty butler isn't going to rescue you from Accessorize. As your girlfriend points out, there's not even a mic on the collar wing you're talking to. What this watch can do, however, is give you the direction and distance of a pre-stored waypoint. Say, where you parked the BatFiesta. Mind you, the Kailash is more designed for out-of-Gotham adventures. The GPS sensor will auto-adjust to local timezones in far-off places, and it will also log altitude, step counts and sunset times. Via an app, it'll highlight notifications. Maybe he'll text.

£650 / suunto.com



ALSO JOINING THE X-MEN

If you were looking for a phone with an X after its name but for a lower buy-in, you could do worse than check out OnePlus's second phone launch of the year, the OnePlus X.

This 5in phone is more about design than power, although with a Snapdragon 801 and 3GB RAM, it's not exactly limping. The best news is the pricing: the 'Onyx' black version costs just £200, while the limited edition 'Ceramic' version comes in at £270.

The catch? As with other OnePlus phones, you can't just buy one from a shop: you need an invite. Visit oneplus.net to apply.



Channel you, if anyone's watching

EE CAPTURE CAM

If you bought an action camera, there was a faint glimmer of hope that the footage was for just you – just to privately examine your technique or line choice; perhaps admire your skills a little. Then EE launched an action cam with a built-in SIM card, and that defence was lost. Here was a camera, the primary purpose of which was to livestream what you were doing to others. And now this, a new 8MP action cam to not only stream 720p video via the Skeegle app but, due to its small 55mm form, to do so more often and more conveniently. Indefensible show-offery.

£tba / ee.co.uk

START MENU

The latest startups, crowdfunded projects and plain crazy ideas

KICK-STARTER



Tripping the light agnostic

MOLT M.STICK

You can't put light in a box. Well, you can – this is light in a box. But we mean that you shouldn't put light in a categorical box: this is a bike light, this is a ceiling light, this is a fridge light, etc. You should just say this is a light, and I will use this light for many things, helped by the accompanying apps. I may use it as a bike light, but I can also use it as an audio visualiser, a selfie flash, a visual timer for cooking or exercising and a camping light. Even as a bizarrely obtuse way of getting a weather report. I shall use its magnetic or tripod mount, or optional running or bike mounts. But I will not put it in a box. Unless it's a bit dark in the box.

US$80 / molt.kr

BACK IT

STACK IT

SACK IT

KICK-STARTER



Waist hot, want not

ION BELT

There's loads of superfluous space for rent in human clothing. These enterprising individuals have managed to engineer the inclusion of a 3000mAh battery into a belt, with the USB plug on the end of the tail. We hear you: what's the amperage? It's 2.1A, so it ought to charge your phone, or your watch, pretty crisply.

US$100 / iontechwear.com

INDIE-GOGO



You spin me right round

PIXELIO 3D

There's another 3D scanner on page 36 that makes you do the turning. This one is more laid back, with a rotating arm that whisks your attached smartphone or camera around the thing that you're scanning. More than that, you can attach your camera facing outwards to create precise panoramas or tantalising timelapses.

£90 / pixelioscanner.com

KICK-STARTER



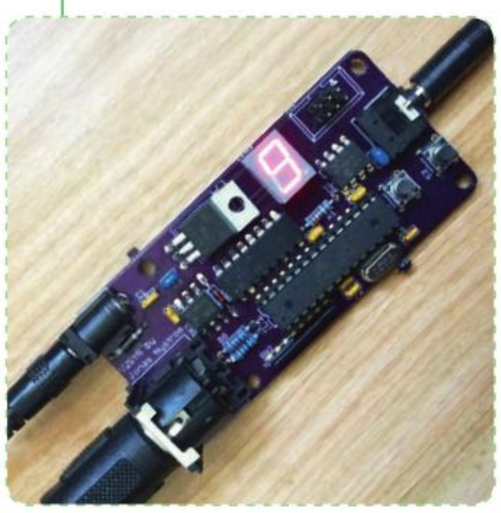
Pretty easy puzzle

PUZZLEPHONE

If you feel like you've seen this before, it might be because you have. The PuzzlePhone concept was out and about in late 2014. But now the Finnish developers are ready to hit the production line with their Google Project Ara–like phone that separates the body, battery and brains into three upgradeable parts.

from €400 / puzzlephone.com

INDIE-GOGO



Gram slam

ARCANO SYSTEMS OBSCURA

The Obscura gathers together a whole gamut of geekiness: Arduino, synth and retro games. Plug in a USB MIDI keyboard, choose one of 16 programmed sound effects and get creating computer game music like you're a Commodore coder in 1989.

US$105 / arcanosystems.com

Introducing MotoShatterShield™ Technology.

The world's first shatterproof screen.



moto X FORCE

Available at

Carphone Warehouse

Powered by:

Qualcomm snapdragon™

The new Moto X Force combines 5 rigid screen layers to absorb any impact. The latest Qualcomm Snapdragon™ processor lets you play, stream and multitask as fast as you want. Our 5MP and 21MP cameras with flash on both sides let you capture any moment in stunning detail, whether it's a selfie or a landscape. And with up to 48hrs battery life and TurboPower™ giving you 13hrs charge in just 15 minutes, it's truly made to keep you moving. Visit Motorola.co.uk for more.

The display and embedded lens are warranted against shattering and cracking for four (4) years from the original date of purchase; scratches or other damage to the protective lens is not covered by this warranty, but should always be in place to prevent scratches and other damage to the underlying components. This phone is not shockproof or designed to withstand all damage from dropping. All other warranty exclusions, including scratches and other cosmetic damage, intentional damage or abuse, normal wear and tear and other limitations apply. © 2015 Motorola Mobility LLC. All Rights Reserved. MOTOROLA and the Stylized M Logo are registered trademarks of Motorola Trademark Holdings, LLC. Android, Google and other marks are trademarks of Google Inc.



The ears have it

CHORD MOJO

The *Stuff* conglomerate is, as you'd expect, a ragtag bunch with wildly differing views. Spats are so numerous that we're surrounded by company-trained first-aiders, and the last Xbox/PlayStation generational shift led to an enforced Nerf gun amnesty. But there's something even more divisive than consoles: DACs. The fans revel in the kHz figures, while the naysayers argue that most source files and/or headphones render them pointless. If you're going to get involved, choose wisely. Chord's £1400 Hugo is bedecked with awards, so this more portable version is news indeed. Digital coax, optical and USB inputs run your tunes though Chord's custom hardware to – if there's someone else in your gang – twin headphone jacks.
£400 / chordelectronics.co.uk

A drone that converts into a tiny tank **WTF?**



Along a bit, up a bit... shoot!

B-UNSTOPPABLE TANKCOPTER

Have you ever been in a helicopter? It's brilliant... so long as you ignore the fact that you're sitting in a machine that is airborne only by the 'grace' of screaming, gnashing mechanics into which jet fuel is being injected with the elegance of a firehose. Which is a whirly way of getting to the 'why' of this tracked drone, which can whisk itself along the ground further and quieter than it can fly. Its tank dynamics let it navigate obstacles that would flummox wheels, with the rotors on standby as a Get Out Of Mire Free card. Currently on Indiegogo, the top-spec model (US$160) has a 720p camera that sends live views to a screen on the controller.
from US$90 / bgobeyond.com



DROP EVERYTHING AND DOWNLOAD...

Progress To 100 £2.29 / iOS

Worried about how you're going to entertain the in-laws at Christmas? This iPad game, available for less than the price of a pack of brandy butter, will easily kill an hour. One hundred puzzles are presented to you as no more than a word on the screen with no other clues as to how to progress... except us telling you now that they involves touch or accelerometer or sound. Pass it around the gang and let silliness ensue! Or, stilted awkwardness. It depends on your in-laws.

SORRY OPTOMA.

8 OUT OF 10[1] PREFER

EPSON.



In a like-for-like test of HD projectors, **8 out of 10 people** said they'd choose to own an Epson over Acer, BenQ, Optoma and ViewSonic.

We know for the ultimate experience you want only the best images. **83%** of those we surveyed said they view Epson as their first choice of projector. [1]

Find out more at www.epson.co.uk/CLO

Up to 3x BRIGHTER COLOURS[1] with Epson Projectors*

No.1 EPSON WORLD LEADER IN PROJECTORS[2]

1. Aug 2015: Epson blind test between Acer H6510BD, BenQ TH681+, Epson EH-TW5200, Optoma HD26 and ViewSonic PJD7822HDL. For further info on the test and on the 3x brighter colours data please see **www.epson.co.uk/CLO**
2. Survey conducted by Futuresource Consulting Limited for the period from 2001 to 2015.

EPSON®
EXCEED YOUR VISION



ROBO ROSSI RELEGATOR

The response from the internet was immediate and astute: "No, Yamaha, don't invent a robot to ride motorcycles. Invent a robot to do my crummy job so *I* can ride motorcycles." But it's too late. The Japanese company has already put time and money into this riding robot, which uses conventional hand and foot controls to realise two aims: one, to develop rider safety and support systems; two, to eventually 'surpass' celebrity bike racer Valentino Rossi. Which is marketing, of course, but given Rossi just narrowly missed out on his 10th World Championship win, perhaps the cyber rider's alarming intentions had him spooked.

NEWS FEED



YOUR NEXT LAPTOP COULD RUN ANDROID

Google is reportedly looking at turning the Chrome OS it makes for all Chromebook laptops into a species of its Android phone OS. What does that mean? It means you could run all the apps and games from your phone on a lightweight, £200-ish laptop.



YOUTUBE LAUNCHES RIVAL TO NETFLIX

Google has announced YouTube Red, a US$10/m service that offers ad-free and offline viewing, exclusive videos and access to Google Music. It's US-only at the moment, but stop scrabbling for your passport: it'll be coming to the UK at some point.



AI KNOWS WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER

Facebook's researchers are using artificial intelligence to scan, separate and identify elements in photographs. When it's deployed you'll be able to search for 'dog' and see all the dog photos you and your friends have taken, even if you've never tagged a dog. Creepy, but cool.

BEST OF

FITNESS TRACKERS

A selection of wrist-based personal trainers to help you keep tabs on your flab

THE ALL-ROUNDER

Polar A360

Car makers often launch bicycles, not expecting people to like them so much that they get rid of their cars. Polar's reputation is built on heart-rate monitoring belts, so this new watch with an optical pulse reader is a slightly risky move. What's more, the A360 is really capable: it has a two-week battery for activity tracking, workouts and sleep, as well as handling phone notifications.

£155 / polar.com/a360

THE ACTIVITY-UPPER



Misfit Shine 2

As liberal as we are in the twenty-teens, some folks still cannot turn up for work looking like a contestant from *Fun House* with garish adornments on every limb. Misfit's Shine has always taken a more subtle approach, and this new version is no different – except that it's now thinner and more accurate, with coloured LEDs, a vibration motor for notifications and Bluetooth 4.1.

£80 / misfit.com

THE OVER-ANALYSER



Garmin Forerunner 630

Ground Contact Time, Lactate Threshold and Vertical Oscillation – we fail to see how our 'jogging' could possible attract such high science terminology. But then the 630 is Garmin's new flagship running watch. Amateurs might be better off with the Forerunner 230 (from £210) or optical-HRM-equipped 235 (£270). All three can notify you of calls or texts, if you're looking for excuses to rest.

from £330 / garmin.com/uk



DENON®

REAL HIFI FOR TODAY'S LIFESTYLES

THE NEW DENON DESIGN SERIES

The stereo amplifier **PMA-50** and the CD player **DCD-50** form the prelude to the **Denon Design Series**. Through its unique combination of subtle design and the latest technology, the start of this new product range makes the hearts of demanding music lovers beat faster.

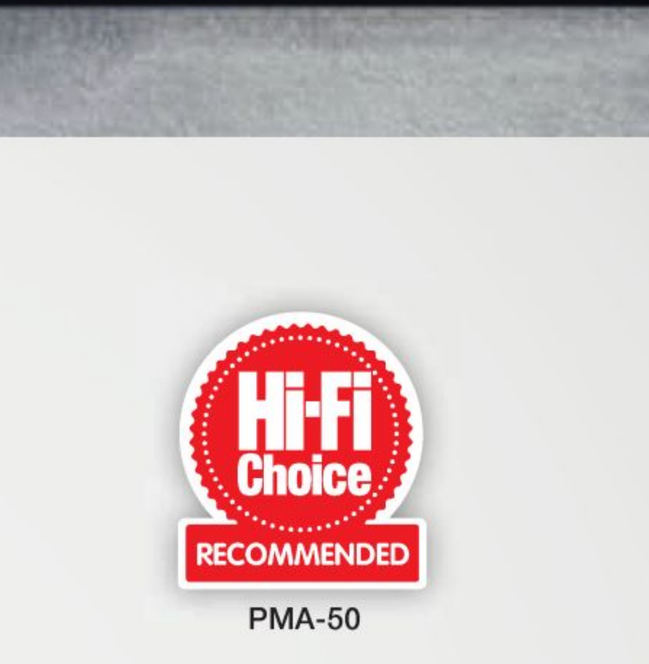
These first-class hi-fi models are very compact yet powerful at the same time. A special feature of the **Denon Design Series** is that they can be optionally set up horizontally or vertically, the clear-view OLED display automatically rotates with each position.

Experience unique Denon technologies such as the Advanced AL32 Processing and the DAC master clock design. Enjoy playing your favourite tracks, among other things CD or via Bluetooth with high quality CSR aptX Low Latency decoding - all this with the renowned Denon sound quality.

Bluetooth® aptX CSR ADVANCED AL32 PROCESSING 32BIT 192kHz DAC

Hi-Fi Choice RECOMMENDED

PMA-50



www.denon.co.uk

APPS

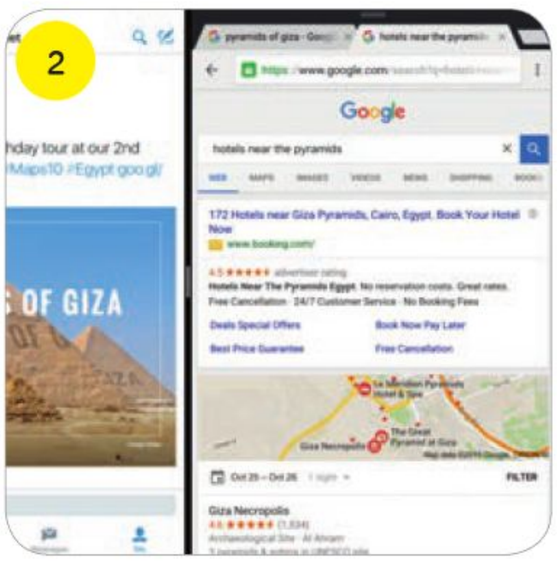
This month's mobile must-downloads



1 Microsoft Arrow

£free / Android

Hailing from the same Microsoft Garage workshop that produced the popular Next Lock Screen, this is Microsoft's fully fledged launcher app. Yep, for Android. Get over the weirdness, get with the slickness.



2 Google Chrome for iPad

£free / iOS

If you're bang up to date with iOS9 on iPad Air 2 or iPad Mini 4, the latest Chrome browser supports Split View multitasking and handy Autofill fields. You lucky badger.



3 Evel Knievel

£1.49 / iOS

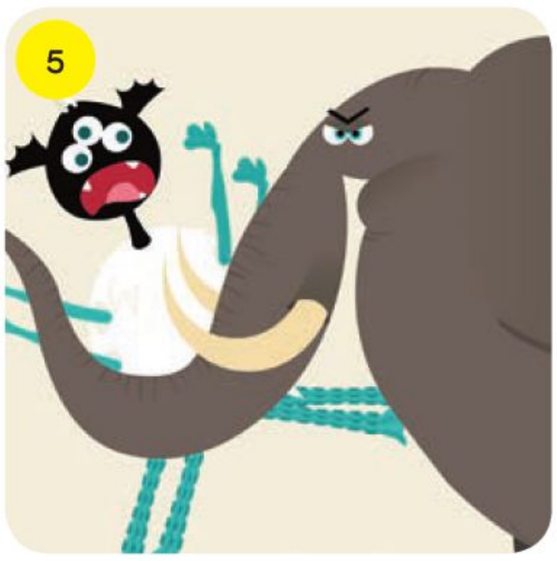
Is Evel Knievel still a household name? Do kids still aspire to be motorcycle stuntmen? Or do they now aspire to be coding daredevils? Arduino superpeople? Any which way, this game looks like a blast.



4 Garmin Connect

£free / Android, iOS

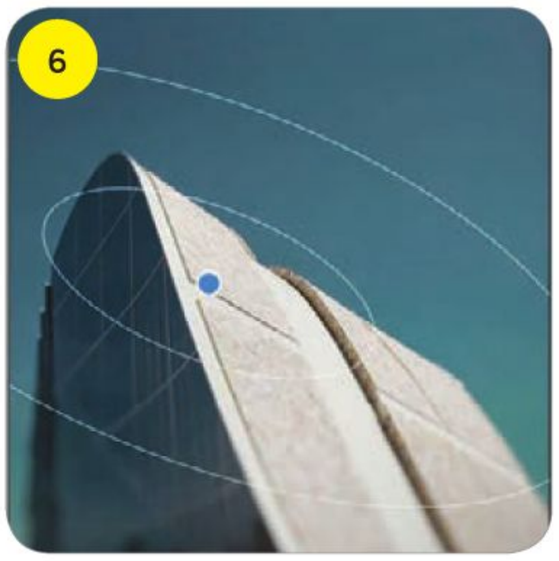
Out with the blue and in with the new: Garmin's activity tracker app gets a new neon-on-black look. No alarming changes to the data, which is good if you're precious about your activity history.



5 DNA Play

£2.29 / Android, iOS

"Where's Damien?" "Upstairs playing with genetics." "What?!" "It's an app, where you manipulate DNA strands to watch the real-time effect on monsters." "Good. You can never start them too soon."



6 Snapseed

£free / Android, iOS

Some recent Android phones have the ability to shoot photos in the tweak-friendly RAW format, and now the Google-owned Snapseed app will let you edit those RAW files right there on your phone.



7 Agent A

£2.29 / iOS

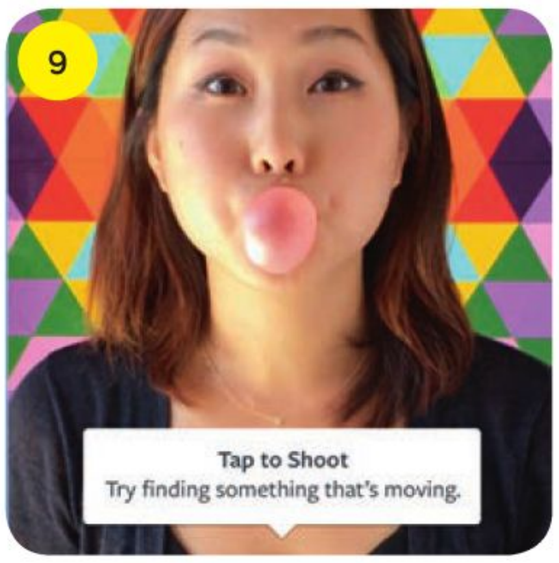
This '60s-style puzzler has you point-and-clicking your way to the discovery and apprehension of enemy spy Miss Ruby La Rouge. Add some modern relevance by playing it in Chinese.



8 Waze

£free / Android, iOS

The community-centric sat-nav app gets a design refresh – without losing the charming graphics – and streamlined UI. Reporting traffic jams, speed cameras and petrol station prices now takes fewer taps.



9 Instagram Boomerang

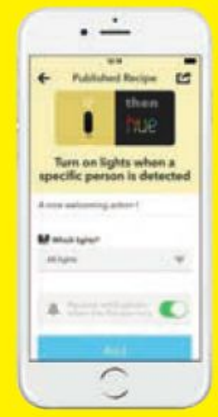
£free / Android, iOS

So called because this app creates super-shareable one-second videos that bounce backwards to the start point instead of looping. So not strictly like a boomerang, which is made to stun, not bounce.

NOT JUST AN APP

NETATMO WELCOME

£200 / Android, iOS



Netatmo has linked its face-recognising homecam to the Internet of Things facilitator app, IFTTT. So now, instead of getting a boring phone notification if a stranger enters your house, you can scare them by launching Luther Vandross and dimming your Philips Hue lights to a shade of raw salmon orange. That'll see 'em off. Equally, converse to what Netatmo has suggested, you can set your IoT-connected house alarm to go off every time your own face is recognised, as a kind of 'In da house!' shout-out to your neighbours. Of course, just like the NFC craze of 2011, what you might also do is turn all this off after a couple of weeks and never use it again.



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£75

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AND RETAILERS*



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EOS 750D



EF 16-35mm f/4 L IS USM

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*Offer subject to full Terms and Conditions - see canon.co.uk/wintercashback.
Available on selected European products purchased between 14.10.2015 and 13.01.16 from selected UK retailers.



You don't have to go it alone

ARCAM SOLO MUSIC & MOVIE

If you were to decide that you wanted to build a kick-ass one-box music or film system, the first thing you'd do is have a rootle around in the garage and see if you had any useful bits to get started with. Arcam's garage is chock full of high-end AV equipment, and thus the stereo Solo Music (£1500) and Blu-ray-and-surround-sound Solo Movie (£2000) are full of the kind of digital 'Class G' amplifiers, Bluetooth streaming and 4K upscaling gubbins that it would take you ages to cobble together. Mind you, they do lack Wi-Fi and Spotify Connect, so there's work for your screwdriver yet.

from £1500 / arcam.co.uk

The junior kit can last for a whole childhood from 0-13 (with adjustments, of course).

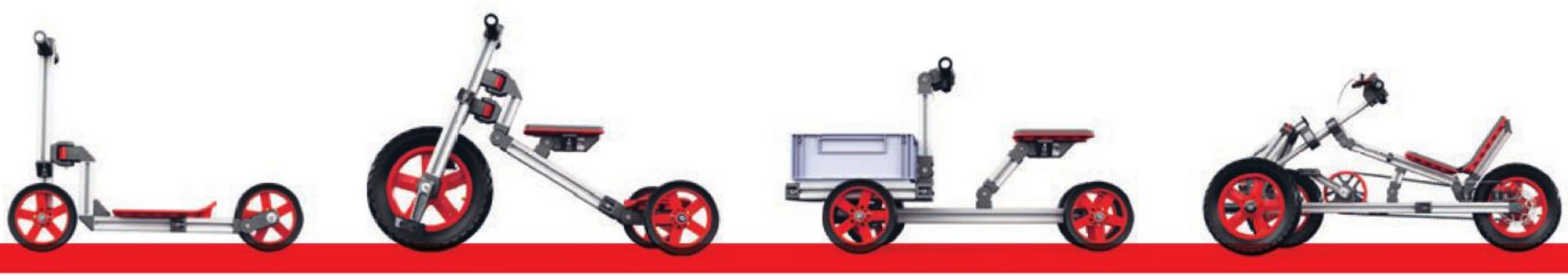
Kit's not for sharing

INFENTO

Look what Daddy's bought you! It's got all these beams and brackets and even a belt drive and brakes. All I need is an Allen key, and we can build a bike or a scooter or a trailer. There are sled attachments to go in place of the wheels when the snow comes, and the company is even talking about an electric motor kit! Okay, you'll get your turn. Maybe in a few years.

from US$300 / infentorides.com





FUTURE STUFF
GOOGLE SMART REPLY

Chris Rowlands on how the search kingpin is slashing tapping time with machine learning

"Gosh, I really wish Google would read my emails and reply for me," said no discerning data protection preacher, ever. But it's happening. Google's put machine learning tech into its Inbox app, meaning auto 'bot replies to insistent colleagues.

The humanoid-aping system (currently only available for Android and iOS apps) will scan emails and offer three replies, shaving seconds off your turnaround time. Don't expect essays, though. The aptly named Smart Reply feature is intended for messages that can be dealt with by brief responses – think "I'm working on it" rather than "So, about last night..."

Google's aim is to deliver two-tap replies: one to open, one to select a response. Thankfully, the system has developed a lot from its early stages when it threw "I love you" around a little too often.

While spreading the love doesn't sound too bad an idea to us, to become a useful piece of functionality Smart Reply will need to be almost perfect at imitating humans – something that could put the jitters up AI-fearers.

In any case, this is just the latest in a line of developments to come out of the California tech giant employing the same neural network tech that revolutionised media management in its smart-sorting Photos app.

With Google already scanning your inbox for flight bookings and hotel reservations, Smart Reply is one step closer to fully automated email. Watch out, PAs.



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Life's Good

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A WHOLE NEW CATEGORY OF TELEVISION.



PERFECT BLACK CREATES PERFECT COLOUR

Unlike other TV's, only OLED uses self-lighting pixel technology,
delivering a never before seen standard of black, colour and viewing angle.
With truly breathtaking design, LG's OLED TV is the most advanced television you can buy.
lg.com/uk/discoveroled

LG OLED TV

Stuff ★★★★★
LG 55EG960V
JUNE 2015

WHAT HI-FI? ★★★★★
LG 55EG960V
MAY 2015

avforums REFERENCE STATUS AWARD
LG 55EG960V
JUNE 2015

Model shown EG960V

3 STEPS ...to winter cycling



1

Make 'em see you

TORCH T2

Get your hands on a Torch helmet in real life and you might, like us, find the cynical smirk wiped right off your face. It's neither as oversized or as overweight as you might imagine for a CE-certified urban bike helmet that also has front and rear lights and batteries built in. The classy matte colour choices almost complete the deal, then the reasonable price does just that.
from £85 / torchapparel.eu



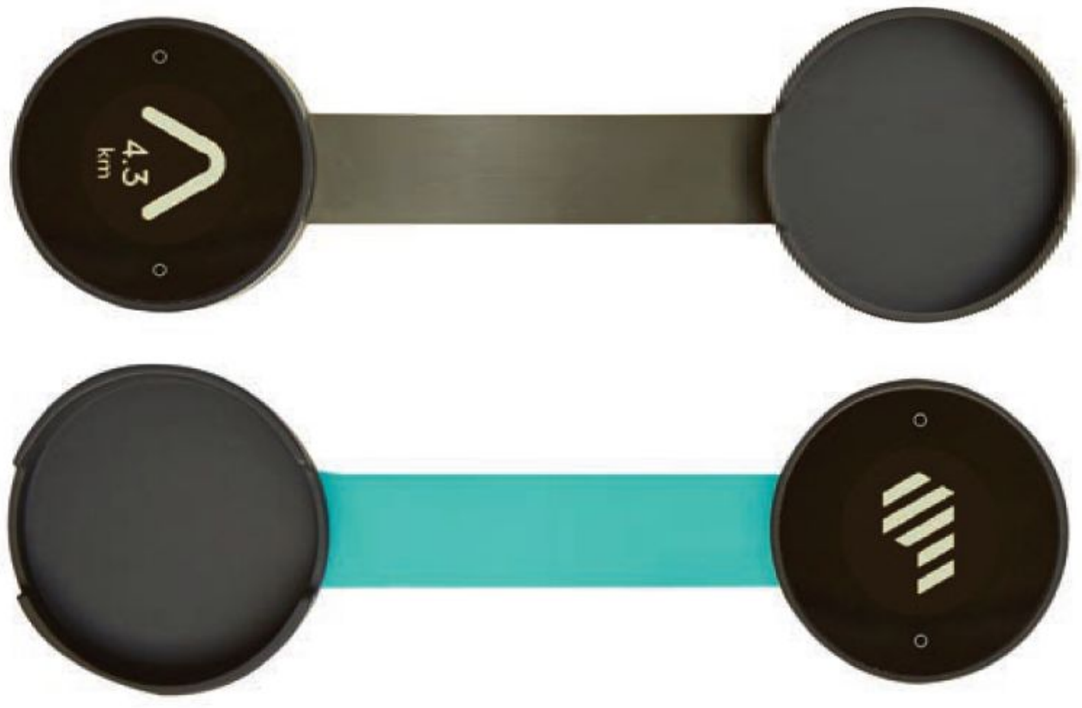
2

Dealbreaker windbreaker

LEVI'S COMMUTER WINDBREAKER JACKET

You could spend £500 on hurricane-proof Gore-Tex extreme jacket and troos, or you could use weather apps to decide that on some days the weather is manky enough to just get the train. But on all those other glorious crispy wintry or borderline mizzly days, this stylish, reflective-detailed, weather-resistant jacket from Levi's cycle range might be all you need.
£115 / levi.com

3



Buzz off home

BEELINE

Winter cycling demands kit simplicity. Forget prodding at a million-function bike computer or watching your phone's battery go flat in its handlebar mount. This Kickstartered navigation device has a low-power, high-vis E Ink screen on which it simply displays the general direction and distance of your destination. You keep your head up and make road-to-road nav decisions based on what you see in real time.
£60 / beeline.co



FIRST LOOK DETROIT: BECOME HUMAN PS4

Not to be confused with the 1994 Amiga game *Detroit* (a turn-based business sim about the car industry), *Become Human* is the latest in PlayStation's line of 'interactive experiences' that began with *Heavy Rain* in 2010 (or *Fahrenheit* for the PS2 five years earlier, if you want to get pedantic about it).

Detroit started life as *Kara*, a tech demo unveiled by developer Quantic Dream in 2012 that showed a female android being assembled and 'malfunctioning' by exhibiting emotion, before convincing her creator to let her venture out into the world anyway. It was kind of a cross between *Ex Machina* and Chris Cunningham's video for *All Is Full Of Love* by Björk, and many of the millions who saw it on YouTube – us included – wished Quantic Dream would do something more with it. *Become Human* is that something.

In this version of Detroit the city's car industry has been replaced by the humanoid robot industry. It's now Android City, not Motor City, and not everyone is happy about this robotic development.

Kara's still on the loose, albeit with a different haircut, and while her 'bot brethren ride in separate compartments on the train and seem to be treated like second-class citizens, she walks free like her flesh and blood makers.

That's about all we know for now and what happens from there is unclear, but storytelling is Quantic Dream's thing, so you can expect a smartly told tale with plenty of hand-wringing as you make decisions that could dramatically affect how events unfold later on.



[**Words** Tom Wiggins]

NEWS FROM PARIS GAMES WEEK

DREAMS
PS4

When the quirky kids behind *LittleBigPlanet* announced a new game at E3, we were all excited. Thing was, no-one could really work out what the game was about. Or even if it really was a game. Now we've seen *Dreams* in action, and our excitement is warranted.

Media Molecule will include pre-built levels and characters in a story-like experience, but *Dreams* is all about creation. You can take parts from anywhere and stretch and twist them to your own worlds or characters. Don't worry if you've got all the creative skill of a stunned cephalopod: your accidental Picassos are quite acceptable here.

And they needn't be stuck in the game – they can be exported and 3D-printed. Media Molecule's Alex Evans said they've experimented with 3D-scanning objects and adding them to the game too. Just imagine importing all of your old toys to your dreams...





GRAN TURISMO SPORT
PS4

Sony says it's not *GT7* but that doesn't mean *Sport* will be a half measure. In fact, the world governing body for motorsport, the FIA, will be recognising results from two of *GT Sport*'s online championships, so put in enough hours and McLaren might be on the phone. Well, they couldn't do much worse than they are already.



UNTIL DAWN: RUSH OF BLOOD
PS VR

Fresh from browning the trousers of PS4-ers across the globe, the makers of *Until Dawn* are prepping a virtual reality version for the launch of Sony's VR headset next year. It seems to be an on-rails shooter like you'd find in '90s arcades, but with the added fear of having your head stuck right inside that world.



WILD
PS4

Fantastical forage-'em-up *Wild* is something of a Doctor Dolittle simulator, in which you track and befriend a host of creatures across a landscape designed to replicate northern Europe. You'll even get to inhabit their bodies by making offerings to the game's gods. Sounds weird, right? But it makes a change from another first-person shooter.

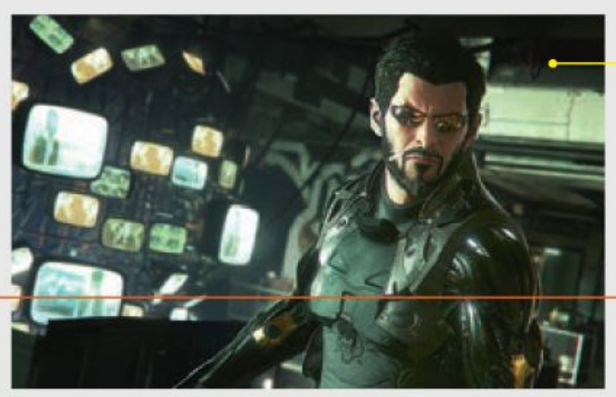


ROBINSON: THE JOURNEY
PS VR

Looking a little like *Portal* crossed with *Jurassic Park*, *Robinson* puts you in the shoes of a young boy who has found himself on a planet inhabited by dinosaurs, with a *Destiny*-esque floating robotic sphere as his only friend. Crytek (of *Crysis* fame) is making it for PlayStation VR so you can bet it'll be a visual feast.

INCOMING





FEBRUARY
- DEUS EX: MANKIND DIVIDED

MARCH
- TOM CLANCY'S THE DIVISION
- HITMAN

MAY
- BATTLEBORN
- MIRROR'S EDGE CATALYST

JUNE
- NO MAN'S SKY



WTF IS THE XYZ?

Is it, at last, a halogen clothes iron?
Nope. We think that steam is going to remain your top-tier crease-reduction tech for some time yet. Possibly until nanotechnology. Although, when we get to the point of finessed control over atom-fiddling nanobots, we'll just reconfigure our outer skin layer and won't need clothes, pressed or otherwise.

Like Mystique from *X-Men*? Awesome.
Yes, well, within whatever size constraints you're already working with...

Uh huh. So it's not an iron?
Nope, it's a 3D scanner. We cheated slightly on the headline, because it's not called the XYZ, but we thought 'WTF is the XYZ Printing Handheld 3D Scanner' might give the game away prematurely. But what's great about it is that it's a 3D scanner that isn't either (a) the size of a small aeroplane or (b) more expensive than a small aeroplane. It's a 200g device that uses Intel RealSense tech to scan objects no larger than 60x60x30cm.

That's only about the size of a spaniel.
Two things to think about. One, think about the tech that's involved in getting a 3D scan of a spaniel. Think about the textures and nooks and crannies on something that size, and how a lightweight handheld device can capture that – at 30fps to a 1mm resolution – using cameras, infrared and colour sensors. Secondly, think about the end result. You want to print something any bigger, given that a chess piece takes half an hour? Good luck with that.

So, it connects straight to my 3D printer?
Nope, it connects to your computer, using USB 3.0. The keyword here is simplicity, but nonetheless you'll need a reasonably meaty computer to process the scans. Something with fourth-generation Intel Core processing, according to, um, Intel. But that's not unattainable. And if it lets us scan our own print designs, rather than relying on what's on the 3D community websites, for £200, we're in. Well, until the nanobots can just make stuff out of atoms.



Eyes wide shutter

LOMO'INSTANT WIDE

Since you grew up, some things have got smaller. Yorkie bars, interest rates, the world; but if you also get a chance to look at an original Polaroid picture, you'll marvel at how small (and rubbish) they are. In order to supersize your instant print experience, the latest camera from indie imagers Lomo uses Fujifilm Instax Wide Film (£20 for 20 shots) with a 99x64mm exposure area. Consequently or deliberately – we're not sure – the camera itself, with its switchable flash, creative shooting modes and clever lens-cap remote control, is huge.
from £170 / lomography.com



Exploring the middle ground (in 3D)

AURAVISOR

The AuraVisor aims to fill the space between the big guys of VR – Oculus, Gear VR, HTC Vive – and the smartphone adaptors like Google Cardboard. It's going to do this by being a standalone VR headset with display and built-in Android OS. That means there's no need for a phone or console: you can download any VR app direct to the device's storage. It has a 5in display, serving 1080p to each eye, with a 100° field of view. Sound comes to your headphones via Bluetooth or 3.5mm jack, and the battery life is quoted as five hours. It's a neat solution for those not willing to spend £1000+, nor hand over their phone to their kids.
£300 / auravisor.com



Zeppelin Wireless.
Next level audio
performance.

Bowers & Wilkins

CHOICE

COASTERS

You know we're all about that base. 'Bout that base. No dribble.

1 VectorEngrave Retro Gaming

VectorEngrave's high-tech name befits these classy rubber-backed metal coasters. (We say 'aluminium', you say 'aluminum', let's call the whole thing swarf.)
£20 / vectorengrave.etsy.com

2 Vinyl Village Record Coasters

If the trendsters are to be believed, vinyl currently has a burning life force that eclipses that of digital. Which makes these chopped coasters somewhat macabre.
£16 / notonthehighstreet.com

3 TheRetroMarket *Zelda* Coasters

Taran-ta-raa! Pling! You got The Cup Of Tea! Now you should go to The Lost Woods. Or, to The Chair and try to collect at least three episodes of *Pointless Celebrities*.
£3 / theretromarket.etsy.com

4 Cosmos Coaster Set

Your sofa is probably larger than the entire Vostok-6 capsule that took Valentina Tereshkova into space in the '60s for days at a time. Unless it's a converted Vostok-6, in which case... nice sofa.
£10 / sciencemuseumshop.co.uk

5 Memeskins Pizza Cat

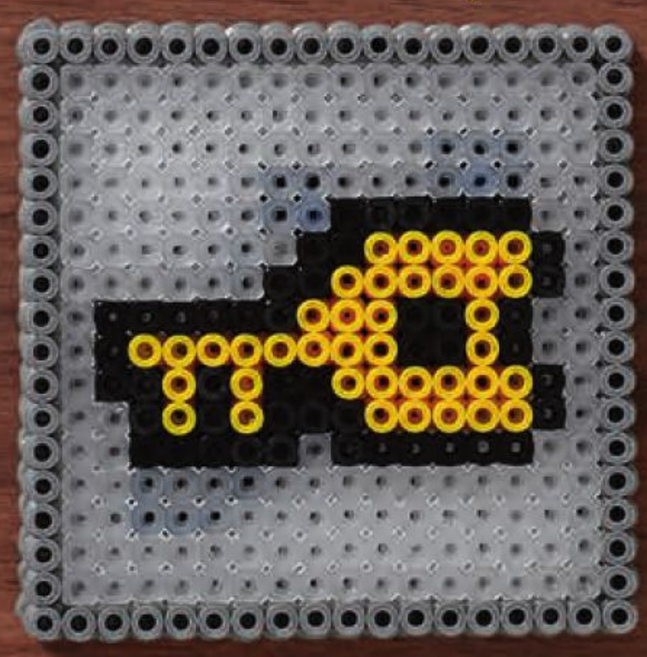
Avoid those awkward Christmas afternoon silences by spending a few hours explaining the concept of an internet meme to the elderly members of your visiting family. Use these as flashcards.
£3 (each) / memeskins.etsy.com

6 Brain Specimen Coasters

If ever there were to be a subtle marketing campaign for the organ donor movement, then this 10 pack of mock-brain-slice coasters surely shouldn't be it.
£25 / firebox.com













IT DIDN'T FALL OFF THE BACK OF A SLEIGH, HONEST.

from

£49.99



fire

Introducing the new Fire tablet.
Powerful performance, unbelievable price.

Engineered by amazon

D5500

24.2 MEGAPIXEL

VARI-ANGLE TOUCH SCREEN

39 FOCUS POINTS

BUILT-IN WIFI



I AM READY TO IMPRESS

I AM THE NIKON D5500. Photographer Andrius Aleksandravičius expresses the full potential of his creativity – and so can you. Turn your ideas into great images with the advanced technology of the D5500. The new vari-angle touchscreen, built-in Wi-Fi* and exceptionally portable and easy-to-handle body make it your smart companion for every project. With a 24.2 MP sensor, 39 focus points and an ISO range up to 25,600, the D5500 always gives you superior image quality. Get inspired and take your photography to the next level with the D5500.

*Wi-Fi enabled smart device is required to share images.


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Awards 2015 Which? Best Photography Brand

Nikon, Winner of the Which? Awards Best Photography Brand

Nikon

At the heart of the image



Don't look back in Spandex

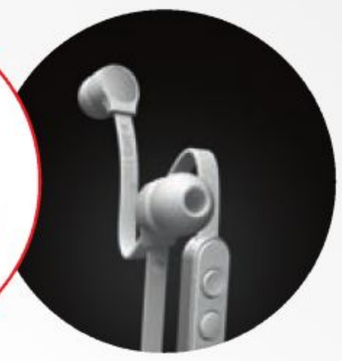
TIMEX 80s COLLECTION

These are confusing times. This is officially 'the future', in the eyes of the writers of 30 years ago. But should we celebrate our futureness, asking Cortana to turn on the home heating while taking our hands off the steering wheels of our cars? Or revel in what came before, such as these retro Timexes? Shiny leather or denim straps: the reminder that, without the past, the future would be just be a meaningless, referenceless now.

£55 / timex.co.uk



The tangle-defying ribbon cable and matte metal finish add a touch of class.



Phone-friendly (for now)

JAYS A-JAYS FOUR+

Be swift in your synchronisation, groovers. Word on the street is that the trend for muted metals and mirrored glass is on the way out. This time next year, your Samsungs and Apples will be wearing neon Perspex and Chilean loomspun alpaca. In the meantime, ensure you're not rocking a rose gold phone with last year's glossy earphones. In addition to the *de rigueur* design, these new Four+ in-ears have a lighter ribbon cable and a new remote.

€65 / jays.se



DROP EVERYTHING & DOWNLOAD

Neko Atsume: Kitty Collector

£free / Android, iOS

Well, maybe don't drop everything. Millions of people have already been enjoying the calming pastime of kitty collecting, whether in their native language of Japanese or by using online guides to make sense of the Japanese. So the game's new English language mode, while great news for everyone who has been waiting for it, arguably means that we're joining the party a bit late. But what do the kitties care? Not a jot. They're just waiting to see if you have snacks.



ICON

TRIUMPH BONNEVILLE

£tba / triumphmotorcycles.co.uk

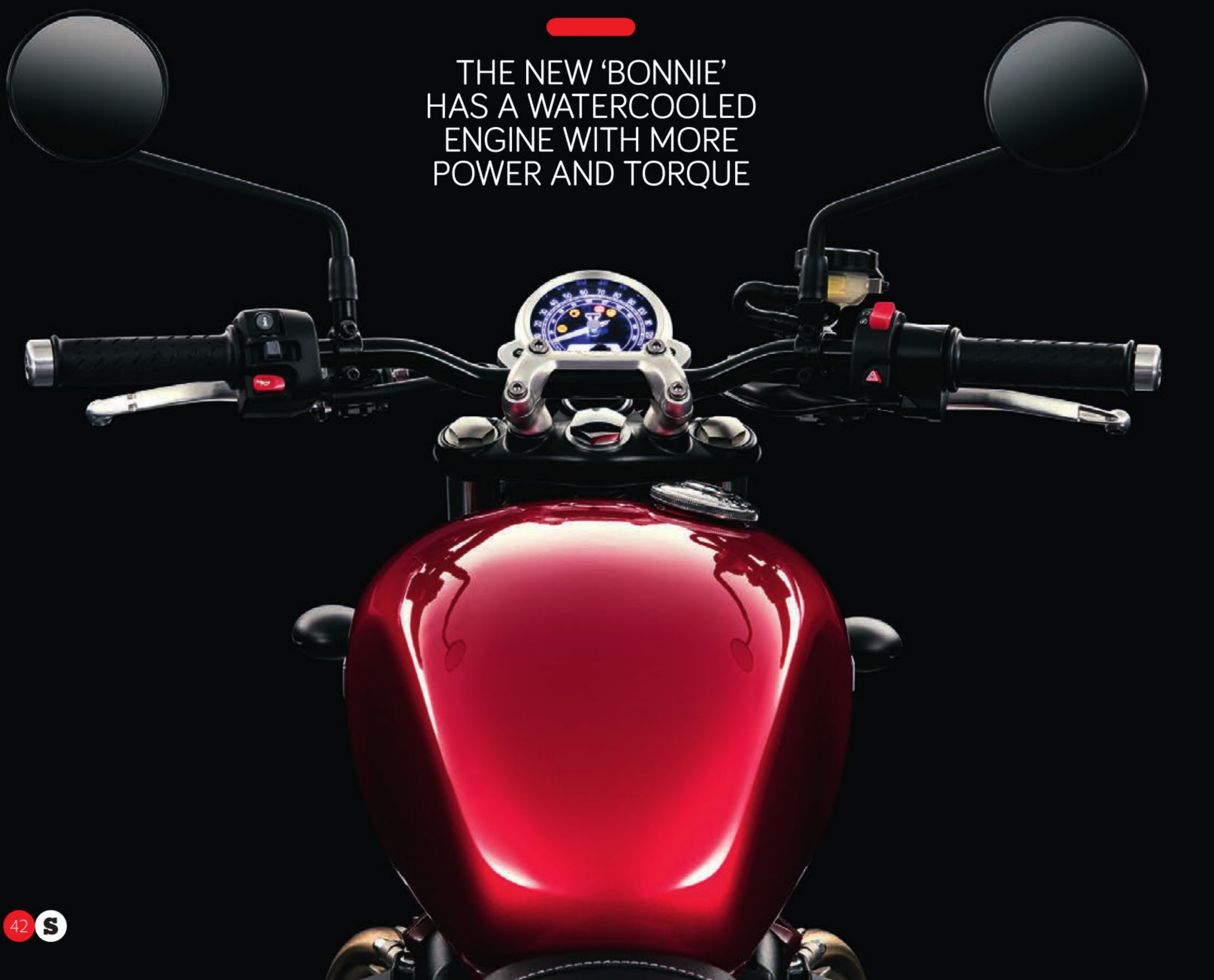


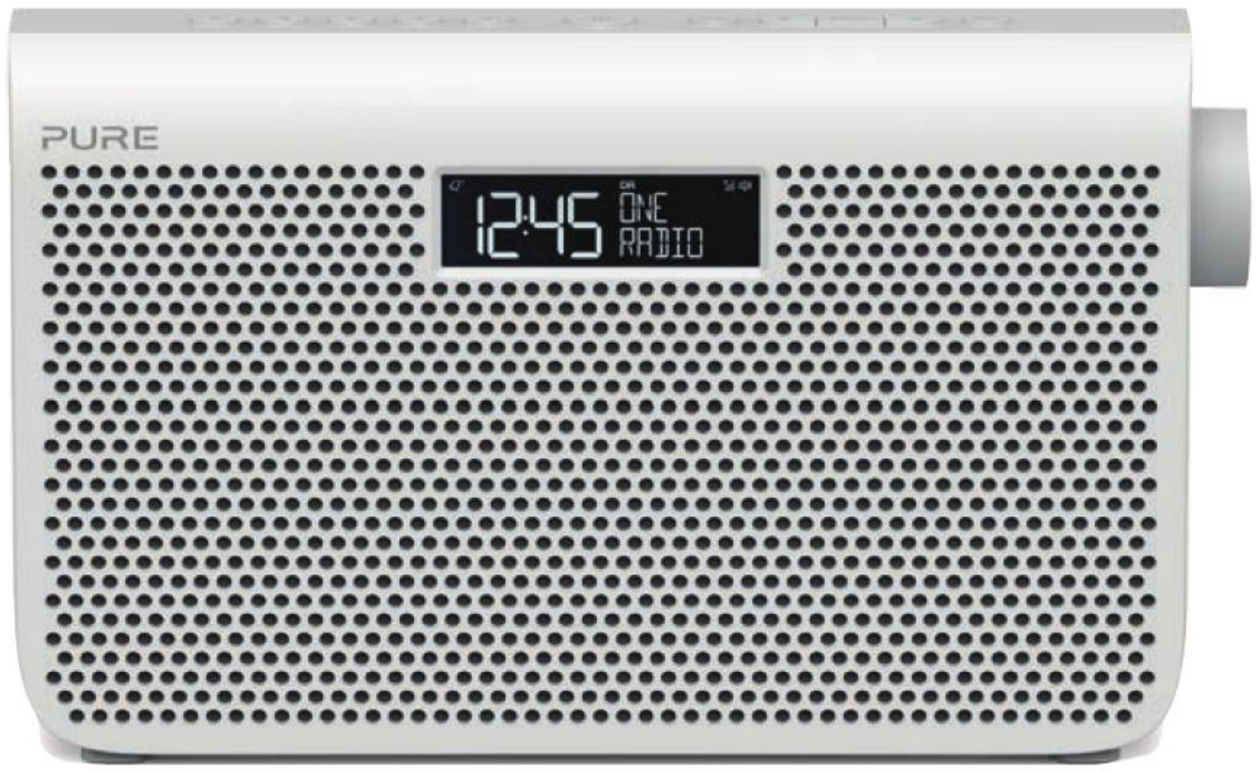
Ooh, don't, I'll fall off.
You haven't even got on it yet. The rumour that a motorbike can kill you with a just a look is wildly exaggerated. Go on, look at it.

My eyes! My beautiful eyes!
Now, don't be silly. Triumph has been working on this bike for four years, with a team of designers and engineers larger than any it's ever assembled for a new bike.

It doesn't look terribly new.
Then it's a success! The Bonneville is Triumph's iconic bike, the one that's most evocative of its eons of British motorcycle production. It's Steve McQueen and Evel Knievel and, for better or worse, David Beckham. It's a big seller. And so the chief aim of the new version was to keep the appeal, while also taking the fight to rivals such as the Ducati Scrambler, Moto Guzzi V7 and BMW R nineT. Oh, and also appeasing the EU.

The EU? What do they want now?
As ever, a cleaner planet. Which means the Bonneville has got itself a fancy new watercooled engine. There are two, in fact: a 900cc version, as seen in the entry-level Street Twin pictured here, and a larger 1200cc lump for the classic T120 plus the Thruxton and Thruxton R. Good news: water cooling means more power and more torque. Even better news: modern traction control, wet riding modes and ABS mean that extra oomph won't instantly kill you. A huge list of accessories will let you shape your perfect bike and, because the Street Twin is expected to be about £8000, you might even be able to afford it. Go on, get out of your car.





Approachable

PURE ONE

The latest generation of the world's best-selling digital radio series has, it appears, managed to keep its feet on the ground. No Spandex outfits, no drug scandals, no ill-advised solo projects: the family of Mini, Midi and Maxi radios fronts as one. If anything their new look is more refined and understated than before, though the sound output of the Midi and stereo Maxi versions has been increased. Continued portability, via either AA batteries or £35 ChargePAK, is further evidence of the trio's fan-friendliness.

from £50 / pure.com





Demanding

TEAC NT-503DAB

This, on the other hand, is a DAB radio demanding your attention. Just look at that protruding power switch – shameless! As well as DAB, it's a network streamer that supports Spotify, Deezer, TuneIn and aptX Bluetooth. It's also a super-strength high-res audio player that supports 5.6MHz DSD and 192kHz WAV/FLAC streaming over your home network. Displaying behaviour befitting such a glitzy DAB, the NT-503 refuses to handle its own amplification, so you'll have to connect it to other Teac Reference Series components, or to another amp or multiroom system.

£950 / teac-audio.eu

DECIPHER

ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN...



#9 SOUND DIGITAL RADIO

Fraser Macdonald



If I were to tell you that 2016 will begin a whole new era of digital radio (aka DAB), would you jump for joy? You might say: "Digital radio? Ain't no-one listening to the radio no more, brah." And I'd raise an eyebrow at your street jive, but point out that a demographically inclusive study in 2014 showed that 74% of people listening to anything were listening to the radio. And mostly listening to the radio on a radio, not a laptop or a phone. Bruv.

You might say: "Digital radio? Can't get it and, furthermore, it don't get me." And I'd silently applaud your cueing and bring in Sound Digital, which is a consortium launching Britain's second national commercial digital radio network. You won't need a new radio, but you might need to retune your existing one. Sound Digital should bring 15 stations with it: some new ones (Magic Mellow), some

THIS DIGITAL RADIO EXPANSION WILL BRING MORE DAB STATIONS TO MORE OF THE COUNTRY

that haven't been available nationally (Kisstory, Jazz FM), and one, Virgin Radio, a retro reissue. Absolute 80s and Planet Rock are also jumping ship to the new platform.

You might say: "Is any of the new bandwidth being used to increase the bitrate of these stations, or to convert them to stereo?" And I'd employ the eyebrow again to highlight your sudden expert knowledge, but sadly shake my head. It was decided that breadth of programming overruled sound quality, so all the Sound Digital stations are mono and 64-80kbps – about par for DAB, really, but a shame for audio geeks.

Let the voice of Naim take you inside the music



Mu-so® is our first wireless music system. Designed by our specialist audio engineers in England, its powerful digital brain delivers the most exceptional quality in sound, commanding 450 watts of power through six speakers to create an immersive sonic experience that has to be heard to be believed.

Features: Airplay, Bluetooth®/aptX®, Spotify Connect®, TIDAL (NEW), UPnP™ (access your stored music), Internet Radio, Multiroom (NEW), USB, Analogue and Digital inputs, Apple iOS and Android App for complete control

Go Deeper

naim

John Lewis | Selected Apple stores | www.apple.com | Specialist Naim retailers

naimaudio.com

AirPlay is a trademark of Apple Inc.

VITAL STATS

SEE MORE, NO BUTS

Sony RX1R II

£tba / sony.co.uk



Is it a pop-up flash? No! Is it a pop-up 2.4million-dot OLED electronic viewfinder? Yes!

If you, like us, thought Sony's full-frame RX1 was a tad OTT, stand by: its replacement is absolutely bonkers.

Don't be fooled by its non-radical appearance.
The RX1R II looks very similar to its predecessor, right down to the weighty Zeiss 35mm f/2 lens, but it's packing innards that push the envelope further.

There's a new sensor – the back-illuminated 42.4MP full-frame beast that's found in the mighty A7R II – as well as a new autofocus system, a wider ISO range and a pop-up electronic viewfinder that hides in the little bit where lesser cameras would stash a flash. The autofocus is 30% faster, while the ISO goes from 50 to an owl-a-licious 102,400. That nifty disappearing viewfinder means that, unlike the original RX1, you can compose your shots properly, as if you're looking through the lens.

Quick, we can head them off at the low-pass.
The RX1R II is also the world's first camera to offer an optical low-pass filter that can either be turned on or off. With other cameras, you have to choose between having a low-pass filter (which eliminates the moiré effect in your images at the cost of some detail) or going without – but Sony has made it selectable, and with 'standard' and 'high' settings. It's something that enthusiast photographers are likely to be, well, enthusiastic about.

But filmmakers might be less fanatical.
This camera can't capture 4K video, which might raise an eyebrow (other recent high-end Sonys have included it), but it will record in up to 1080p at up to 60fps.

As you might imagine, the price for all this high-end wizardry in such a compact device is high. Sony says the R1XR II will cost around €3500, so probably about £2600 in your money, assuming your money is pounds.

SONY HAS CRAMMED A PROFESSIONAL FULL-FRAME SENSOR AND A VIEWFINDER INTO A COMPACT CAM



YOUR MONTH DEC

Christmas isn't the only thing going on this month, you know...



07

FEAR THE WALKING DEAD

DVD, Blu-ray

The Walking Dead neatly launched into its narrative with the zombies already very much a thing in North America. *FTWD* rewinds to the start of the outbreak. New gang, new dramas!

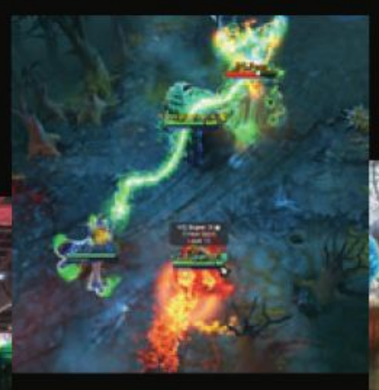


11

BRICK 2015

ExCeL, London

The What's On list for this Lego fan fest reads like the result of a money-no-object pre-event brainstorm. And yet it's all real, including movie scene reconstructions, giant brick pits and Guinness World Record attempts.



11

INSOMNIA56

Birmingham NEC

Pack up your gaming PC in an old kit bag and... head to the UK's biggest gaming event. Now upgraded to the capacious halls of the NEC, there's eSports, tournaments, exhibition halls and panel talks. And cosplay, naturally.

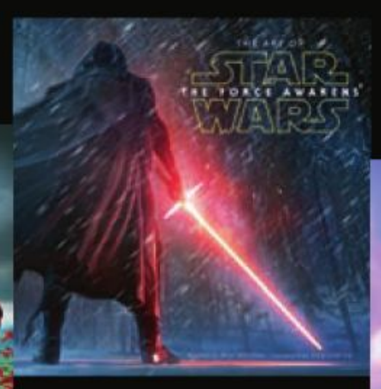


12

ALICE IN WONDER-LAND: LIVE

Royal Albert Hall, London

This live orchestra screening of *Alice In Wonderland* (Tim Burton edition) has enough visual thrills to keep the kids on side, with smart dress Albert Hall pomp for the grown-ups.



18

THE ART OF STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS

Presuming you pre-booked to see the new film on its launch day of the 17th, you won't get any spoilers from this book of sketches, storyboards, blueprints and interviews dropping on your doorstep the next morning.



21

THE PEANUTS MOVIE

The voice cast for this 3D computer animated film is all children, although Woodstock and Snoopy's sound effects are from the Charlie Brown archives. With members of the Schulz family doing the writing, this could be pretty good.

BOSE

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ONE TOUCH ACCESS
TO WIRELESS SOUND
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WIN 1 OF 5 SONY SMARTWATCHES WORTH £190 WITH NATIONWIDE

We have two things to talk about: the chance to win a free smartwatch, and careers in the financial services industry. No offence, Nationwide, but we'll tackle the watch first.

This is the Sony SmartWatch 3, described by *Stuff* as "the best fitness smartwatch around", not least because its inbuilt GPS means you can use it to track runs without having to take your phone with you. And thanks to Nationwide, we have five of them to give away.

Which brings us neatly to the UK's biggest building society. Nationwide has a range of graduate programmes ideal for anyone looking for something a little different within the financial services sector. Graduates are offered a permanent contract with roles and responsibilities from day one, as well as award-winning training and development.

For more information and to apply, head over to **nationwide-jobs.co.uk/et**

HOW TO ENTER

For your chance to bag a serious upgrade for your wrist, just go to **stuff.tv/win** and answer this question:

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING *CAN'T* YOU DO WITH A SONY SMARTWATCH 3?

A ... Check on your texts and calendar reminders

B ... Get up-to-the-minute weather reports

C ... Fry an egg

Nationwide
On your side

HURRY! COMPETITION CLOSES 13 JANUARY 2016

Terms & conditions 1 Open to UK residents aged 18 or over. **2** Entries close 11.59pm, 13 January 2016. **3** Prizes are as stated. **4** Prizes are non-transferable. **5** Only one entry per person. For full Haymarket terms & conditions see www.stuff.tv/legal Promoter: Haymarket Media Group, Teddington, Middx TW11 9BE



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#BEAHERO



The Philips Izzy is available from

Amazon, Maplin, Selfridges, Very.co.uk, and Harvey Norman

SPEAKER SYNCING MADE SIMPLE

One tap of a button, 30 million songs: the new Philips Izzy system makes multi-room music streaming incredibly easy

There are around 30 million reasons to invest in a high-quality wireless multi-room speaker system – that's how many tunes are on the leading music streaming services. Imagine being able to play all that music throughout your house, whenever you want.

Now, working through 30 million songs is going to take ages (even if you skip a few of the rubbish ones), so you don't want to waste precious listening time tediously setting up a complicated multi-room system. And with the new Philips Izzy, you don't have to.

The Philips Izzy is all about simplicity. It's simple to set up, simple to use and simple to expand – and it's also competitively priced. But it has the same power and functions as more expensive systems.

The Izzy range differs from most multi-room systems because it connects using Bluetooth, rather than your Wi-Fi network. That means no messing around with special routers or fiddling with network settings.

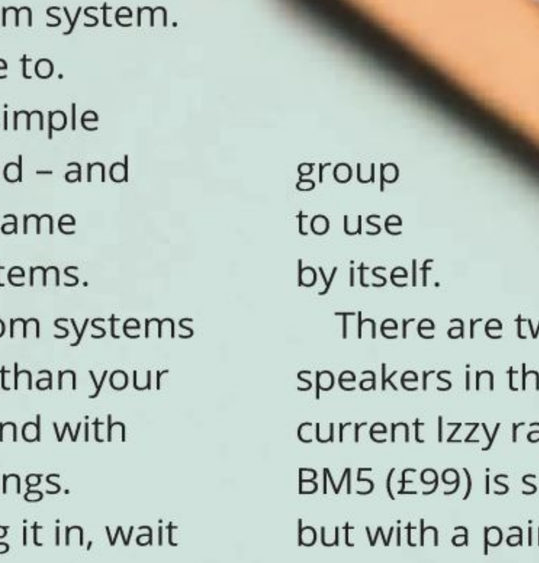
To make an Izzy speaker work, simply plug it in, wait for the Bluetooth light to flash and find the speaker in the Bluetooth menu of your phone, tablet or computer. And off you go. There's no need for a special app: Izzy works with any music player or audio app of your choice.

Expanding the Izzy into a multi-room system is just as easy. Plug in a second unit, push the group button, and enjoy as your music plays out of both speakers. You can add up to five speakers to one group, and it's easy to remove a speaker from a group to use by itself.

There are two speakers in the current Izzy range. The BM5 (£99) is small and stylish, but with a pair of 2.5-inch drivers it packs plenty of music-playing punch.

The larger BM50 adds FM radio, a USB port and a CD player – and you can stream music from those sources throughout your house.

The Philips Izzy takes the hassle out of owning a wireless home audio system: press one button, and off you go. Now all that you have to do is decide which of those 30 million songs to play. Hmmm, that might not be quite so easy...



PUSH THE BUTTON

1. Plug in an Izzy speaker, and wait for the Bluetooth light to flash
2. Select the speaker from the Bluetooth settings of your device
3. Plug in a second Izzy speaker and press the Group button to pair up

HOW IZZY WORKS

4. Pick a tune from the app of your choice – and press play



So Pure. So Stylish.
Solo.

Arcam's world-class reputation for state-of-the-art home cinema and high performance Hi-Fi systems has now been applied to a soundbar.

The new Solo bar plus and sub have been designed to make Arcam's legendary sound quality accessible to a wider audience, setting a new standard for music and movie reproduction from a soundbar.

ARCAM solo bar PLUS

For more information on these landmark products or to find your nearest stockist visit **www.arcam.co.uk**

ARCAM
Bringing music and movies to life

Stuff GADGET AWARDS 2015

25 AWARD WINNERS

[**Photography** Matt Beedle]

Our team has spent a whole year testing every gadget you can buy. And the 2015 winners are...

188 GADGETS SHORT-LISTED

13,000 VOTES CAST



SAMSUNG GALAXY S6 EDGE

You might think our smartphone of the year would just be whatever has climbed to the summit of our Top Ten most recently, but when it comes to choosing the winner of a *Stuff* Award there's much more to consider. Sure, the regular S6 (let's call it the S6 Flat) offers better value for money, but this is about being the best of the best no matter the cost – and the S6 Edge pushes boundaries (or at least curves them) as well as being technologically superior to anything the competition can throw at it. The S6 Edge is *Stuff* incarnate.

from £480 / samsung.com/uk

SHORTLISTED

● Motorola Moto G ● Google Nexus 6P
● Samsung Galaxy S6 ● OnePlus 2
● LG G4 ● Apple iPhone 6s
● Vodafone Smart Prime 6

More is more

This is the S6 Edge, but if you crave a little more screen to bend there's also the Edge+, which adds half an inch of extra AMOLED, a bigger battery and an extra gig of RAM.

SMARTPHONE OF THE YEAR



HEADPHONES OF THE YEAR

AKG Y50BT

Something funny happens when you take the wire off your headphones: they stop working. Well, unless they've got Bluetooth, but even then they rarely sound as good as their tethered counterparts. That's what makes AKG's wireless Y50BTs worthy of anybody's ears. Compared to their wired equivalent the difference is impossible to spot, and they won't give you bonce fatigue. If they do run out of juice, you can plug in a cable and go old-skool – and with buttons on the earcup you can control your tunes without getting out your phone.

£150 / uk.akg.com

SHORTLISTED

- SoundMagic E10S
- AKG N60 NC
- Sennheiser Momentum M2 IEi
- Bowers & Wilkins P5 Wireless
- Sennheiser Momentum 2.0

STREAMING SERVICE OF THE YEAR

SPOTIFY

With Apple Music and Tidal launching attacks on its throne it's been an uncertain year for Spotify, but the original streaming service looks stronger than ever. Spotify Running automatically matches music to your pace, and Discover Weekly generates a bespoke playlist that helps you find new bands you'll actually like. It takes more than just making music available to win at this game, and the Swedes continue to lead the way.

from £free / spotify.com

SHORTLISTED

- Apple Music
- Netflix
- PS Now
- Tidal
- Amazon Prime Instant Video



TABLET OF THE YEAR

iPAD MINI 4

When you're already number one there's often little incentive to try any harder, and with Apple's iPad sitting pretty atop our Tablets Top Ten since what seems like Roman times, the Cupertino crew could quite easily sit back and count its cash. But in the absence of a new Air, this year's iPad Mini (Apple's fourth pared-down tab) with its improved screen, increased battery life and those iOS tweaks is this year's finest portable rectangle that won't fit in your pocket. Hey, Apple, why not stop trying so hard and give the others a chance for once, eh?

from £320 / apple.com

SHORTLISTED

- Samsung Galaxy Tab S2 9.7
- Sony Xperia Z4 Tablet
- Amazon Fire
- Microsoft Surface 3

READER VOTED
MOBILE GAME
OF THE YEAR

CROSSY ROAD

Crossy Road's endless riff features blocky creatures aiming to make it as far as possible before being flattened, drowned, or splattered across the front of the 09:36 to Painful Parkway. Often, playing with a character dramatically shakes things up, not least when Pac-Man and his spectral chums invade. We're still playing a year later so, good choice, readers!

£free / Android, iOS, Windows Phone

SHORTLISTED

- Lara Croft GO
- Her Story
- Horizon Chase
- Fotonica
- You Must Build A Boat
- Lifeline
- Game Of Thrones: A Telltale Game
- Geometry Wars 3: Dimensions
- PewDiePie: Legend Of The Brofist

EZ-D2
Connecting your phone to your BB-8 is easier than beating an Ewok at basketball. Just download the app, turn on your Bluetooth, hold the phone or tablet near the BB-8 and you're ready to roll.

TECH TOY OF THE YEAR

SPHERO BB-8

The idea of Star Wars toys coming to life is the stuff of recurring childhood dreams. Han would give you a lift to school in the Millennium Falcon. Chewie would roar in the face of those bullies. Luke would teach you how to tie your shoelaces using the Force. And you know what? Those dreams never really go away. Praise the ghost of Obi-Wan, then, for Sphero's BB-8. It's a phone-controlled rolling droid from *The Force Awakens*, complete with magnetically secured head and AR 'hologram' message mode. You'd have to be on the Dark Side not to want one.
US$150 / sphero.com

SHORTLISTED
● Formlabs Form 1+ ● Hackaball ● Anki Overdrive ● Infento ● Meccano Tech Meccanoid G15 Personal Robot

Phat-nav
A whopping 12.3in touchscreen up front is the portal to the Sensus Connect system. You can pinch, swipe, prod or use voice commands to navigate its menus.

CAR OF THE YEAR

VOLVO XC90 T8

Big, comfortable and flash they might be, but SUVs don't tend to get us very excited. Volvo hasn't got a reputation for thrills either (except when it raced estates in the British Touring Car Championship). In short, we're as surprised as you are. But the XC90 T8 has a hybrid engine that's super-fast and efficient, and enough gadgets to mean it's a better driver than you are.
from £45,750 / volvocars.com

SHORTLISTED
● Audi RS3 ● VW Golf R ● Toyota Mirai ● Tesla Model S P85D ● Ariel Nomad ● Range Rover Sport SVR



Flame wars
Add the gamepad (£40) and the Fire TV will let you play any Android game that's in Amazon's store. It won't tempt you away from *Fallout 4*, but for a bedroom TV it's a nice add-on.

TV GADGET OF THE YEAR

AMAZON FIRE TV 4K

There's something about a plain black box. What's going on in there? Amazon's black box won't give you eternal life or tell you how to make perfect fishcakes; it's full of telly. But not just any old telly... 4K telly. Hooked up to a suitably pixel-happy screen it'll stream Ultra HD films and TV shows from Amazon Prime Video and Netflix, with spot-on voice search to help you find stuff. If your internet connection's up to it, the Fire TV turns binge-watching into a genuinely luxurious experience.
£80 / amazon.co.uk

SHORTLISTED
● Google Chromecast ● Dali Kubik One ● Geneva Model Cinema ● Roku 2 ● Denon AVR-X2200W



TELEVISION OF THE YEAR

LG 55EG960V

Bacon and eggs. Buzz and Woody. Neither of those partnerships can hold a candle to OLED and 4K. One the king of contrast and colour, the other the don of detail: together they create a picture so lush that real life looks dull. You've got the smart TV experience of LG's webOS too, complete with the 4K catalogues of Netflix and Amazon. Yes, it's mighty expensive, but this beast of a TV is in a class of its own.
£2250 / lg.com

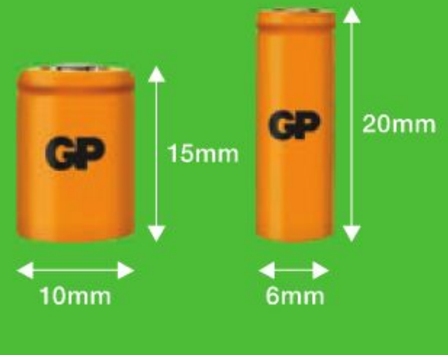
SHORTLISTED
● Panasonic TX-40CS520 ● Samsung UE48JU7000 ● Samsung UE55JS8500 ● Sony KD75X9405C



small cells

big power





15%* more powerful for innovative gadgets

GP custom-made energy solution

www.gpbatteries.com * based on size and volume

recharge with GP

Panasonic

MASTERING THE MAGIC OF LIGHT



BRINGING THE DIRECTOR'S VISION TO LIFE

We believe that light is magic. And our passion is mastering its power to create an award-winning 4K range with the widest, most vivid colour spectrum imaginable. Our CX802 series televisions with 4K Pro Studio Master technology can recreate the most nuanced shades from light to dark, delivering the incredible detail the film-maker imagined.

panasonic.co.uk/4KPro

FreeviewPlay

4K source required for best picture.
Freeview service subject to coverage. Aerial upgrade required. Min 2Mbps broadband required. 7-day catch up for selected channels.

4K PRO
STUDIO MASTER UHD

Monster hunter
The story can be galloped through in 30 hours or so, or if you're easily distracted you can lose 200 hours in side quests. They're all such high quality you'll get sucked in.



THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT

Sometimes it's nice to find out that you, dear readers, are on the same page as us. So to know that your favourite game of 2015 is the same one that's topped the Stuff.tv chart since its release makes us feel all fizzy in our fuzzy place. *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*'s quest is engaging, the characters memorable and fleshed out; and the world itself is utterly stunning but constantly intriguing. The time we've spent exploring it makes our trips to *Destiny*'s universe look positively fleeting, but as far as we're all concerned... time well spent.
PS4, Xbox One, PC

SHORTLISTED
● FIFA 16 ● Batman: Arkham Knight ● Bloodborne ● Until Dawn ● Destiny: The Taken King ● Super Mario Maker ● Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain ● Everybody's Gone To The Rapture ● Project CARS

READER VOTED
GAME OF THE YEAR

INDIE GAME
OF THE YEAR

EVERYBODY'S GONE TO THE RAPTURE

With its cosy pub, church, quaint cottages and local shop, *Everybody's Gone To The Rapture*'s Yaughton is the most compellingly mundane post-apocalyptic world ever made: a cross between the deserted streets at the start of *28 Days Later* and *The Archers*. But what really sets it apart is the story that unfolds there. Discovering how the village came to be deserted is a memorable gaming experience.
PS4

SHORTLISTED
● Kerbal Space Program ● Soma ● Volume ● You Must Build A Boat ● Her Story



Instafans
The X-T10's film simulation modes are a joy to use. Want bright, rich colours? Try Velvia. Subdued, cyberpunky tones? Classic Chrome is your friend. You'll be the envy of all Instagram.

SYSTEM CAMERA OF THE YEAR

FUJIFILM X-T10

Ask a proper photographer what they actually look for in a picture and they won't say anything about megapixels or autofocus points. There are things that are not so easily measured: colour, sharpness, composition. That's why we love the X-T10: it just takes better pictures. It's sharp as a new tack and designed with manual dials in all the right places for quick, intuitive shooting. Thanks to an X-Trans sensor, it creates film-like pictures with rich, gorgeous colour. It costs less than some compacts but, pound for pound, this is the best camera we've ever used.
£500 (body only) / fujifilm.com

SHORTLISTED
● Canon EOS 750D ● Canon EOS 5DS ● Olympus OMD-EM5 II ● Sony A7 II ● Nikon D7200 ● Nikon D5500 ● Panasonic Lumix DMC-GF7

COMPACT CAMERA OF THE YEAR

SONY RX10 II

'Bridge' cameras, with their fixed, long-zoom lenses, aren't cool. They're for twitchers who want tight focus on a bullfinch (no, that's not a euphemism) or National Trusters after a full-frame gargoyle (again, not slang for anything). So why are we so crazy for what looks like a pricey bridge camera? For stills, the RX10 II simply leaves everything else standing, and it shoots video at 1000 frames a second. And we all know what that means.
£1290 / sony.co.uk

SHORTLISTED
● Panasonic LX100 ● Panasonic Lumix FZ1000 ● Sony RX100 IV ● Canon PowerShot G3 X ● Leica Q (Typ 116)

SONOS PLAY:5

For a loudspeaker, it's ironic how quietly brilliant the Sonos Play:5 is. We're not saying it won't go to 11 – we've never heard such a spacious sound from a single box – but it just goes about its business, either as a lone ranger or as part of a multiroom system. You can stand it up vertically but design-wise it's hardly changed – and that's no bad thing. Being able to add speakers into an existing setup is part of the Sonos charm and this is one to buy without a second thought.

£430 / sonos.com

SHORTLISTED

● Geneva AeroSphere Large ● KEF Muo ● Cambridge Audio CXN ● UE Roll ● Ruark R2 Mk3 ● B&W Zeppelin ● Audio Pro Addon T3

Material grille

The grille on the Play:5 is now plastic instead of metal. That seems a shame but it means a better Wi-Fi connection, so you can move it around the house without losing signal.



COMPUTER OF THE YEAR

APPLE MACBOOK

A laptop has to be pretty darn fancy to draw a *phwoooar* from the *Stuff* team, but that's exactly the reaction we had to Apple's latest technoblade. It's not the most sensible laptop you can buy, with its single USB-C port, or the most powerful, with its Core M chip. Nor, in fact, is it the best. But let's be honest: it's the one you want.

from £1050 / apple.com/uk

SHORTLISTED

● Apple MacBook Pro 13in ● Asus ZenBook UX305 ● Microsoft Surface 3 ● Google Chromebook Pixel ● Asus ROG G751 ● Toshiba Chromebook 2



AUDIO GADGET OF THE YEAR

AKG
by HARMAN

AKG | N60NC

THE PEACE AND QUIET YOUR MUSIC DESERVES

EISA AWARD Best Product 2015-2016
MOBILE HEADPHONES
AKG N60NC

WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2015
On-ear headphones
Best noise-cancelling headphones under £250
AKG N60 NC

Hear no evil. The AKG N60NC headphones feature 30 hours of battery life and deliver Grammy award-winning AKG superior sound while also utilizing best in class active noise cancelling to minimize the disruptive sounds encountered when travelling. Accented with premium materials, this unparalleled listening experience comes magnificently packaged in elegantly crafted lightweight headphones that provide both viewing and listening pleasure.

Find out more at akg.com

Sky eye
A three-axis gimbal keeps your footage shake-free (unless you crash into a tree) and feeds a live HD stream back to the controller so you can see exactly what you're shooting.

ACTION CAMERA OF THE YEAR

DJI PHANTOM 3 STANDARD

We've been conditioned into thinking action cams are little boxes that sporty folk stick on their helmets. This entry-level drone changes all that. For not much more than a GoPro, you can buy a flying camera that takes superb aerial videos of your risky escapades, before automatically whizzing back to its landing spot. Pro filmmakers will lust after this DJI's more expensive, 4K-capable siblings. But the Phantom 3 Standard will go down as the game-changer that let us mortals star in our very own Bond opening sequences.

£650 / flyinggadgets.com

SHORTLISTED
- GoPro Hero4 Session
- Parrot BeBop
- Sony FDR-X1000V
- TomTom Bandit
- GoPro Hero4 Black Edition

APP OF THE YEAR
GOOGLE PHOTOS

Sure, it offers free, unlimited backup for videos up to 1080p and pictures under 16MP (anything more will eat into a 15GB allocation), and that on its own would almost be enough... but it's the AI assistance Google Photos uses to automatically sort your pictures by subject that tips it over into our utterly essential compartment. We've seen the future – it's got robo-helpers.

£free / photos.google.com

SHORTLISTED
- Earth Primer
- Laundrapp
- Korg Gadget
- Yousician Guitar
- JustWatch
- Dice
- Apple News
- Giphy Cam
- Periscope

Wrist management
Apple recently updated WatchOS so that apps can now run natively on the Watch, rather than on your phone – which speeds things up dramatically.

SMARTWATCH OF THE YEAR



APPLE WATCH

Android fans like to grumble that Apple isn't really an innovator, despite the mountain of evidence to the contrary. Fair enough, smartwatches existed before the Watch – but in typical Apple fashion, it elevated the form. It's a dashing little device, particularly with its higher-end band and material options, but it also had a head start on Android Wear in the apps department, with developers lining up to put their ideas on Apple's shiny little wristputer. WatchOS 2 has taken things a step up, too. You don't need a smartwatch, but the Apple Watch makes it hard not to want one.
from £300 / apple.com

SHORTLISTED
- LG G Watch Urbane
- Moto 360
- Huawei Watch
- Pebble Time Steel

SMARTHOME GADGET OF THE YEAR

NEST

It's been a good year for the smarthome. The Netatmo Welcome smartcam met us at the door, Ikea lamps charged our phones wirelessly, and the Amazon Echo gave us a glimpse of a voice-controlled, automated future. But, ironically, smart heating is still the coolest thing in the robo-home. It saves you money, saves the planet and makes your place more comfortable, and nobody does it with as much style or intelligence as Nest.
£200 / nest.com

SHORTLISTED
- Philips Hue
- Smarter Coffee
- Ikea smart charging furniture
- Netatmo Welcome
- Samsung SmartThings
- Amazon Echo



oppo

EUROPEAN HI-FI HEADPHONE OF THE YEAR 2014-2015

hi-finews OUTSTANDING PRODUCT

tech radar 2015 EDITOR'S CHOICE ★★★★★

Planar Magnetic Headphones

avforums RECOMMENDED AWARD

Award-winning personal audio & home theatre innovation

HOME CINEMA Choice Reference Status

Universal Blu-ray Players

hi-finews OUTSTANDING PRODUCT

EISA AWARD Best Product 2015-2016 USB DAC/HEADPHONE AMPLIFIER OPPO HA-2

Headphone Amplifiers

oppodigital.co.uk



MOOV NOW

Imagine that, last year, your target was to design a fitness gadget. You'd been realistic. Instead of a £700 smartwatch made of Venusian Beryllium, you'd said: "In 12 months' time, I want my fitness gadget hero to be a lightweight, unobtrusive, sub-£100 device with at least six months of battery life. It should be able to provide coaching and metrics for several fitness disciplines, including swimming, so it needs to be waterproof." Now, after surprisingly little effort, the Moov Now is the result of your aspiration. Target achieved.

£60 / moov.cc

SHORTLISTED

● Jabra Pulse ● Wahoo Kickr Snap ● Garmin Fenix 3 ● Jawbone UP3 ● Fitbit Charge HR ● Zepp Golf ● Withings Activité Pop

HEALTH & FITNESS GADGET OF THE YEAR

READER VOTED
DESIGN
OF THE YEAR

TESLA MODEL X

SUVs are often fairly dull function-mobiles, more concerned with seats and storage space than anything else, but Tesla has brought some much-needed flair with its seven-seater 4WD family wagon – with a 250-mile range, 155mph top speed, acceleration to 60mph in 3.2 seconds and the largest panoramic windscreen in production (#accidentalpartridge). But let's be honest, you just like the gullwing doors, don't you?

£tba / teslamotors.com

SHORTLISTED

● Samsung Gear S2 ● Apple MacBook ● Lytro Illum ● Devialet Phantom ● Microsoft Surface Book ● Steam Controller ● Nanoleaf Bloom

INNOVATION OF THE YEAR

Zombies, run!
Stuff's Tom Parsons recently played zombie game *Arizona Sunshine* on a Vive and he couldn't sleep without his teddy for three weeks. But then again, he is a great big wimp.



HTC VIVE

Even for jaded gadget-fondlers like us, there is still the occasional moment when we realise we're looking at something that could genuinely change the future. The Vive virtual reality headset developed by Valve (the *Half-Life* people) and HTC (the phone people) is the most incredible piece of tech we've seen this year. The little pits on the surface are sensors that place you inside the virtual space, giving you the feeling that your actual body is inside a game. It's a bit unnerving but also amazing. Try it the first chance you get.
£tba / htcvr.com

SHORTLISTED
● Apple 3D Touch ● Amazon Echo ● Spotify Discover Weekly ● BT Sport 4K ● Tesla Powerwall ● Google Photo ● ResearchKit ● Microsoft HoloLens

READER VOTED KICKSTARTER OF THE YEAR

EXPLODING KITTENS



This year's crowdfunding picks included some gems, but Exploding Kittens is the only one to satisfy a combined craving for card games, kittens, explosions, laser beams and goats. On that basis, it's no surprise you picked it as the winner. And it's a deserved one. It's basically Uno for the Buzzfeed generation: essential for anyone who gets giddy at the thought of a pig-a-corn.
£16 / explodingkittens.com

SHORTLISTED
● Artiphon Instrument 1 ● Floating Record Vertical Turntable ● Makerarm ● Buddy ● KnitYak ● Bloxels ● CHIP



ONEPLUS 2

You're a contrary lot, aren't you? You could've picked something that anyone can walk into a shop and buy, such as the Apple Watch or the S6 Edge, but for the second year running you've gone for the invite-only phone. But who can blame you? When the OnePlus 2 manages to outperform phones that'll set you back twice as much cash, who wouldn't consider joining the search for a golden ticket? It looks great, it runs like a cheetah on a treadmill and its neatly customisable OxygenOS gives Google's stock Android a run for its money. So, has anyone got a spare invite?

£290 / oneplus.net

SHORTLISTED

● Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge ● Apple Watch ● Apple MacBook ● Fujifilm X-T10 ● DJI Phantom 3 Standard ● GoPro Hero4 Session ● LG 4K OLED TV ● Moov Now ● Amazon Fire TV 4K

Twice as nice

Two by name, two by nature, the OnePlus has a pair of SIM card slots, plus a USB-C socket, so even the most hardcore mobile nerd will have their connectivity needs satisfied.

READERS' GADGET OF THE YEAR

SAMSUNG GALAXY S6 EDGE

So here we are. The big one. In the end there could only be one winner of 2015's Gadget of the Year award: Samsung's Galaxy S6 Edge. It's the smartphone that's deviated from the standard black rectangle template we've been following since the launch of the original iPhone way back in 2007 – in a minor way, maybe, but one that indicates where phone design could go. Oh, and did we mention that it's also the best phone you can buy? Its flatter brother might represent better value for money, but if you want a gadget to show that you surf the cutting edge and only want the best, there's really no other option.
£550 / samsung.com

SHORTLISTED
● OnePlus 2 ● Apple Watch ● Apple MacBook ● Fujifilm X-T10 ● DJI Phantom 3 Standard ● GoPro Hero4 Session ● LG 4K OLED TV ● Moov Now ● Amazon Fire TV 4K

Stuff GADGET AWARDS WINNER 2015

Pixel wars
We don't want to start a fight (do we?), but the S6 Edge's 5.1in display crams in a whopping 577 pixels per inch of screen. That's almost 80% more than the Retina display in the iPhone 6S.

STUFF GADGET OF THE YEAR



ACCESS ALL AREAS

Yamaha's MusicCast system lets you listen to all your music. Everywhere. From any source. Sounds good...

The rules of Playlist Roulette are simple: gather a few chums and then each put your entire music collection on shuffle. The one who lasts the highest number of tracks before being booed into a ball of embarrassment is declared the victor.

It's brutal, especially when that long-forgotten I-only-put-it-on-there-for-a-joke *Agadoo* megamix bellows out across the living room.

Or even the entire house, if you have a Yamaha MusicCast wireless multiroom rig.

It's versatile enough for you to slink away in exile and put on some Jive Bunny in another room, too – even if it isn't your house. All MusicCast products come with Bluetooth onboard, so you can stream to any compatible Bluetooth product. Or from your smartphone or tablet. It's seamless.

There are 23 compatible products currently in the range – some of which you can see below – from soundbars, micro-systems and stereo amps to CD players, desktop speakers and AV receivers – including the high-end Aventage range for beaming movie and TV sound.

Or you can connect your own sources – any sources, even turntables – and then send them across your MusicCast network to Yamaha products in other rooms. Every MusicCast product can share its inputs with anything else it connects to. And they can all handle hi-res 24-bit/192kHz material.

And it's all controlled from one app. The free MusicCast Controller app for iOS and Android lets you select rooms, sources and songs; play separate tunes in different rooms, or bring everyone to the party with one stream.

Just make sure you play some decent music, eh?

Meet the Yamaha MusicCast family

AV RECEIVERS



CXA5100



RN602



RXA50 Series



RXS601 & RXS601D

MusicCast
Wireless Music System

YAMAHA



HI-RES EVERYWHERE

All MusicCast products support 24-bit/192kHz WAV, FLAC and AIFF files, and you can stream everything from MP3, WMA and AAC to Apple Lossless and DSD besides on products across the range.

BLUETOOTH ON BOARD

Send music directly to any Bluetooth speaker from the internet, USB sticks, NAS drives, CD players, turntables and more. If you can connect it to a MusicCast input, you can stream it everywhere via Bluetooth.

SMARTPHONE CONTROL

The free MusicCast Controller app for iOS and Android puts a world's worth of music in your hand. Access streaming services and internet radio, plus NAS-based files and more – and play it all in any room. You can even customise it with pictures of your house for easy reference.

"Connect any source and share it over your network"

SPEAKERS & SOUNDBARS



NXN500



DUO Pack



DUETT Pack



ISX-80



TRIO Pack



SRT1500



WX030



YSP1600



YSP5600



RXAS710D



RXV79 series

MICRO SYSTEMS



MCRN670



MCRN870

App:roved

FOR NERVOUS NOODLERS

Pause

It'd be easy to pour scorn on Pause. This noodly app has you slowly dragging your finger about your iPhone's screen, tracking a pulsating blob, while listening to a tinkly ambient soundtrack. It's like someone's squashed a lava lamp into your device. And yet, in enforcing a calming focus, Pause subverts the typical ten-minute break where you add to your stress by checking ALL OF THE THINGS. Billed as drawing on Tai Chi, it smacks of placebo — but works.

Stuff says ★★★★☆
£1.49 / iPhone

FOR SPEED FREAKS

HoPiKo

HoPiKo could bring on a nervous breakdown, so relentlessly demanding is this speedrun platformer. You swipe and tap your way through tiny levels, trying to obliterate a virus and save the world of gaming. Your reactions are stretched to the limit, every move requiring precise aim, leaving little room for error. It's intense and frustrating, but any cruelty is outweighed by the constant rollercoaster ride and occasional dizzying thrill when you nail a perfect run.

Stuff says ★★★★☆
£2.99 / Android, iOS

FOR GOOD LISTENERS

Just Press Record

It's always fun to see a developer out-Apple Apple. With Just Press Record, you get the most elegant recording app for Mac, iPhone, iPad or Apple Watch. Prod 'record', make your recording, and if you're online it will sync to iCloud. Recordings can be renamed and shared — and that's it. The app's simplicity is a boon in situations where you don't want to think and just need to get on with recording something, especially if you're using the Watch.

Stuff says ★★★★★
£2.29 / iOS; £3.99 / OS X

FOR DIGITAL MAESTROS

Fugue Machine

Calling itself 'Bach in a box', Fugue Machine is inspired by layered classical composition techniques, but this is thoroughly modern iPad software. You tap out notes on a piano roll and decide how the four playheads should approach them in terms of speed, direction and pitch. Complex patterns emerge from simple sequences, and it's near-impossible to create something that isn't mesmerising. This app is for anyone, though pros will enjoy the integration with other iPad synths.

Stuff says ★★★★★
£7.99 / iPad



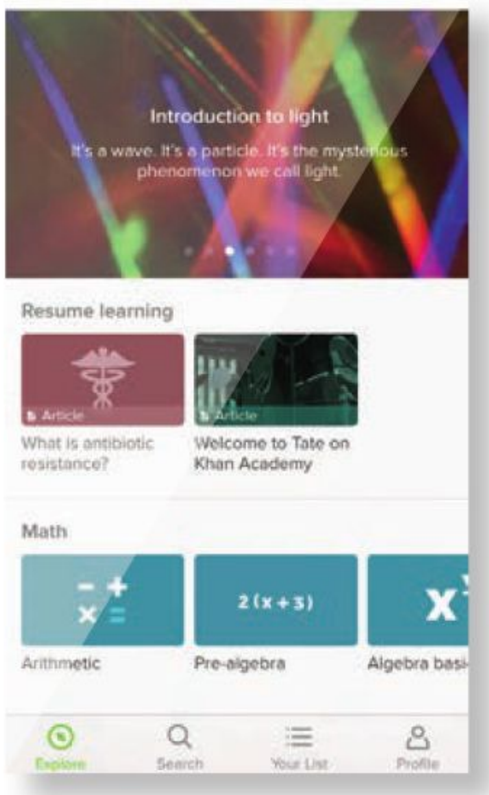


Mini meme



YOU MIGHT LEARN SOMETHING

They said winter was coming. We didn't listen. Now it's dark and cold, and we're stuck inside. Well, what better time to pick up some handy skills?



Khan Academy

With the laudable goal of providing "free, world-class education for anyone", Khan Academy is packed full of videos covering a range of subjects. Videos can be stored offline, and you can create a profile to track progress. The app's a touch US-orientated, but it's still a great tool if you fancy learning something new.

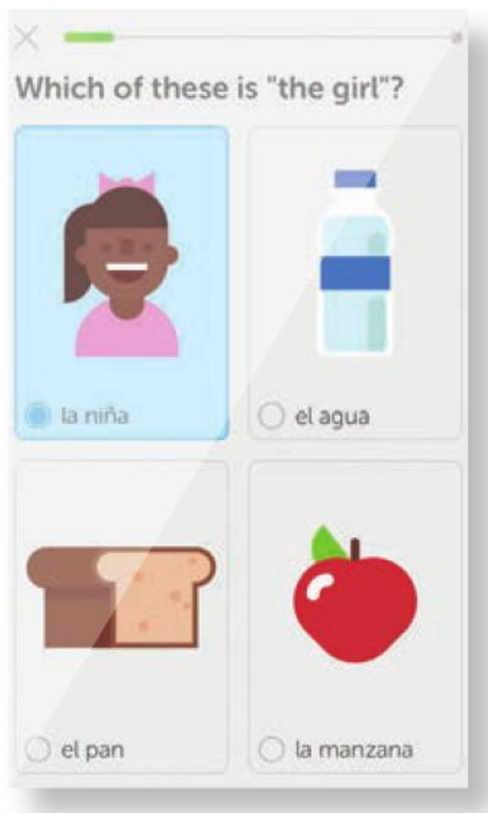
Stuff says ★★★★★
£free / Android, iOS



Yousician

Mastering an instrument can be hard, which is why many people instead 'play' tiny plastic guitars with a bunch of colourful buttons. Yousician flips *Guitar Hero* 90°, and along with your device's mic it gamifies learning chords and notes on a proper guitar. This is way more fun than trudging through rubbish paper songbooks.

Stuff says ★★★★☆
from £free / Android, iOS



Duolingo

If you've ever wanted to learn another language but never thought you could spare the time, download Duolingo. Its bite-sized exercises fit into gaps in your day that you'd otherwise waste on Facebook and Candy Crush, taking you from the absolute basics through to conversing like a native. Anyone seen the pen of my aunt?

Stuff says ★★★★★
£free / Android, iOS



Lrn

We're often told coding's the future, but to newcomers it can be like trying to read a book in Ancient Mesopotamian. Lrn provides a way in, taking you through the basics of JavaScript or Ruby, then gradually increasing in complexity as your confidence builds. You get four sets of exercises for free; grab the lot for £2.29.

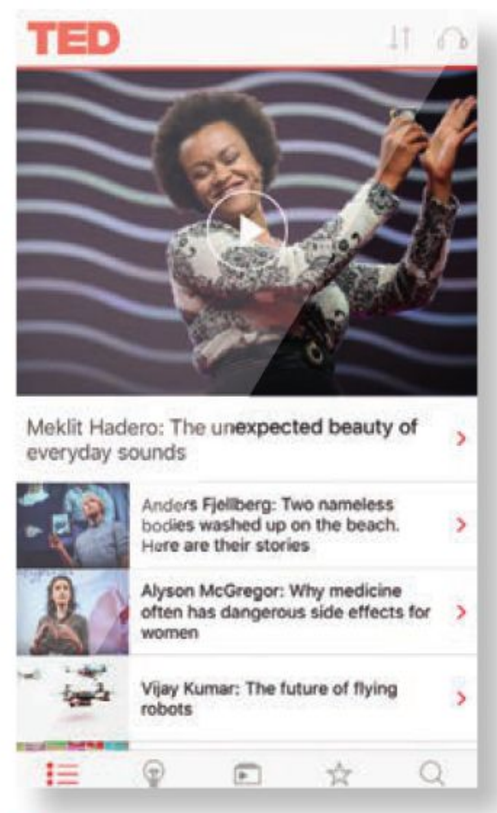
Stuff says ★★★★☆
from £free / iOS (Android soon)



Instructables

This app is what happens when teaching goes social. Explore and you can discover how to create wooden trebuchets, Twinkie mummies and all kinds of hacked-together tech weirdness. You can drill down into specific categories, upload your own 'instructable', or just marvel at the mix of creativity and madness.

Stuff says ★★★★☆
£free / Android, iOS, Win Phone



TED

The TED mission is all about spreading great ideas in the form of short, powerful talks. The app therefore resembles a brainfood YouTube, where you simply sit, watch and get inspired. Our favourite bit is the 'Surprise Me' tab, which serves videos based on a keyword — funny, ingenious, courageous, etc — and the time you have to spare.

Stuff says ★★★★★
£free / Android, iOS

Tiny, tempered

Apple's not letting go of the iPad Mini, despite a mixed reception for version 3... so is the Mini 4 the upgrade we've been waiting for?

from £320 / apple.com/uk

Is Apple interested in making small tablets any more? If last year's iPad Mini 3 is anything to go by, you'd be forgiven for suggesting not. Priced at £320 and featuring only one new trick, Touch ID, it caught fistfuls of flak from anyone with an opinion on these things (and several people who just like to shout on the internet). The Mini 3 didn't even trump its predecessor to make our Top 10 tablets list.

One year later, the Mini 3 is no more. Apple has deleted it from existence and replaced it with the shiny new iPad Mini 4, which lasts for for 14 hours of Netflix. Although it hasn't been handed the gift of 3D Touch, which is reserved for the new iPhones, it's faster than ever before, with a subtly improved screen and some tiny design refinements.

Is this the iPad Mini that the last one should have been? Or have Apple's Plus-sized iPhone endeavours rendered its small tablets obsolete? We donned our finest investigative deerstalker.



1 Don't mind the gap
The Mini 4's 7.9in screen looks the same as the Mini 2's, but Apple has reduced the air gap between the anti-reflective glass and its Retina LCD display. The result? Colours are bolder and icons appear to be floating just under your fingertips.

2 The same but different
Just like the iPhone 6s and 6s Plus, little seems to have changed about the iPad Mini on the surface, but in fact it's 1.4mm thinner and 32g lighter than the Mini 2, despite being ever so slightly wider and taller. Time to buy a new iPad case.

3 Power play
This mini tab runs on a second generation A8 chip, similar to the one that fires the new iPhones. While *Vainglory* stuttered a little on my iPad Air and caused me to lose a match, the Mini 4 handled it with ease, even in the most frazzling of fights.

24 hours with the Apple iPad Mini 4

- Good
- Meh
- Evil

- 5mins — Yep, it looks identical to the Mini 3, and I can't even get it in rose gold.
- 30mins — Lighter, though – which is great for when I inevitably drop it on my face.
- 40mins — The display is so crisp, it's the best I've ever seen on a mini tablet...
- 45mins — ...and the anti-reflective layer means I can still read things in direct sunlight.
- 1hr — Sadly it hasn't got the glorious 3D Touch like the new iPhones.
- 3hrs — Spot the difference! The speaker grille has been tweaked to a single row...
- 4hrs — ...so when gaming in landscape you'll end up blocking the speakers. Hmm.
- 5hrs — Hopefully the next Mini will have four corner speakers *à la* iPad Pro.
- 7hrs — There's a welcome boost to graphics during heavy-duty gameplay. Nice!
- 9hrs — Only my inability to steer straight is going to stop me in *Asphalt 8*.

[**Words** Elissa Loi **Photography** Matt Beedle]



Tech specs

Screen 7.9in, 1536x2048 pixels
Processor Apple A8 **RAM** 2GB
Camera 8MP rear, 1.2MP front
Battery 5124mAh
Dimensions 203x135x6.1mm
Weight 299g

Alternatives to keep tabs on

After a new tablet but need something bigger or cheaper than the Mini 4? Try one of these...

Samsung Galaxy Tab S2 9.7



If you're after a larger screen, this 9.7in Samsung has impressive battery life and top-notch performance. It's a superb tab for everyday use, but one that still has stamina and speed. Big-screen tablets still make sense: they're great for consuming content, but can still handle serious tasks as well.

Apple iPad Mini 2



If your budget doesn't quite stretch to the latest Mini 4, the Mini 2 is still available from around £220 and has the same screen resolution as its younger sibling at 326ppi. It's lighter and much more compact than the iPad Air models, and it has the same great apps and battery life, making it a killer everyday, everywhere tablet.



Do Apple's petite tablets still make sense? When it came to games and emails, I found myself putting the 6s Plus down and grabbing this instead. It's just the right size for a portable entertainment hub, lasting three days and doing justice to TV series and graphic novels alike. The Mini 4's a worthy upgrade, unless you want to wait for 3D Touch. *@elissaloi*

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★

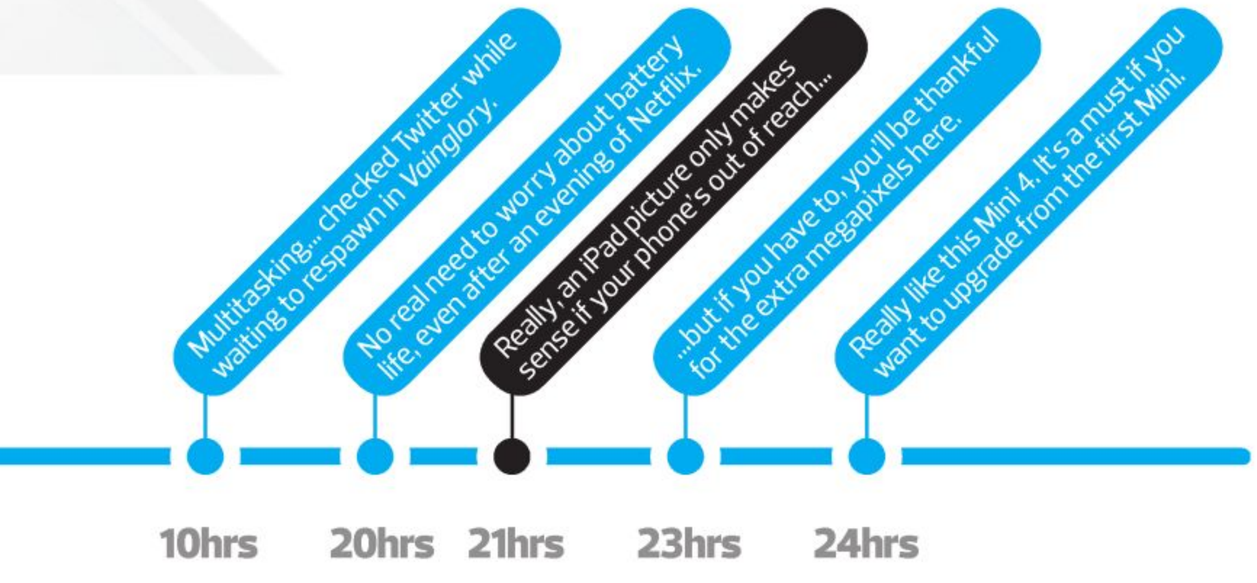
This is the tablet the Mini 3 should have been – and it's the best small tablet on the market

4 Fine as iOS 9

With all that power elevating the baby iPad from its schlobby former self, you'll want to get the most out of iOS 9's new multitasking tricks such as the split screen. It certainly proved helpful when we were watching YouTube and had to answer an urgent email.

5 If you must...

Say what you like about people who use their iPad to take photos. Seriously, say it. There's no insult too great for them. However, the Mini 4's rear-facing snapper now has 8MP, instead of the Mini 2's 5MP, while retaining the same f/2.4 aperture.



GIVE + GO



GIVE SOMEONE THE GIFT OF
FOOTBALL THIS CHRISTMAS

TUESDAY 29 MARCH, 8PM

ENGLAND v NETHERLANDS

BUY NOW AT THEFA.COM/TICKETS
WEMBLEY CONNECTED BY EE

VAUXHALL

TOGETHER FOR ENGLAND



CONTROL CENTRE: Notified

Officer 7: Not assigned

Officer 1 status: Taser drawn



UPDATE: High chance of major incident

Officer 5: Not assigned







Body Cam 2: Suspect identified

Officer 3: In pursuit



Officer 2 status: High stress

Known gang violence area



Officer 6: ETA 00:00:31

Officer 4: Not assigned

THE NEW BILL

Smart holsters, video glasses and predictive maps: we try out the next-gen police tech that could have criminals queuing up for a career change

Words: Craig Grannell



T

he best way to experience the future of policing tech is to go on the run. That's what I (temporarily) experienced on a visit to Motorola Solutions' secret lab, where tomorrow's crime-fighting tools are being developed for the world's police forces.

Sitting in a room with walls of screens and a mannequin dressed in what I'd soon learn was seriously cutting-edge police kit, I was an unkempt version of my usual self – unshaven, sporting glasses and with hair having grown to the point that my wife suggested I try out for a Beatles tribute band. Granted, it was a rubbish disguise. But I didn't realise how rubbish until my hosts cheerily noted that their facial recognition software had instantly clocked me. And all from a photo from my website of a markedly younger me, shorter of hair and shaven of face.

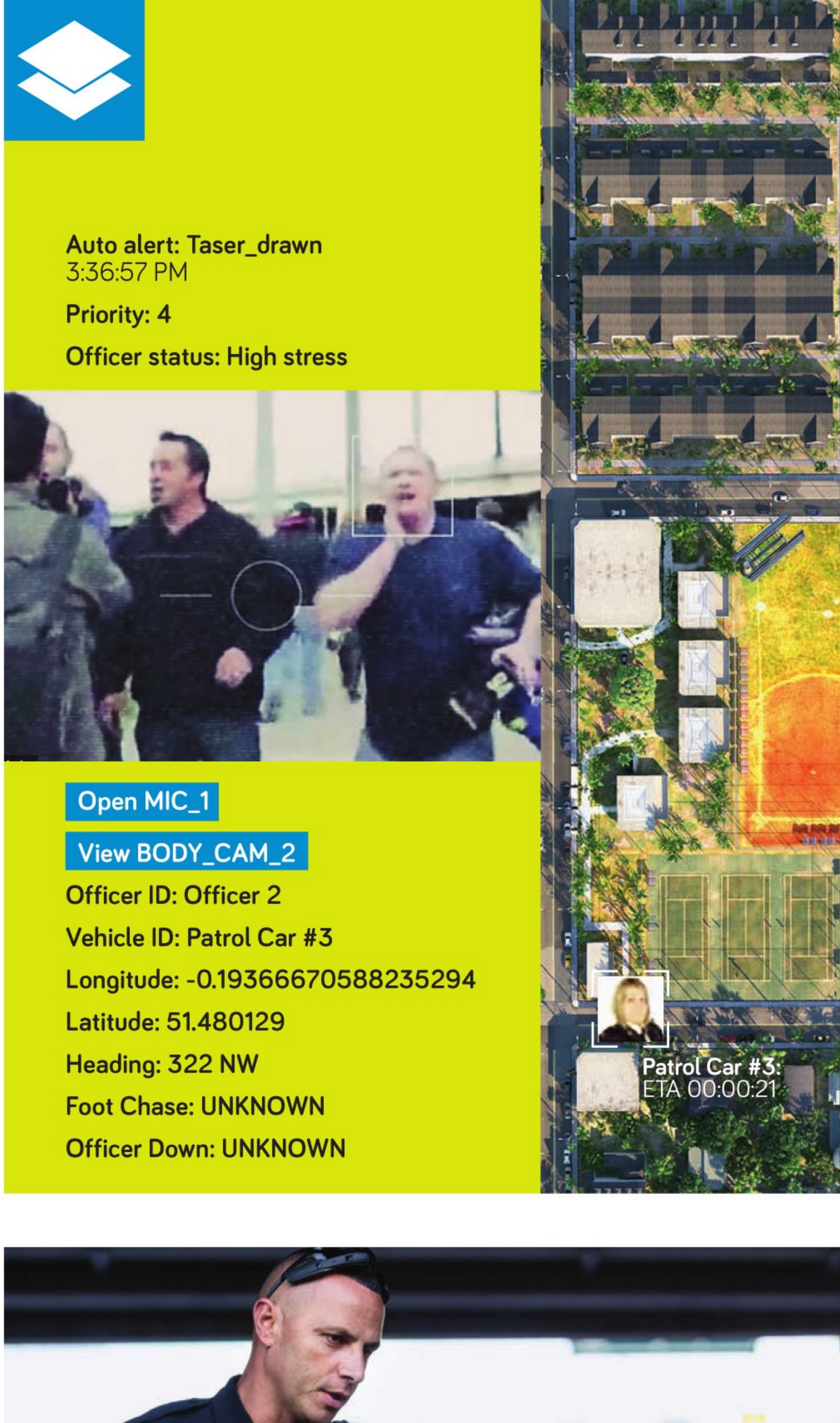
This was just the start of my journey into the police's sci-fi future. But whereas the *CSI*s of this world are infatuated with stupid gestural interfaces and implausible technological leaps ("We downloaded the hard drive by holding a USB stick up to the screen!"), Motorola's effort is about substance, about solving the modern-day policing problems of efficiency, intelligence gathering and data analysis.

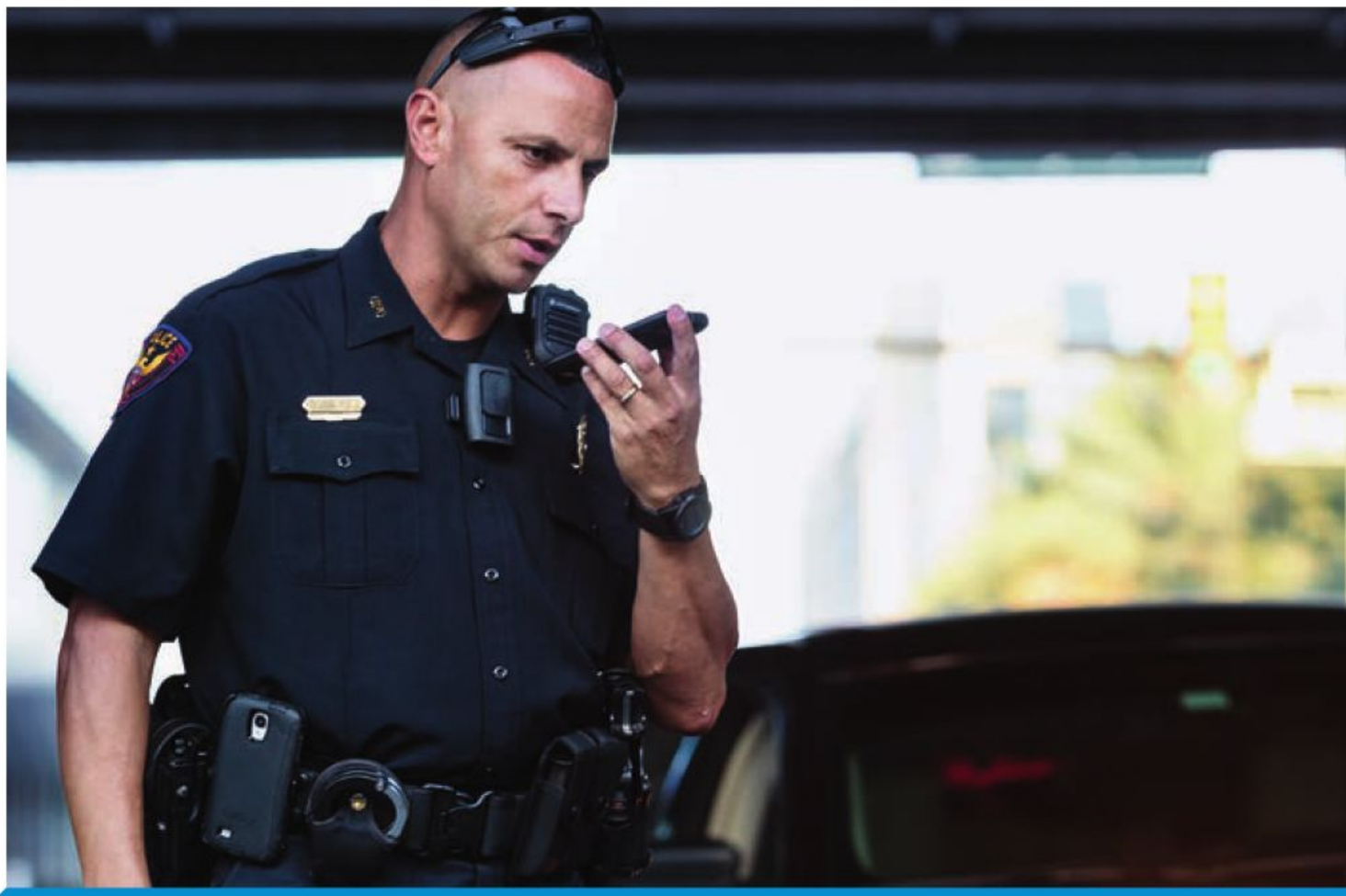
There was a time when British police went about their business armed with a stick, a walkie-talkie, their wits, and an unnecessarily tall hat. Now Motorola, the inventor of the walkie-talkie, is reinventing itself as the source of high-tech police gadgetry and support networks. In fact, networks within networks, because the connected cop is all about layers.

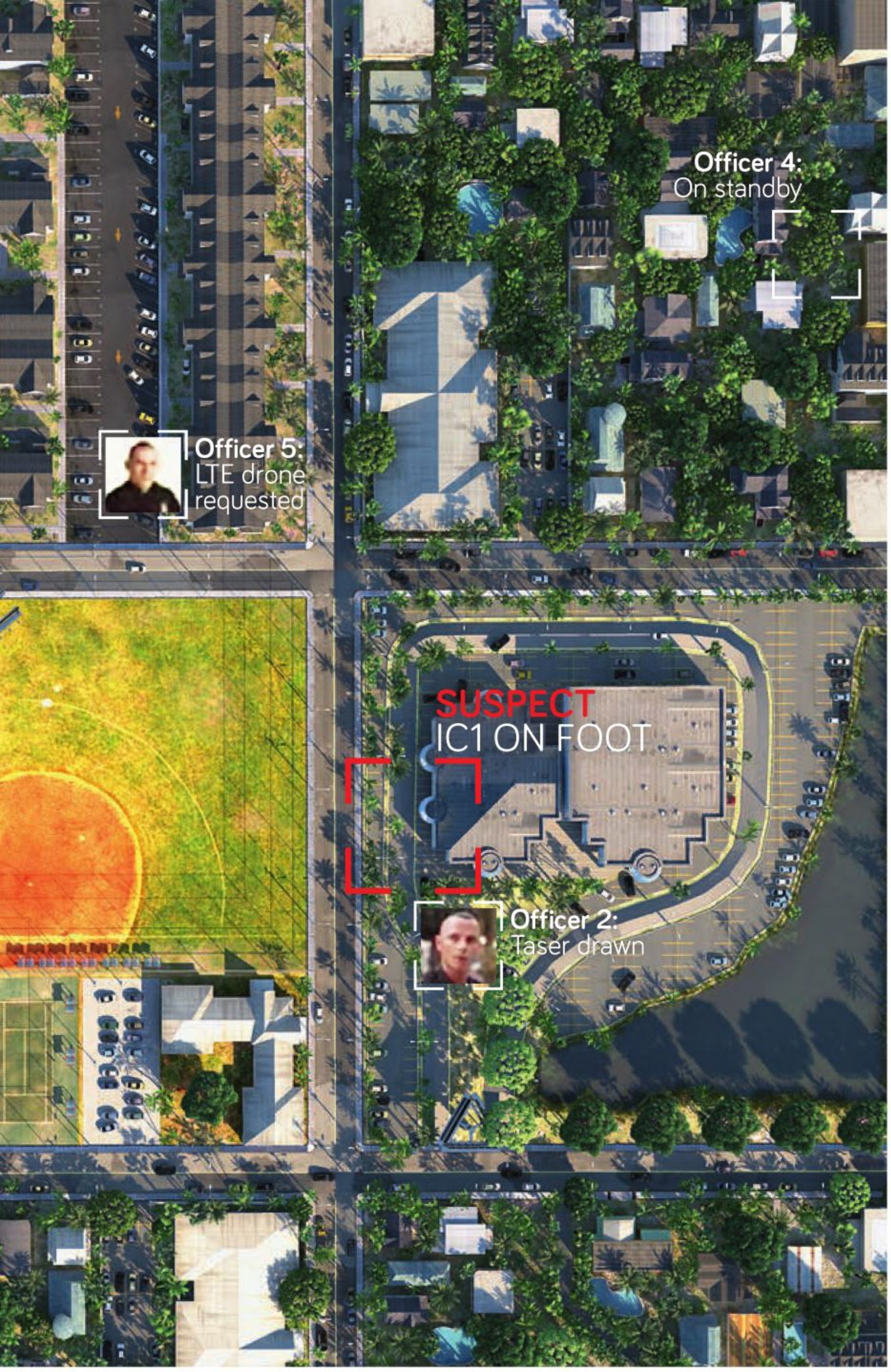
MAKING A CONNECTION

Taken in isolation, the future rozzer's gear is all very recognisable: mobile devices, smart glasses, a smart belt. I was told this was intentional: its use must be second nature, or it gets in the way of everything an officer has learned. Innovation and technology are therefore wrapped around existing learned activities. At a time when funds are diminishing but danger isn't, policing tech must aid effectiveness, feeding intelligence in context, without distracting anyone from doing their job.

I tried on the smart glasses, and a tiny display lurked in my peripheral vision. It's designed to flash up important data, such as the correct talk group on your radio so you won't be isolated during an operation. You adapt quickly, instinctively noticing something's changed and soaking it in. A mobile device was then lobbed my way. The LEX L10 is









a security-enhanced Android phone with contextual modes of operation. Back at the station, it might show email and CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch) incidents; when an officer is deployed, it could prioritise mapping, displaying where colleagues are located. Along with the Si500 — another Android device, combining a camera and microphone — the L10 is designed to lighten an officer's load, which today may include all manner of radios, camera and video devices, and often a tablet in a satchel.

BELT UP

So far, so 2015... but the key component is the belt, and it's not there to hold up anyone's trousers. It acts as a Bluetooth hub of sorts, creating a personal area network around the officer. Sensors enable it to recognise when a weapon is drawn, and this can trigger actions from connected kit, such as the camera on the glasses taking a photo. It can also alert the control room, while the belt's GPS and gyro provide location and direction details.

Consider the officer as a node in a wider network and the benefits are clear. Individual officers gain from information flows sent to their smart kit, and what this equipment sends helps their pals. For example, those photos can be distributed to incoming backup, so they know who or what they're dealing with. Crucially, officers aren't having to do anything

FUZZ FEED

THE POLICE'S NEW CONNECTED KIT

1



SMART GLASSES

Inspired by the smart glasses worn by gnarly sportspeople, these Recons provide a small alerts screen triggered by the connected radio. Alerts can be fed from the network to the officer; but the info flow goes in the other direction too, with the glasses capable of taking images and offering positioning details that can be shared with control and other officers.

2



ANDROID DEVICES

The LEX L10 is a rugged beast that has capabilities well beyond a consumer Android phone. It boasts a dedicated push-to-talk button and enhanced audio, and software enables the interface to be context-sensitive. The Si500 (pictured) acts as a body-worn camera, mic and speaker combo. Both devices connect to a network for sending and receiving information.

3



THE CONNECTED CAR

The concept for the connected car starts with a unit that has 'upgraded everything'. It's packed with electronics, including cameras, radios and computers, and could in theory be used as a full incident command vehicle. When on the road, there's a camera with a half-mile zoom, meaning police can safely follow targets of interest from a distance.

4



TETHERED LTE DRONE

If dealing with a major incident, a drone attached to a microfilament tether can be sent up. Powered using a generator, it can stay airborne indefinitely. Such drones can also be a solution when connected officers find themselves in an area of low connectivity — deployable LTE can provide coverage for up to 20 personnel in the immediate area.

new here — in fact, they potentially have less to do. Rather than alerting command regarding details and locations, and manually taking photos, intelligence and real-time information become automated and easy to share.

This all relies heavily on the underlying system that ties everything together. The bulk of the heavy lifting is done by CommandCentral, a suite of modular but interoperable products with snappy and excitingly cop-show names like Aware, Analytics and Inform. Combined with situational awareness collaboration tool DragonForce (which sounds more *Game Of Thrones* than *Law & Order*), CommandCentral provides police with some truly excellent toys hidden behind mundane Windows interfaces.

PREVENTATIVE ACTION

Floods of information flow around the system, directed in part by human operators. Geofences are erected, within which social networks are monitored for keywords that police could use to suppress problems that might otherwise escalate. One scripted incident I saw found police entering a building. Floorplans were relayed to them and overlaid with routes and alerts. It's all a bit easier than having to remember every fine detail during an incredibly stressful situation.

It was the analytics demos that most dazzled, though. In the first video-crunching demo, a shady character was shown dumping a suspicious package. In less than half an hour, the system can crunch seven hours of surveillance footage into a three-minute segment that smartly overlays all movement of vehicles and people to identify patterns. Other filters hone in on colours, while raw video adds extra context. The demo we saw was insanely fast, condensing hours of screen-gazing into minutes.

The long-term crunching of historical data is also propelling a tech-fuelled 'reactive to predictive' policing shift. By putting the right people in the right places at the right times, based on an area's criminal history, tests have resulted in an average 30% reduction in crime. Further smarts include sending up drones with LTE wireless connectivity and accessing public CCTV cameras, not least during shooting incidents, when it would be more than a little handy to see inside a building before entering.

BALANCING ACTS

Of course, with so much information sloshing around, there are privacy concerns. But it was interesting to find that the vast majority of facial recognition searches are for missing persons, and that the system's overt riffling through social media is balanced by a greater sense of accountability. We too often hear of shootings, especially in the USA, where blame comes from both sides. But if smart systems were ubiquitous, automatically recording when a weapon was drawn, the public benefit would be obvious.

How soon we'll see such kit on British bobbies is unclear. Motorola recognises that police forces already have a lot equipment, so it predicts piecemeal rollouts, with forces gradually integrating new gadgets and software modules.

Just like smarthome tech, it's the interoperability of these systems that's vital, giving the whole thing value — otherwise, police would end up with disparate, mismatched tech. And no-one wants a burglar to escape because an officer's holster wasn't compatible with a colleague's in-car maps.

PRE-CRIME

HOW SOFTWARE CAN STOP A RIOT BEFORE IT BEGINS



1

PREDICT

Social media monitoring, a community tip-off programme (via smartphone apps) and analytics identify areas potentially at high risk of crime during a specific shift. Those forecast crime areas are flagged in the pre-shift briefing report to all officers.



2

PATROL

Additional officers are allocated accordingly. Routes are monitored in real time through car-tracking and smart device GPS. Biometric tech enables control to monitor vitals (pulse, blood pressure). Officers can see on their devices the locations of backup units.

3

RESPOND

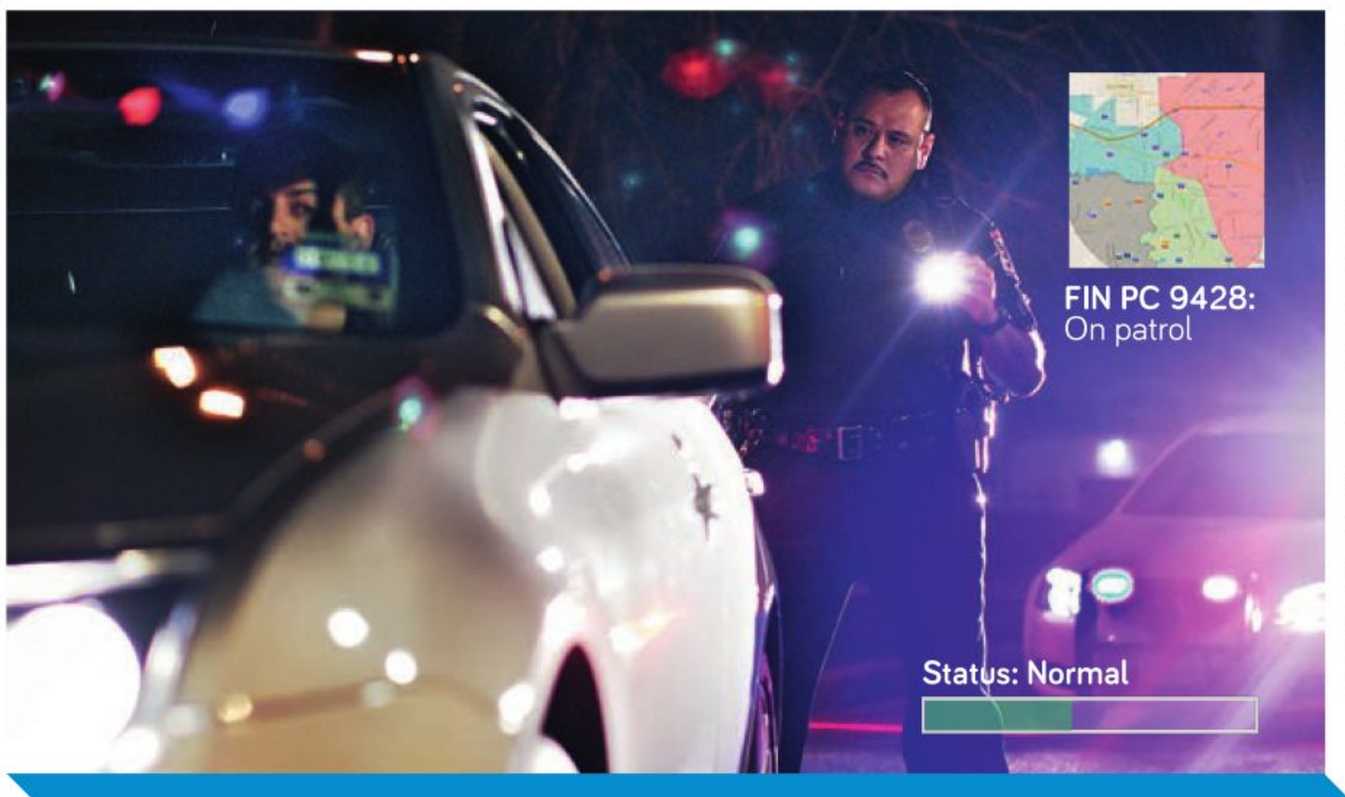
Facial recognition software identifies a known offender. Details, location and images are sent to officers. CCTV shows escalating violence. Units are dispatched, and video from vehicles is streamed to control. A taser is drawn; the smart holster notifies control.



4

RESOLVE

The suspect is arrested. Digital evidence — video, audio, witness reports, location data — is secure within the agency's cloud. Post-analysis of data generates intelligence on accomplices. The evidence secures a conviction. High-five sequence initiated.



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Pro-Ject AUDIO SYSTEMS

Best of the wrist?

The second wave of smartwatches from the big names in tech has arrived. But which of these is the real Apple Watch challenger?

Moto 360 (2015)

£230 / motorola.com

What's the story?
The best-looking smartwatch from the first Android Wear wave is back with an even more legit, watchlike design. There are two sizes as well: 42mm for everyone, 46mm for those with tree-trunk arms. It's classic Android Wear: this is one of the most stylish smartwatches around.

Is it any good?
The look matters a lot with a Moto 360, and the smart design is matched with top-notch comfort thanks to a supple leather strap. If you're after a full-fat smartwatch that looks like a watch, there are few better choices. This is mostly about the slick casing, though. Like the first 360, this watch's screen has an unfortunate cut-out at the bottom, so it's not perfectly round.

It's also one of just a few top-end smartwatches to use an LCD. Although this jacks up the brightness automatically when you go out, visibility on a nice day isn't too hot. And as LCDs can't match the efficiency of OLEDs, you'll only get one day of battery life if you want the display on all the time. It has a neat wireless charger, but the constant recharges get old quickly.

What the Moto 360 has over the S2, though, is the Android Wear assurance that new apps are coming out all the time. The system may still feel like a work in progress but it supports way more apps. This just about makes it the better device.

Tech 1.37in 360x325 IPS LCD ● 11.4mm thick ● 4GB storage ● Android Wear ● Wi-Fi, NFC, Bluetooth 4.1 ● 300mAh battery

Stuff says ★★★☆☆
This is a beauty among smartwatches, but the battery life and screen fail to impress.

Samsung Gear S2

£250 / samsung.com

What's the story?
Out to bust the finger-twisting confusion of other smartwatches, the Samsung Gear S2 has a rotating bezel that acts as your main control. It also breaks free from the Android Wear norm with Samsung's own Tizen OS software. This is a smartwatch that's altogether different from the rest.

Is it any good?
A big step up from the odd-looking Gear S, the S2 is almost a match for the Moto 360 on looks. The rubbery strap isn't quite as comfy, but a smart stainless steel front and not-too-huge size make this a watch you'll want to wear. Its rotating bezel feels great and, well, it just works.

You use it to turn through the menus, all of which are designed for the twisty dial (there are still buttons and a touchscreen, though). Coming from Samsung, it's no surprise the screen is good. It's OLED, 1.2in across and 360x360 pixels: not quite as sharp as some phones, but as sharp as the best watches. Using efficient OLED lets you leave the display on and still get at least 1.5 days per charge. It's not the week-long stamina we want, but it beats both the Moto 360 and the Apple Watch.

The issue with the Gear S2 is that it just doesn't have many apps. Samsung says there are 1000+, but 95% of them seem to be watch faces. You're paying a lot of cash for limited scope here.

Tech 1.2in 360x360 Super AMOLED ● 11.4mm thick ● 4GB storage ● Tizen OS ● Wi-Fi, Bluetooth 4.0 ● 250mAh battery

Stuff says ★★★☆☆
The bezel control is ace, but be sure you're OK with limited apps before you splash out.

TIZEN OS vs ANDROID WEAR

Samsung has redesigned the Tizen watch OS for 2015, with a circular design that slots in perfectly with the S2's round face and bezel control. It's visually intuitive, more so than Wear, which seems to love making you flick and tap the screen twice as much as is necessary.

The problem is that Tizen is only used by Samsung, and only in a couple of watches so far at that. So, no surprise, it has just a fraction of the apps of Android Wear. Want Runkeeper, Tripadvisor, maybe even some watch games? No problem for Wear. But Tizen? Good luck.

[**Words** Andrew Hayward]





1 Give us a ring
The metal bezel around the screen turns, clicking lightly every few millimetres. It's a great way to flick through Tizen's menus, and is basically a smartwatch stress toy.

2 Pressing matters
There are also familiar buttons on the side: one takes you right to the clock face, the other just acts as a back button. Although it's more fun to muck about with that bezel.



1 Taking the pulse
Both of these watches have heart-rate sensors on the back. They're about the same quality: great when you're not moving, useless for recording your heart rate while you run.

2 Bedside manners
The Moto 360's wireless charger is a cute little seat you can just rest it in overnight to top up its energy reserves. The S2 has a similarly handy little throne for recharging.

Flame on

Amazon's new tellybox offers 4K streaming, Android gaming and voice control

£80 / amazon.co.uk

Amazon Fire TV 2.0 is here, and it's faster and more powerful than before, with 4K streaming to wave in the face of its rivals, making it the first and only streaming box in the UK to handle the 4K TV shows from Amazon Prime and Netflix.

Setup is quick and simple. Just connect the mains lead (included) and an HDMI cable (not included, still). Amazon can pre-register your account details on your Fire TV when you order it, which saves a lot of faffing about.

How's the picture quality? Up to Full HD, it's not far off Blu-ray. Discs have slightly better sharpness and dynamic contrast, but there's not much in it. The 4K – 2160p video at 30fps – is a huge leap up. The level of detail is stunning.

The interface is a mixed bag. You'll wade through Amazon's own stuff before you do anything else: Prime Video, non-Prime purchases and rentals, as well as your Amazon video library and watch list. On top of that there are other big hitters such as BBC iPlayer and Spotify.

A quad-core 2GHz Mediatek chip and 2GB of RAM bring a 75% jump in processing compared to last year's model. That's quite a feat considering the old Fire TV zipped about like a puppy on espresso. Menus and apps load fast enough to give your eyeballs whiplash.

Tech specs

Dimensions 115x115x17.8mm
Weight 270g **Processor** MediaTek quad-core up to 2GHz **RAM** 2GB
Storage 8GB (expandable)
Connectivity HDMI, Ethernet, USB 2.0, microSD
Video output 720p and 1080p up to 60fps, 2160p up to 30fps





Little black number
It's minimalist enough to look cool, subdued enough to ignore – there are far worse designs to plonk under the telly. The remote is a little heftier than before, with a more solid directional pad.



Playing with Fire
The bigger processor means it can handle some 'proper' games such as *Lego Star Wars*, and the add-on gamepad (£40) is slick enough to actually get some use. It's not going to worry a PS4, though.

STUFF SAYS The Fire TV's 4K skills and silky speed make it an essential TV add-on ★★★★★

The battle for next-gen streaming begins
Ced Yuen



If you want a streaming box, Amazon's 2015 revision is a significant step up and fixes many of the original's shortcomings. Even if you own the original, it may be worth investing. This is the first streaming box in the UK to offer 4K. It's super-fast, plenty powerful, and offers loads to watch. Voice search is cool, and it even makes a conspicuous gesture in the direction of serious gaming.

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THE PRESENTS OF GREATNESS

Oh you're rich, are you? Well, good for you. In that case we'll tell you all the things we want for Christmas. You know, just in case

[**Photography** Pete Gardner]



1 DxO One

If you're splashing out on someone who loves their iPhone 6s, you could have it decorated with crystals or slices of fossilised mastodon brain, but let's assume they have taste. Instead, upgrade their Instagram feed with this clip-on smart camera, which adds a 1in sensor and bright f1.8 lens to their phone.
£450 / dxo.com

2 Leica Q

In our Awards (p53) you'll see our Camera of the Year costs £500. That's the camera you should buy. But this is the camera you *want*: a beautifully made Leica with a full-frame sensor and a superb lens. It's fairly simple, but sweet mother of Cartier-Croissant, is it nice.
£2900 / leica-camera.com

1 Blottworks Clamshell Table Lamp

If you buy someone one of these industrial masterpieces and they've already got one, we'll eat a bag of hats. Only 100 have been made, and you can tweak the light shining through the coloured pebbles in its lower half by hand-cranking the reflective upper clamshell. £1650 / blottworks.com

2 Lumio Book Lamp

In their stocking, the Lumio disguises itself as a hardback book. But imagine their gratitude when they realise you've actually given them a rechargeable lamp that's as close to an Optimus Prime figure as a grown-up can hope for. £195 / conranshop.co.uk



3 Dyson CSYS

If you're buying a present for someone who's always poring over architectural drawings (or just likes collecting iconic lamps), they'll appreciate this crane-inspired task light. The heat pipe in its arm means its LEDs will last 37 years, until Christmas 2052.
£400 / dyson.co.uk

4 David Irwin M Lamp

It might be inspired by miners' lamps, but this portable light is more power-cut buddy than murky coalpit illuminator. The M Lamp lasts eight hours per charge and will bathe their shed, picnic or reading session in a soft, warm white glow.
£235 / conranshop.co.uk

1 Hamilton BelowZero 1000m Auto

It's the watch Mark Watney (Matt Damon) wears on the red planet in *The Martian*, but you don't have to be marooned 300 million kilometres from home, growing potatoes in your own faeces, to appreciate this tough but sophisticated diving watch.
£1195 / hamiltonwatch.com

2 Jaquet Droz Grande Seconde Ceramic

Do you know someone who secretly controls the world financial system? Tricky to buy presents for, aren't they? Try this stealthy black ceramic timepiece from three-century-old watchmaker Jaquet Droz. Subdued but powerful, it goes great with a sharp suit and a deranged laugh.
£11,000 / jaquet-droz.com

3 Farer Carter

A classic, almost vintage style face is livened up with some brightly coloured hands to create a nice design that's striking without being too showy. With sapphire crystal glass and a Swiss quartz movement, it's good without being over the top. A great all-purpose watch.
£425 / selfridges.com

4 Blancpain L-Evolution Carrousel Saphir

If you're feeling particularly generous and your butler's too tired to giftwrap a Lamborghini, why not buy this exquisite piece of sapphire, tantalum, white gold and alligator skin? It's hand-wound but Carruthers can do that for you, as long as he wears his good gloves.
£180,000 / blancpain.com



1 B&O BeoPlay H8

Active noise cancellation means the stewardess will have to gesture to offer your lucky giftee another glass of Montrachet, but they'll manage. These seriously comfortable wireless cans will wrap their ears in lambskin-coated memory foam and touch-controlled music.
£400 / beoplay.com

2 KEF Muo

If this high-end wireless speaker were actually the solid chunk of gold it appears to be, it would weigh over 19kg and cost over £450,000. And that would be a nice present too, but let's stick with luxury wireless audio for now — from this, the best Bluetooth speaker we've used so far.
£300 / kef.com

3 Libratone Zipp Mini

This exceptional portaspeaker isn't just for playing AC/DC in the arboretum (you do have an arboretum, don't you?). It's more of a multiroom thing: you can wirelessly link up to 16 of them and stream music to them using AirPlay, DLNA, aptX Bluetooth and Spotify Connect.
£180 / libratone.com

4 Acoustic Research UA1

If you've bought someone an expensive pair of headphones and they plug them into their laptop and start listening to YouTube, it's a bit of a waste. This high-end DAC plugs into a USB port and gives any high-res music a polish on its way to their golden ears.
£380 / acoustic-research.com

1 Tovi Sorga Minimal Moth

Using leather from one of the last working tanneries in Britain, this wallet is hand-stitched and printed in Bristol, and it has a really nice picture of a moth on it. Recipient frightened of moths? Try telling them to man up – it's only a moth, for crying out loud.
£60 / tovisorga.com

2 Head Porter End

You could buy a wallet made from yak's eyelids dyed the gentle grey of pigeons' tears, but then there's the depressed pigeons, not to mention the startled-looking yak. This trendy Japanese trifold wallet is made of nylon, so any animals that went into it have been safely dead for millions of years.
£50 / thread.com

3 Comme des Garcons Zip-around

In case you needed any more persuading that this wallet is the pinnacle of good taste, our Art Director has one. And if the person in charge of making sure *Stuff* looks as stunning as it does thinks this is the nicest wallet you can buy, then that's about all you need to know.
£105 / mrporter.com

4 Aspinal of London Leather Billfold Wallet

With vegetable-tanned Italian leather outside and rainbow snakeskin inside, this secretly eccentric wallet is a fine home for your giftee's two biro-stained fivers and that Blockbuster card they've been keeping 'in case this whole streaming thing doesn't take off'.
£135 / aspinaloflondon.com



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Huawei to argue?

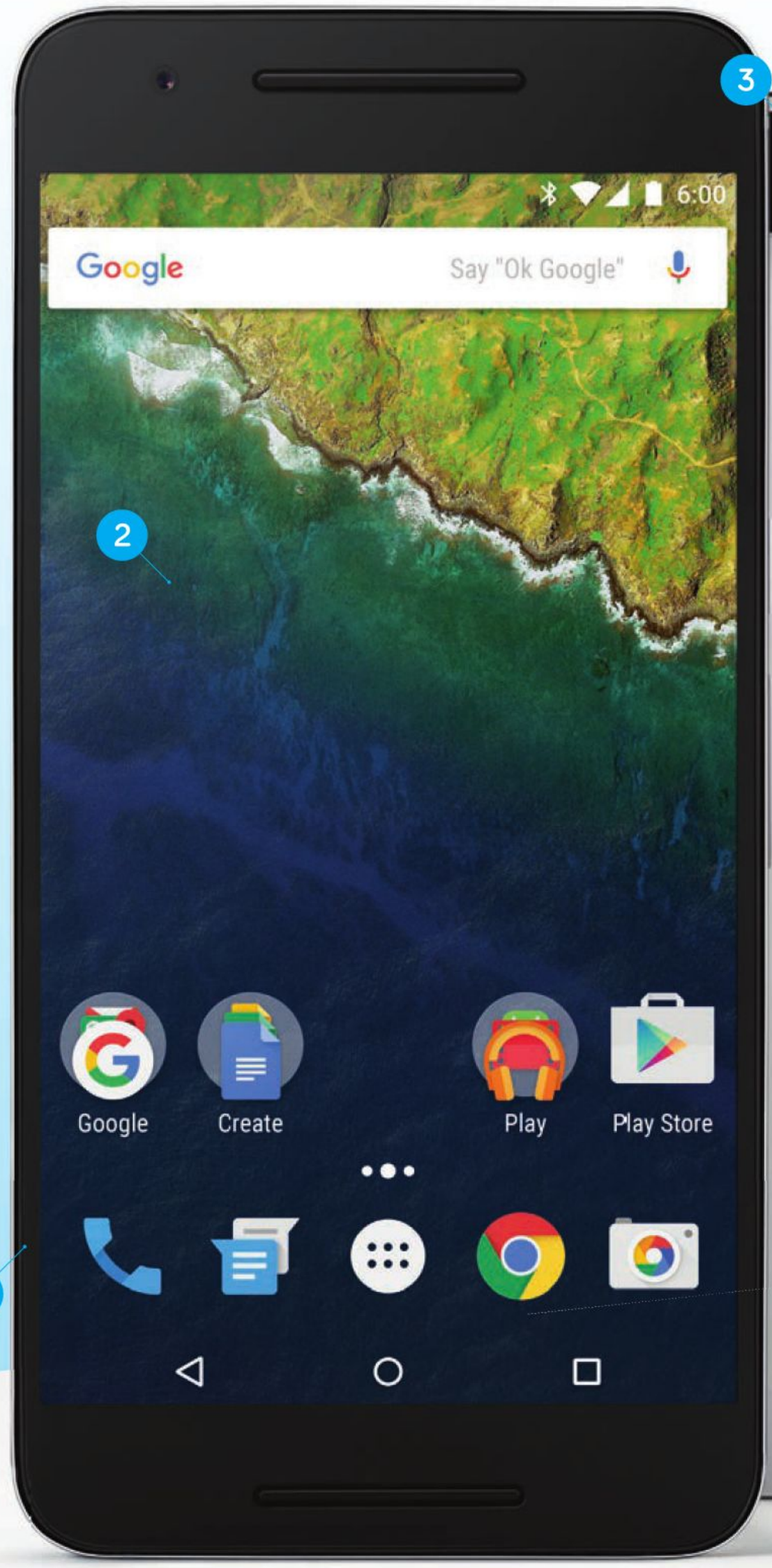
For the first time, Google's Nexus flagship handset is made by Huawei. Will the Chinese phone giant do justice to the latest version of Android?

from £450 / store.google.com

Unlike iOS, Android isn't an elitist system, but it has its purebreeds: the Nexus family is chosen to show off Google's latest smarts.

Smartphones like the Nexus 6P aren't made in Google labs by Google robots, though. It's made by Huawei, which has clawed its way up from making budget phones – often for other companies – to produce the 6P. And it is one of the lead Android phones, whatever you think of the brand. So, after the hand-stretching Nexus 6, which not everyone loved, will the 6P get the series back on track?

Starting at £450 (the 128GB version is a still very reasonable £580), it's a bit cheaper than the 'intended' prices of the other flagships, which is instantly appealing. And on test, it really aced a lot of side attractions as well as the main events: the speakers, battery, rear fingerprint scanner and selfie camera are all great. In short, this is one of the best all-round phones money can buy.



28 hours with the Google Nexus 6P

- Good
- Meh
- Evil

- 5mins — It's built by Huawei but it definitely has the look of a Nexus.
- 10mins — The aluminium design is low-key, but I'm not sure about the camera strip.
- 35mins — Oops, the finish is already showing wear after a run-in with my keys.
- 45mins — That Super AMOLED screen is a real eyeball-pleaser.
- 1hr — The front-facing stereo speakers are almost up to HTC's BoomSound.
- 3hrs — The fingerprint scanner is quick and can recognise up to five digits.
- 5hrs — No more double plugging with reversible USB-C.
- 7hrs — Hang on, my laptop isn't USB-C so I'm in trouble.
- 9hrs — Android 6.0 Marshmallow is faster than baby-oiled lightning.

[**Words** Andrew Williams]



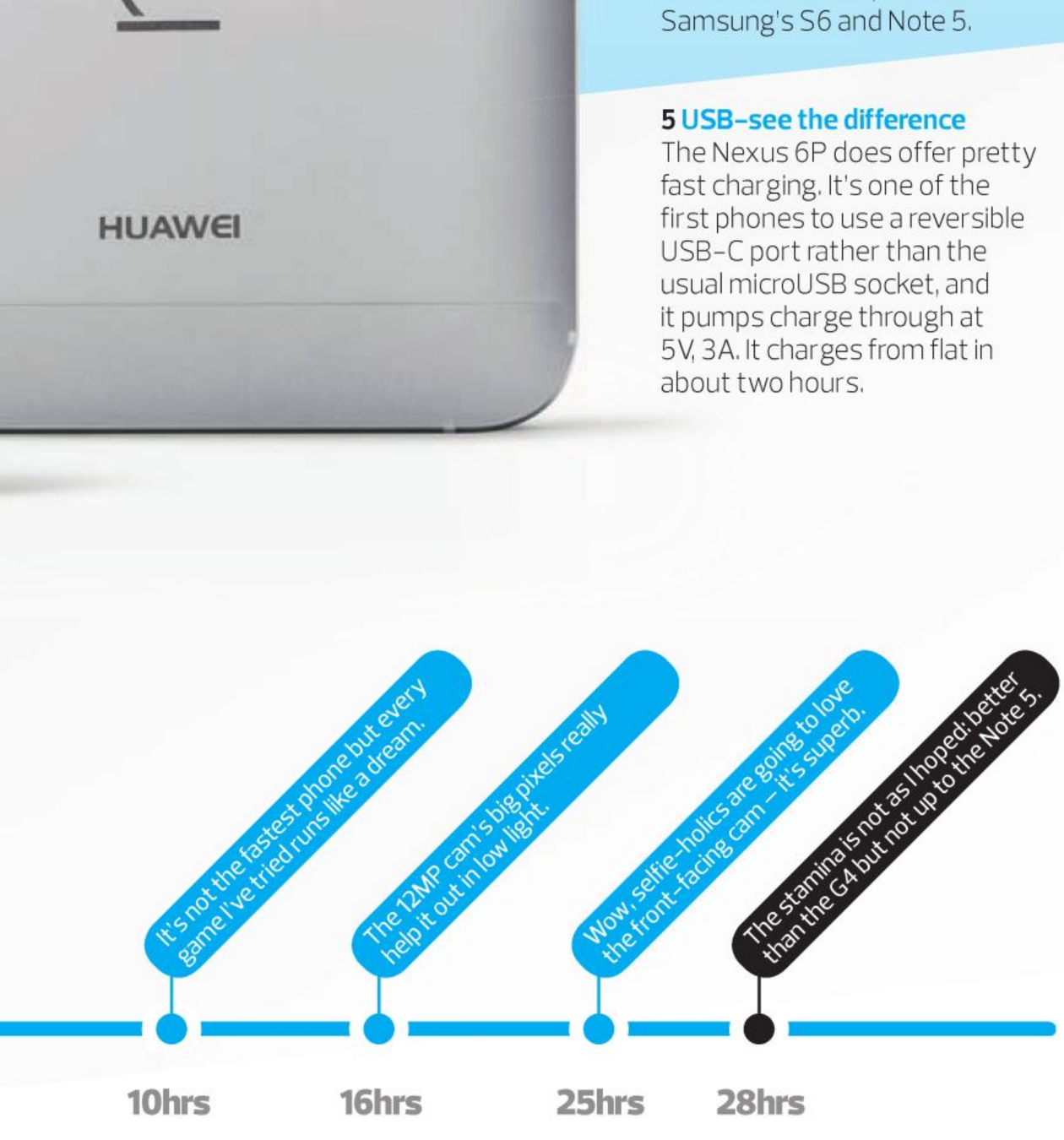
1 You clean up nicely
Huawei has had questionable design moments in the past, but overall the Nexus 6P is clean and unfussy. It has a slim aluminium body, and ours features a dark grey finish that takes the edge off the often sparkly look of anodised aluminium.

2 Game for games
Quite similar to what we saw in the Galaxy Note 5, the 6P's display is very big and very sharp, bright with immense contrast. It makes the phone a great little media and gaming machine. But no, there's no pressure-sensitivity here.

3 Selfie-aggrandising
The 6P takes a new approach and uses a large but mid-resolution 12MP sensor on the back, paired up with a two-tone flash. It also has without doubt one of the best ever front cams – the sort of selfies that show off how your pores are looking, even indoors.

4 Batt's enough
Even with a 3450mAh battery in the Nexus 6P you'll only get decent stamina, nowt more. Left to play a 720p video on loop, the phone held on for 10.5 hours. This puts it on a par with the HTC One M9 and the LG G4, but well behind Samsung's S6 and Note 5.

5 USB-see the difference
The Nexus 6P does offer pretty fast charging. It's one of the first phones to use a reversible USB-C port rather than the usual microUSB socket, and it pumps charge through at 5V, 3A. It charges from flat in about two hours.



Tech specs

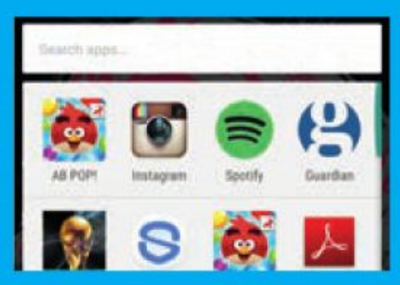
Screen 5.7in Super AMOLED 2560x1440
Processor 2GHz Snapdragon 810
OS Android 6.0 Marshmallow **Battery** 3450mAh
Storage 32/64/128GB non-expandable
RAM 3GB **Cameras** 12MP rear, 8MP front
Dimensions 159x78x7.3mm **Weight** 178g

Show us s'more

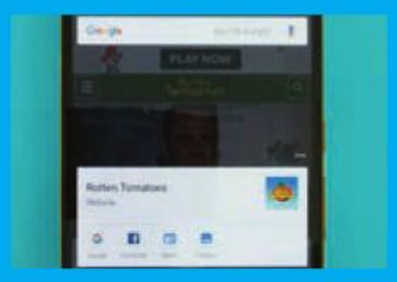
The Google Nexus 6P showcases Android 6.0, aka Marshmallow. What will be next, eh? Nougat? Nutella?



Hands off, Huawei
The 6P is here to present Marshmallow, so there's zero Huawei influence in the software. That's a good job when many don't like their Emotion UI, which doesn't let you view all your apps at once.



Scrolly moley
Marshmallow looks a fair bit like good old Lollipop, but now the apps menu is a single vertical scroll rather than a series of pages. You can get this without a Marshmallow device using Google Now.



VIP treatment
If you're a Google Now user then you'll love Marshmallow: the digital assistant is available at a tap, and it now pushes cards related to what you're looking at onto a handy display overlay.



Sweet, not sticky
The Nexus 6 with Android 5.0 felt a bit like a step down in gears after the ultra-snappy Android 4.4, but this latest version combines the liquid feel of Lollipop with the responsiveness of KitKat.



Meet the new king of Android 6.0. It's a good-value phone that offers good results in just about every area. Camera, design, performance and software all get a thumbs-up. Standouts include the finger scanner and the front camera, all of which make it easy to recommend to anyone out for a large-screen phone. *@wwwdotandrew*

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★
One of the best Nexus devices to date, and a real alternative to the best of Samsung and LG

YOUR LIGHTS, YOUR RULES

Philips Hue makes your home lighting a whole lot smarter – and that opens up endless possibilities

Light bulbs aren't the sort of things you think of as being at the cutting edge of technology. They're just there, dangling somewhere above your head and producing light when it gets dark.

But the Philips Hue personal wireless lighting system has become a tech phenomenon in recent years, thanks to two brilliant features: lights that not only change colour and provide a range of natural white light, but connect to the internet so you can control them with a smart device. Those (quite literal) light bulb moments have reinvented the light bulb.

All this is possible as Philips Hue combines brilliant and energy-efficient LED light with intuitive technology. They also last for up to 20 years – which means less time balancing on stools changing lights. But it's the way in which Philips Hue changes how you'll view your lights that really inspires.

Want to turn on a lamp on the other side of your living room? Easy: control it using your smartphone from your sofa. Forgot to turn your lights off before you left home? Do it from your desk via an app. On holiday? Set your lights to turn on and off automatically.

You can build up a whole-house system, with up to 50 Hue products. Kick off with a Philips Hue white and colour ambience starter kit (£149.99). It has everything you need to get started, including the bridge (also sold separately for £49.99). The bridge connects your system, and is compatible with Apple Homekit (yes, Siri will turn your lights on if you ask). Then you can add in products such as the bendable Philips Hue lightstrip, or Philips Hue Iris, which projects colours onto your walls. There's also the portable, battery-powered Hue Go.

You can also download third-party apps to make your Hue even better. Music apps, such as Splyce, Hue Party and Ambify, adjust your lighting to match your music. It could be strobe lighting with dance tunes, or a flickering candle for times when you need something a little more... intimate.

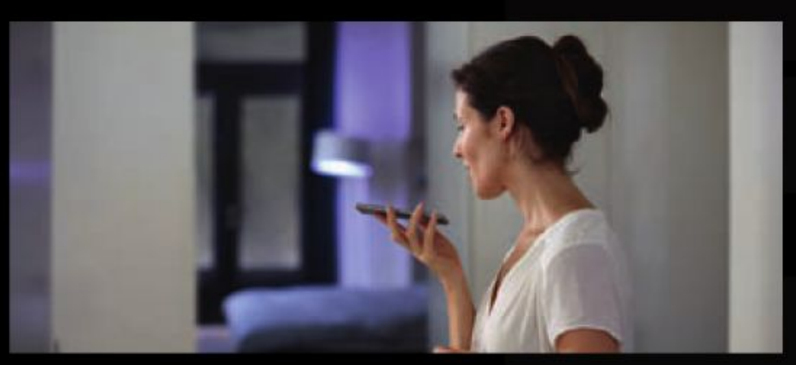
Watching TV? The Huebilight app matches your lights to whatever you're watching. And apps such as Huedini and Espresso for Hue will match your home lighting to your mood. There are even seasonal apps, if you want to simulate fireworks on New Year's Eve.

Philips Hue also connects with other home wireless systems, such as Nest. Your lights will turn on when you use Nest Cam to see what's going on in your home, and turn off when you leave the room and Nest sets your temperature lower.

With Philips Hue, lights aren't just boring things you turn on at night: they now reflect your mood, your music and your life. That light bulb moment just got a whole lot smarter – and with added firework effects.







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PC, PS4, Xbox One / fallout4.com

Fallout 4

This huge new RPG will keep you playing well into 2016; it's so big it might last you until *Fallout 5* comes out

[**Words** Justin Mahboubian-Jones, Tom Parsons]

What's that ear-splitting noise? Oh, I've just helped a crew of robots launch their 19th-century wooden ship into the air. Gaming's most famous post-apocalyptic RPG series has always revelled in its weirdness. Five years since its last *Fallout* title, Bethesda has produced a game with warmth and life that's bigger and weirder than before.

You land in 'The Commonwealth', in what remains of Boston. The city glows with the tacky neon of downtown ghettos and stretches up into the sky with dilapidated high-rises. Attack craft regularly appear overhead and clash with raiders, mutants and the other nefarious clans.

On the ground, the usual power armour zealots and rad-haggard scum are all back, and this time there's a new force: The Institute. We'll spare you the spoilers, but suffice to say they add a new, more technologically advanced flavour of footsoldier to the mix.

Of course, an engaging world is nothing without narrative; but this questing is the best we've seen yet from Bethesda. Yes, we do mean it's better than *Skyrim*.

What's more, it's huge. Crazily huge; you could spend hundreds of hours playing this. With so much to do and see and shoot, you might expect the quality to take a dive. But almost across the board, *Fallout 4* hits the mark. The voice acting is all superb, and while many of the quests follow a similar structure, the characters you meet are a constant joy. The Vault-Tec Assisted Targeting System (VATS) is back for more head-sploding delights and the handling of weapons is also greatly improved.

The only niggle is graphical. Up close and personal *Fallout 4* is next-gen beautiful, but as the vistas get larger and the draw distance bigger, buildings begin to look like coloured boxes as vision is sacrificed to performance.

Still, we'd rather have a brilliant game with the occasional ropey view than a beautiful idiot, and *Fallout 4* is an absolute belter.

STUFF SAYS You'd have to have an irradiated brain to not make this your Christmas pick ★★★★★



One of the power armour upgrades is this jetpack add-on. Get jumping!

This Vertibird is one of the least outlandish pieces of machinery in *Fallout 4*.







The theory of unnatural selection

Choice is Bethesda's hallmark and *Fallout 4* doesn't disappoint. Crafting is back, allowing you to make all kinds of outlandish modifications.

Even before you begin tinkering, the arsenal is ostentatious and wonderful. There are laser rifles, shotguns, even the Junk Jet, which can be loaded with useless inventory objects and fired with frightening velocity. You'd have to be inhuman not to smile when a typewriter whips off a mutant's leg at 200mph.

Each of these weapons can be adjusted at a workbench with an enormous variety of mods. Our rocket launcher has an attached bayonet. Why? Why not?

Players can take control of settlements to construct their own fortress. Each settlement has needs (water, power, defences etc) that must be satisfied, but you get benefits such as a free bed and the ability to call on local forces in time of need. It's a neat feather in *Fallout*'s cap – but like all base-building in RPGs, it ends up feeling redundant.

RPGs are all about individual development and progress, and while there have been efforts to integrate the new toolset into missions, it feels divergent from the game's core objectives.

PC, PS4, Xbox One / starwars.ea.com

Star Wars Battlefront

If it's multiplayer mayhem you're after, spend this winter on the icy surface of Hoth (or above it)

The curse surrounding Star Wars games is notorious: either they're a fantastic offering of sci-fi brilliance or they go south, Jar Jar Binks-style. Few franchises have so consistently yo-yoed between the extremes. Thankfully, Dice's team multiplayer FPS looks sleeker than a Super Star Destroyer, and our laser-scarred experiences in the open beta have confirmed that the hype is well deserved.

Two game modes have been unlocked for the beta: Walker Assault and Drop Zone. The former places 40 players inside the first scenes of *The Empire Strikes Back* on the icy plains of Hoth. Twenty imperials protect a pair of AT-ATs as they make their way towards the shield generator. In order to stop them, the 20 rebels must activate uplink stations to call in Y-wing bombers. The front lines are constantly in motion, and it feels terrifyingly like a real invasion.

Power-ups littered across the map allow players to jump into an AT-ST, a TIE fighter or the monolithic AT-AT itself. Blaster fire from the AT-AT slices through rebels, racking up a dozen kills in 30 seconds or less.

Airborne craft deal out massive amounts of damage, and are great for large targets but hopeless at zoning in on troopers themselves. Such an impressive armoury lends Vader's underlings an advantage, and this is why Walker Assault mode is so refreshing.

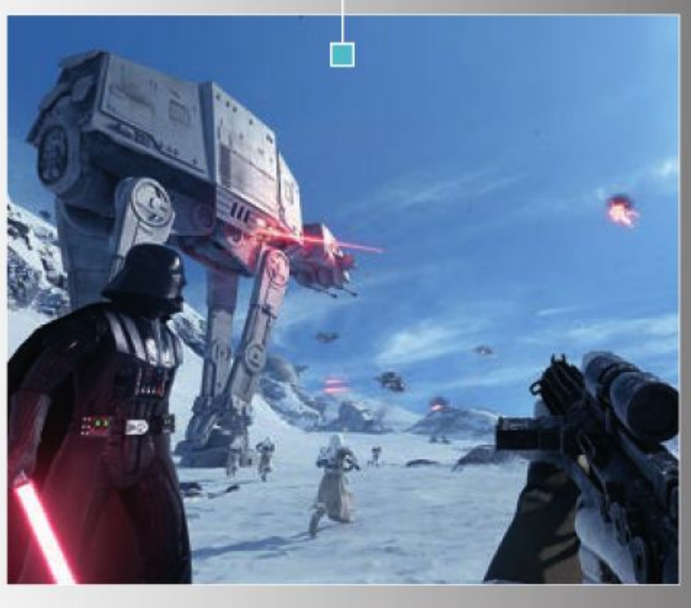
In our first 20 matches, there wasn't a single rebel victory. The ratio improved, but it's still pretty unfavourable. At first we were miffed, but the desire to succeed against a superior force is what makes it so tense. When your team does manage to wriggle into an advantageous position there's a rush of glee that your underdog could actually win. And an odd opposite applies to the Empire: you don't just want to win, you want to humiliate them.

At the time of writing, Dice has just acknowledged that the game mode is 'unbalanced'. Here's hoping they don't even it up too much.

STUFF SAYS If Drop Zone and Walker Assault are anything to go by, we're in for a treat ★★★★★



The AT-ATs dominate the landscape and take plenty of hard graft to fell.



Playing as a rebel, the odds aren't in your favour, but blaster turrets help.





Playing the hand you're dealt

To secure the win it's best to specialise, and *Battlefront* offers customisation in the form of 'star cards'.

Players choose a hand of three cards, each bestowing a unique ability. The jump pack, unsurprisingly, sends you flying; the thermal detonator is, well, a thermal detonator; the ion grenade damages structures and vehicles; and there's also a straight-up ballistic sniper rifle. After use, the ability can't be used again for a few seconds.

One of the cards can only be activated when the player has collected a 'charge point' power-up. Abilities on this third, 'special' card offer greater utility, such as the personal shield (which blocks incoming fire) or the ion bolt (which boosts the player's damage against vehicles). Timely use of these powers can quickly erode a fortified enemy.

There are other power-ups that are picked up across the map, in the form of single-use items such as binoculars that call in an orbital strike.

This, and the player's choice of blaster – of which there are only four – are the limits of character customisation. The choices help define a style of play, be that infantry killer or objective winner, and keep the frills to a minimum.

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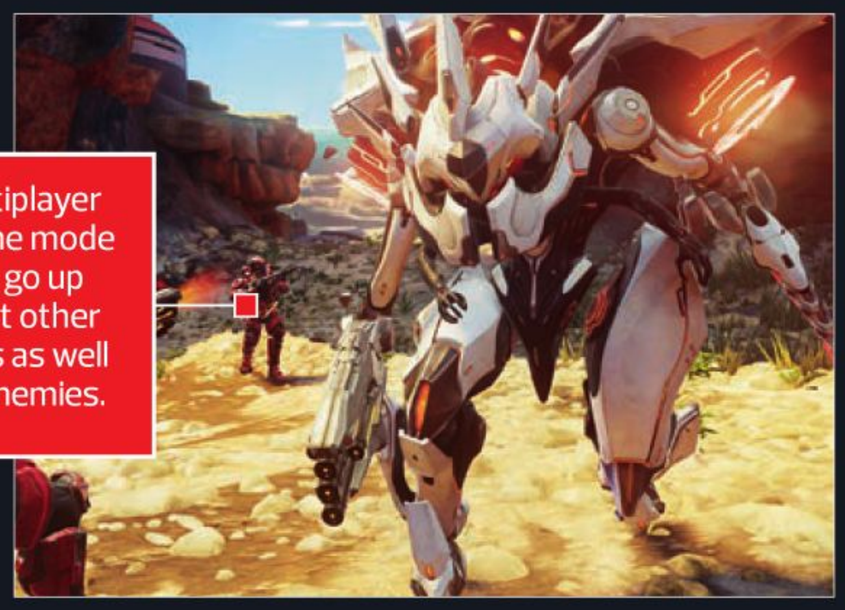
South Kensington (Station Arcade)

On track for the perfect Christmas

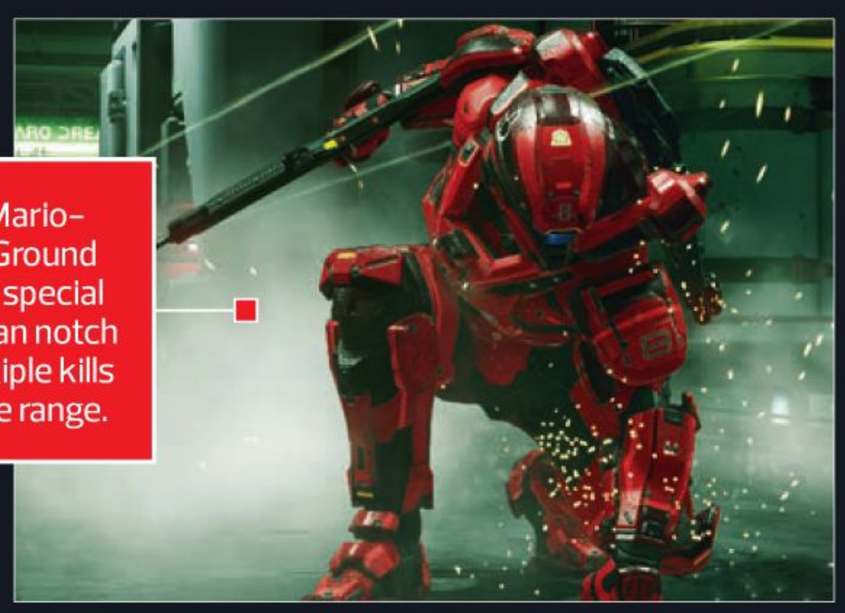
Xbox One / halowaypoint.com

Halo 5: Guardians

Master Chief is back after a three-year hiatus, but are you fan enough for his latest mission?



In multiplayer Warzone mode you'll go up against other players as well as AI enemies.



The Mario-style Ground Pound special move can notch up multiple kills at close range.

Guardians is so sure of your knowledge of *Halo* lore that it jumps right in with no explanation. The generic plot (ancient master race, galactic domination etc) isn't hard to follow, but this game isn't interested in making new friends.

So, here's a quick sit-rep: Master Chief and Jameson Locke are both playable characters in the campaign. They're both angry and manly and dedicated to saving the galaxy from an apocalyptic evil.

The action follows the same formula over and over throughout campaign mode: you enter an open environment dotted with enemies, kill them, move on and repeat. The game also pits you against the same boss time after time – *exactly* the same boss. His health doesn't increase, his attacks don't change.

Oddly, *Guardians* also relegates much of the interesting action to cutscenes. We often ended up thinking, 'Why aren't you letting us do that? It looks like fun!'

All of this is a shame, because in other ways *Halo 5* delivers. The few worlds you visit left us wanting to hang around just for the view. The new game engine also produces some of the most impressive facial animation we've seen.

But while campaign mode is disappointing, for most *Halo* fans it's the side salad to multiplayer. Splitscreen play is, sadly, out: you'll have to venture online to play with your mates. The two choices are Arena or Warzone. The former has the usual modes plus Breakout, in which two teams of four fight for a flag which must be taken to the enemy base for the win. The twist: you only get one life. It's brutal, but it provides the most tension of any *Halo 5* multiplayer.

Warzone is *Guardians*' big sell. Two teams of 12 face off on a large map and attempt to either capture the enemy's core, or be the first to 1000 points by killing the bosses that spawn on the battlefield.

It's admirable that 343 Industries has tried to innovate, but the result is chaotic, with four or five goals to pursue at any one time.

Overall, *Guardians* is the *Avatar* of this year's games: sumptuous eye-candy, but not that smart.

STUFF SAYS A by-the-numbers return for the Xbox FPS juggernaut ★★★☆☆

The *Tomb Raider* reboot of 2013 was fresh, and it was a good game. But some complained that it was a shadow of Lara Croft's original adventure, and called for a return to grand temples and forgotten cities. In response, developer Crystal Dynamics offers a compromise. *Rise* returns to the architectural opulence of *Tomb Raider*'s past, while retaining its vision for an explosive action game.

Lara's goal is the acquisition of the Divine Source, an artefact said to grant eternal life. In contrast to the violence of the last game, she no longer has to slip an arrow between the eyes of every enemy she sees, as stealth mechanics have been added. Environments have height and cover; Lara can climb trees to gain a vantage point and hide in convenient shrubs.

AI has also been tweaked so that enemies will investigate noises from stray arrows and react to the sudden absence of a comrade. On the whole, the stealth mechanics work very well and provide another layer of depth to the action, but sadly there's no real reward for avoiding combat.

For most of *Rise*'s enemy encounters, Lara embraces her new position as the gun-toting lovechild of Ellen Ripley and Indiana Jones. Combat itself is largely unchanged, the most significant tweak being the ability to craft explosives. A bottle of alcohol and a rag become a Molotov cocktail, and empty tins become shrapnel grenades. Throwing these into mobs is highly effective.

The developers know how they want these encounters to pan out, with players fluidly moving between cover using as much of the environment as possible. Only now, in her second post-reboot outing, have they found their own vision for Ms Croft's future: action is this game's true love, and it sits comfortably on the shelf next to the likes of *Uncharted*.

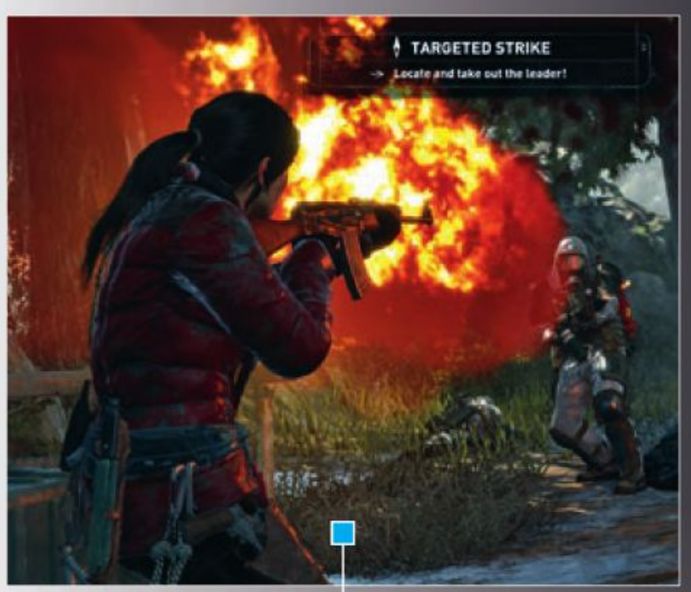
This is not exactly what hardcore fans wanted – but at some point you have to embrace progress, and *Rise* is a thrilling adventure.

STUFF SAYS A worthy sequel that only the most hardcore Lara fans will find lacking ★★★★☆

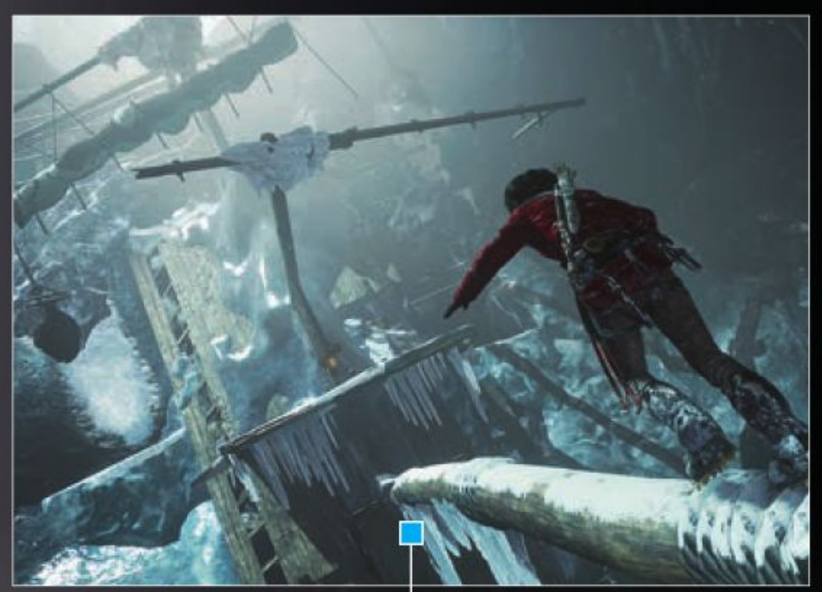
Xbox One, Xbox 360 / tombraider.com

Rise Of The Tomb Raider

Hidden treasure lies within, but the latest Lara Croft escapade buries the series' own past once and for all



If flamethrowers aren't your thing, you can avoid them using stealth instead.



The well-crafted puzzle tombs are great fun but more would be nice.



Not tomb many puzzles for us

The real fun is in the optional challenge tombs, where Lara must best a puzzle to reach her prize and unlock a new skill such as double arrow shots.

Puzzles are notoriously hard to design, but each one we tried slowly drew us through its logic until we cracked it... just soon enough not to get frustrated. They weren't perfect, though. The level designers are obviously big fans of the rope launcher that allows Lara to interact with a whole room of objects from distance, and as a result it has been made almost omnipresent.

It's a great tool, but the constant pattern of tying objects together with rope or using it to pull levers doesn't help to distinguish each chamber. We found the puzzles of *Arkham Knight* were consistently more varied, and more challenging.

The nine optional challenge tombs feel like perfunctory love letters to the game that *Tomb Raider* used to be. Each is moderately sized and lavishly designed, but the challenge itself is fairly small and over far too soon. It must be possible to whizz through the nine chambers in under two hours, a paltry amount of puzzling for a game that claims to provide 40 hours of content to the completionist.

Uncharted: The Nathan Drake Collection

Ahead of the release of *Uncharted 4: A Thief's End*, the previous three episodes have been polished up for PS4

PS4 / unchartedthegame.com

We're all excited about *Uncharted 4*, aren't we? But it's not out until March, leaving plenty of evenings to take our time replaying the rest of the series in this 'remastered' boxset. This isn't just a re-release; resolution has been pumped up to 1080p, textures have been refined, draw distances beefed up and extra effects added.

Drake's Fortune looks and feels way better than it did on PS3 back in 2007, especially in the characters and scenery. The jungle is more defined, with lush foliage, while Drake and his cohorts look much closer to how they ended up in *Uncharted 3*. Controls have been tightened and everything is more responsive, making combat that bit more engaging.

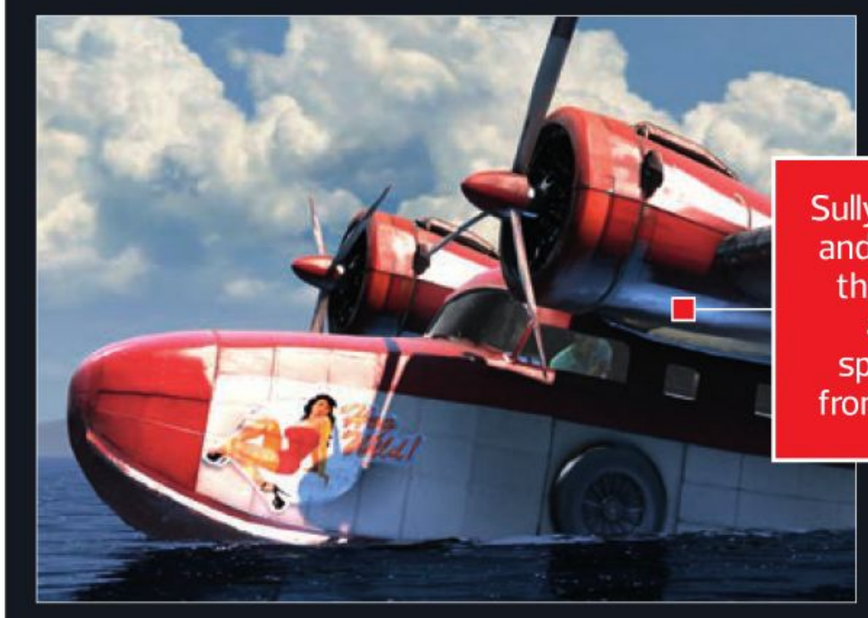
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves is the real masterpiece of the series. Some battles go on a bit too long and the supernatural enemy in the third act seems too familiar if you've only just played through *Drake's Fortune*, but this is a game that still stands out against the very best of the PS3 generation.

Finally we have *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception*, and guess what? It's also a belter. The opening scenes take place in and around a dodgy London boozer, which makes a pleasant change after playing through two games' worth of jungles and temples, and the fist fight right at the start is a masterful example of playable, flexible choreography.

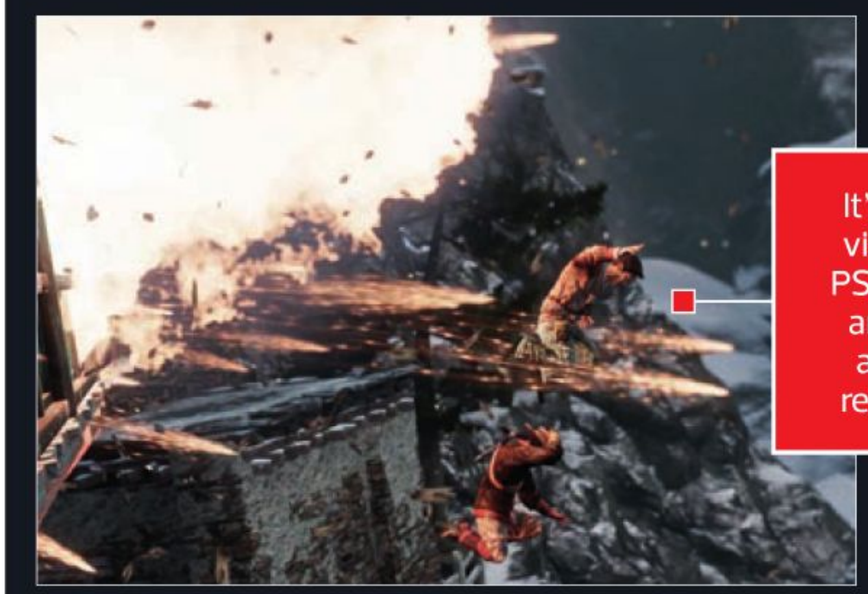
The set pieces here are more spectacular than in any of the previous games, but they're also a little more linear. There are a few gunfights that are more open and flexible, and stealth works more effectively than in *Uncharted 2*.

So, while it's remastered, there are areas in which the *Uncharted* games show their age, and that's particularly true of *Drake's Fortune*; but in a way that's part of the charm. The action gets better with each sequel, but it's the writing and design that shine brightest.

This may well be the best, most consistent gaming franchise there has ever been. Here's hoping *A Thief's End* isn't also the end of the series.



Sully's seaplane and the rest of the scenery all looks spectacular from the start.



It's not just visuals; the PS4 controls are tighter and more responsive.

STUFF SAYS A reminder of *Uncharted*'s brilliance, and a perfect advert for No.4 ★★★★★



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Assassin's Creed Syndicate

After an awkward trip to Paris, can the grimy charms of gang-ridden London revive the action adventure series?

Xbox One, PS4 / assassinscreed.ubi.com



Navigating London is much more fun than trudging around Paris in *Unity* ever was.



Combat is far from perfect, but better... and you can recruit street thugs for gang battles.

Assassin's Creed Unity was a total mess. A plethora of bugs, performance woes and lacklustre features had us wondering whether this once thrilling franchise had become a cynical cash-in.

With *Syndicate*, the ninth game in the series, Ubisoft has sworn to mend its ways. The unnecessary fat of multiplayer mode has been cut, with every effort placed on creating a single player game of impeccable quality. The result is a triumphant return to form.

One of the main improvements is the map. Mission management has always been a sore spot for the series, and *Unity*'s map was cluttered and useless. The aerial view of London here is both easy on the eyes and readable – 3D models have been applied and the new key is infinitely more helpful than the hieroglyphics in the last game.

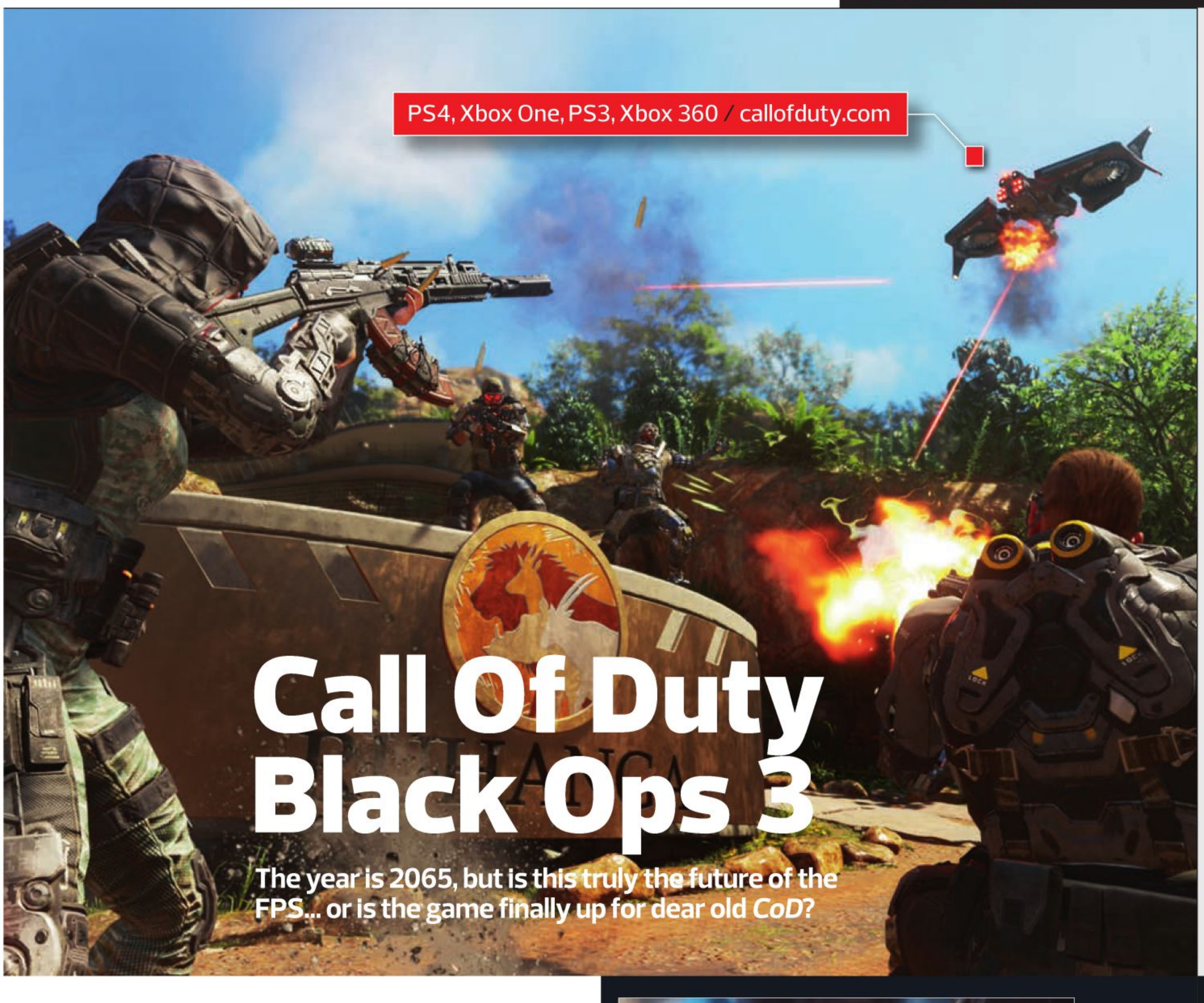
Missions are divided between the main campaign, tasks for famous pals like Charles Darwin, and more basic jobs for your allies. It all makes sense and you'll feel free to enjoy *Syndicate*'s many escapades without constantly gaping at a mess of streets like a gormless tourist.

There's a clear sense of linear progression when tackling the missions that allow the game's two protagonists, the Frye twins, to wrest control of London back from the Templars. The boroughs are divided up into segments, each containing one of these missions, which vary from straight-up assassinations to the liberation of child labourers.

It's possible to play as either Jacob or Evie (yes, an actual woman, about time) and the dual setup works elegantly. The twins share experience and a cash pool but possess separate skill trees and loadouts, allowing each to be customised as you see fit. They can choose from a selection of short blades, knuckledusters and sharpened canes, and skirmishes are far quicker than the drawn-out sword battles in Paris.

It's predictably *Creed*-y, but *Syndicate* makes the series stonking good fun again.

STUFF SAYS *Syndicate* fixes the old toys and offers a whole box of new ones ★★★★★



Call Of Duty Black Ops 3

The year is 2065, but is this truly the future of the FPS... or is the game finally up for dear old *CoD*?

Call Of Duty has become the Madonna of video games: some are wondering whether it should drag itself off the stage to let other games have the limelight. This doesn't stem from waning popularity, but waning relevance: standard first-person shooters have been around for more than 20 years now, and they're starting to look old next to the huge multiplayer battles that next-gen servers can support.

The response? *Black Ops 3* features futuristic mayhem and a small amount of theft from other games. It does just enough to stay contemporary without betraying its loyal following. The agenda might be set by others, but it manages to call the shots with high production values and a slick multiplayer.

The same can't be said for single player, sadly. Each mission takes you on a linear journey filled with scripted moments. Skyscrapers tumble, vehicles explode, aircraft crash. All over the place.

As for the combat, the clearest change is the addition of sci-fi superpowers. Abilities are divided into Martial, Control and Chaos. The powers include a KO ground slam and stealth shielding that makes you invisible.

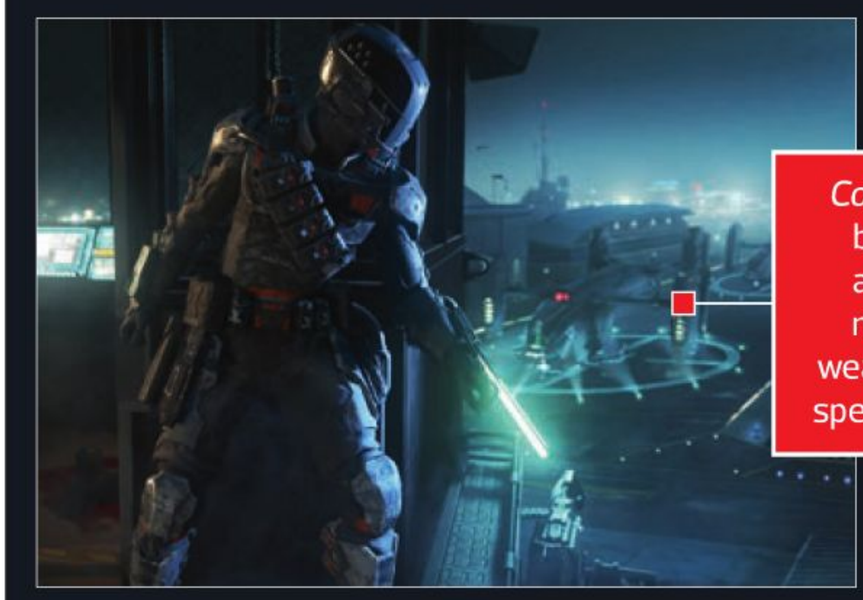
What's surprising is how little these powers affect the game. It never presents any scenarios where clever use of special abilities is required. In multiplayer, however, each weapon is delicately tuned to a specific combat style.

Players can now select from a variety of different classes, known as specialists, each of which comes equipped with two special abilities. The Outrider can choose between exploding arrows or a vision pulse that highlights nearby opponents; the Battery can make use of a shield that blocks incoming fire or a crowd-blitzing incendiary grenade launcher. With a total of nine classes and 18 abilities, there's a specialist to suit everyone. It's an added dynamic that the series has been crying out for.

The FPS may be a dying breed, but *Call Of Duty* remains king of its domain. If it's a toss-up between this and *Halo 5*, this is your game.



Single-player campaign mode has so many explosions that they actually become routine.



CoDBLOPS 3 boasts an arsenal of new sci-fi weaponry and special powers.

STUFF SAYS Sci-fi-laden multiplayer gives *CoD* a welcome upgrade ★★★★☆

The big picture

Packing an astounding 50MP sensor, is this the most powerful DSLR in the world?

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■ Unless you're planning on printing your photos the size of a bus, you'll rarely need the full-scale images that this camera's monster sensor can produce. But 50MP resolution gives you great scope for cropping, which can be useful if you don't have a long lens.

■ Files from the 5DS are whoppers. A 64GB card will hold 600 RAW and jpg shots at the highest quality. That's why Canon has given the 5DS two super-fast Digic 6 processors. The buffer clears quite quickly (shooting jpg only), which is good for capturing action, but this isn't an ideal camera for sports.

■ The 5DS's viewfinder is so large and bright that you almost feel like you're looking directly at the scene. The fact that it offers a 100% field of view also means you can compose with confidence and know that what you see is what you'll get.

■ Focusing is swift and accurate, but all those extra pixels can cause problems when shooting handheld, as wobbles can introduce blur in the fine detail. You'll want to use higher shutter speeds – especially for moving subjects.

■ Most pros enjoy some level of customisation, and happily that has been provided here – including the ability to swap out functions you don't use very often for those that you do on the Quick Menu.

Tech specs

Sensor 50.6MP full-frame CMOS **Processor** Dual Digic 6 **ISO** 100-6400/50-12,800 (expanded) **Autofocus points** 61 **Shutter speed** 1/8000-30 secs **Burst rate** 5fps **Screen** 3.2in 1040k-dot TFT **Video** 1080p@30fps **Dimensions** 152x117x76mm **Weight** 845g



■ Hold still

The 5D Mark III's video skills make it a better all-rounder than the 5DS (it's £2250). It has features this camera is missing, such as uncompressed HDMI output, focus peaking and a headphone port.



■ On the level

For those of us with a propensity to shoot wonky horizons, the ability to display an electronic level in the viewfinder (something the 5D Mark III can't do) is a nice touch.

STUFF SAYS This is a high-detail stills specialist for the serious snapper ★★★★★

Canon EOS 5DS vs 5DS R: what's the difference?

Amy Davies



Sitting between the lens and the sensor, a low-pass filter removes high-frequency image information. Without it, shooting repetitive patterns – such as the weave of a tweed jacket – can result in unsightly moiré or false colour effects. However, it also reduces detail, something that many photographers *not* shooting the sort of subjects that cause moiré don't want. The 5DS has the filter; the 5DS R (£3200) doesn't.

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Media hoard

This month we watch Edward Snowden's favourite TV show, hear the best band to come from a town called Bowling Green, and don't play some old video games

WATCH

Mr Robot _Amazon Prime Instant Video

The odds were stacked against *Mr Robot* being one of the year's most bingewatchable TV shows. Not only is its lead character a taciturn cybersecurity expert, but it's about hackers – and we all know that means bespectacled nerds trying to 'hack the mainframe' against a countdown clock.

The fact that *Mr Robot* resists a 'computers for dummies' approach is just one of the reasons why it succeeds. It's also visually striking and unpredictable, and offers a new take on cyberpunk while wearing its influences (*The Matrix*, *Fight Club* and *American Psycho*) as proudly as the badge on its title character's shirt.

An office drone by day, Elliott Alderson (played brilliantly by Rami Malek) is also a morphine-addled vigilante who hacks the lives of everyone he meets. That is until he's lured in by *Mr Robot* (Christian Slater) to join the hacktivist group 'fsociety', whose plan is to cancel world debt by attacking ubiquitous conglomerate E Corp.

Cue a trip down a rabbit hole that twists through Lynchian dreams, episode-long musings about the hackability of human brains, and a mounting sense of paranoia that leaves you deeply suspicious of everything down to Elliott's malfunctioning radiator. Edward Snowden is apparently a big fan, but you don't have to be an exiled privacy activist to enjoy it.

Mark Wilson

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★



Ant-Man _cinema, DVD, VOD

No one thought *Ant-Man* was going to be much cop. Then Edgar Wright dropped out of directing Marvel's latest jamboree and that seemingly sealed its fate. As it turned out, the reliably winsome Paul Rudd, a slew of hearty laughs and some creative action sequences make this the year's best superhero movie.

Rob Leedham

STUFF SAYS ★★★★☆



Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation _Blu-ray, DVD, VOD

Disappointed by *Spectre*? Tom Cruise has taken the opportunity to out-stunt Bond, recklessly clinging to planes during take-off and tearing up the streets of Marrakech on a motorbike. Not bad for a short bloke in his 50s. *Rogue Nation*'s spectacle partially makes up for its cartoonish plot.

Tom Wiggins

STUFF SAYS ★★★☆☆



LISTEN



Tell Me I'm Pretty

_Cage The Elephant

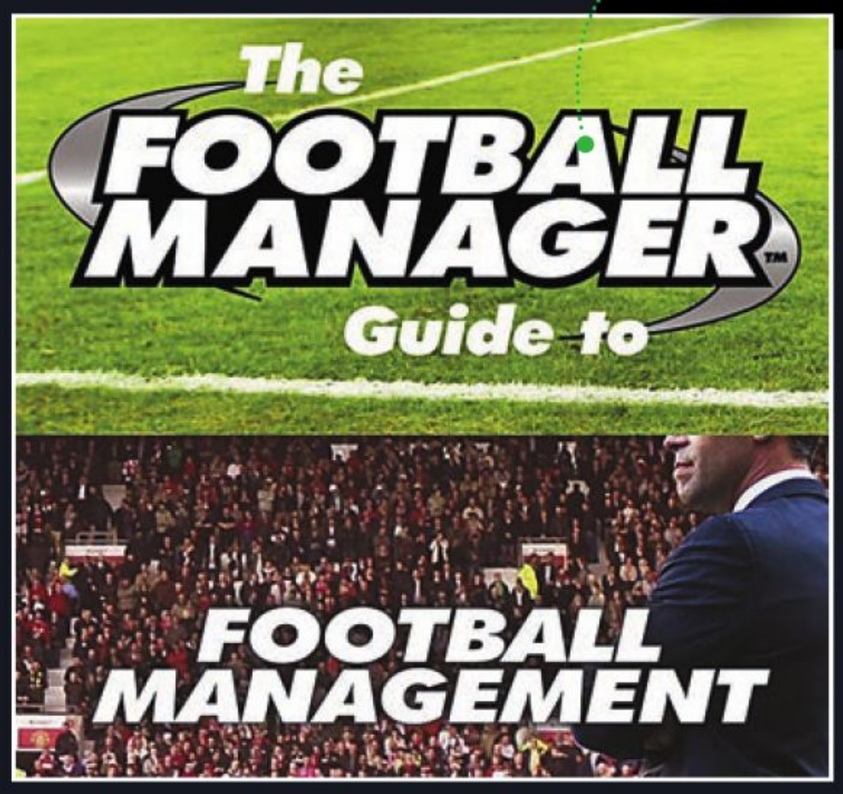
For a band from a town called Bowling Green in Kentucky, there's something curiously British about Cage The Elephant – even with Dan Auerbach of Black Keys fame twiddling the knobs on their fourth record.

There's very little on *Tell Me I'm Pretty* that doesn't sound like an impression of any number of Brit bands from the '60s: the Stones, Kinks and Beatles are all referenced, albeit not explicitly, almost to the point where you'd think you were listening to a tribute album.

The problem is, Cage The Elephant aren't the Stones, Kinks or Beatles and it all ends up sounding like an Apple ad. It's well crafted, radio-friendly rock, but all too easily forgotten. *Tom Wiggins*

STUFF SAYS ★★★☆☆

READ



The Football Manager Guide To Football Management

_Iain Macintosh

Iain Macintosh has pretty much managed to turn playing *Football Manager* into a day job, which makes him the envy of laptop Klopps across the world, but he also knows a fair bit about the real thing.

This isn't a manual (the tactical stuff is quite basic and there are only a few pages at the back that relate directly to the game), but instead Macca uses his years as a footy journo to create a witty, insightful collection of dressing room anecdotes, training ground secrets and lessons to be learned from the real-life gaffers. As he's a Southend fan, it's obviously not just about the Premier League. *Tom Wiggins*

STUFF SAYS ★★★★☆



Live

_Matt Berry And The Maypoles

Toast, Beef, Reynholm Jnr in *The IT Crowd*, Sanchez in *Darkplace*... for all of these reasons it is quite rightly illegal to say anything bad about Matt Berry. Even if he does a poo in your front garden. Berry also makes non-comedic music, of a strangely old-fashioned and theatrical kind, and this is his new live album. We'd better leave it there. *Richard Purvis*

STUFF SAYS ★★☆☆☆



Purple

_Baroness

Continuing with the colour theme of their previous album names, Baroness unsurprisingly don't deviate too much from their existing sound. It's punchier, sludgier, stonerier, hookier and metallier than the previous double album *Yellow & Green* and the shorter runtime delivers a more compact and engaging headbang. *Ross Presly*

STUFF SAYS ★★★★☆



Britsoft: An Oral History

_ed. Alex Wiltshire

This spectacularly geeky collection of interviews with the key players in the British gaming industry of the '70s, '80s and early '90s is essentially 400 pages of screening notes for the 2014 documentary *From Bedrooms To Billions*. The clever structure allows you to follow individual people's scattered inputs. *Tom Wiggins*

STUFF SAYS ★★★☆☆



Terrible Old Games You've Probably Never Heard Of

_Stuart Ashen

'YouTube star writes book' is becoming a puzzlingly common occurrence. Ashen's tome is the kind of thing you'll read on the loo, although his army of fans are surely more liekly to be watching him on their phones. *Tom Wiggins*

STUFF SAYS ★★★☆☆

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M BY MONTCALM® SHOREDITCH LONDON TECH CITY

INTELLIGENT LUXURY

Tech City's newest hotel uses top tech in style

Shoreditch is hot right now. Not literally, of course (this is Britain, after all). But as the home of Britain's freshest digital firms, 'East London Tech City' is right at the heart of the UK's digital revolution. So it's fitting that the area's new must-visit hotel is using the latest tech to add extra luxury for guests.

The M by Montcalm, located on City Road just minutes from 'Silicon Roundabout', combines classic hotel luxury with plenty of cutting-edge technology. As well as features you'd expect from a top hotel – such as a spa, free high-speed Wi-Fi and two restaurants run by chefs from Michelin-starred kitchens – the M by Montcalm's 269 rooms are packed with genius features.

Every room has a tablet, from which guests can control the lighting, sounds and under-floor heating – or order room service. Guests can even select their room aroma. Rooms are also fitted with Bose speakers, an LCD TV and an LED-lit make-up mirror.

The tech solutions in the M by Montcalm make life ultra-relaxing for guests – leaving them refreshed to enjoy visiting Tech City.

The M by Montcalm doesn't just stand out for its interior style: the 18-storey hotel is a striking addition to the Shoreditch skyline. Designed by award-winning architects, the building's façade is inspired by the work of optical art pioneer Bridget Riley. It also provides an amazing viewpoint: the 17th floor restaurant offers sweeping views across London.



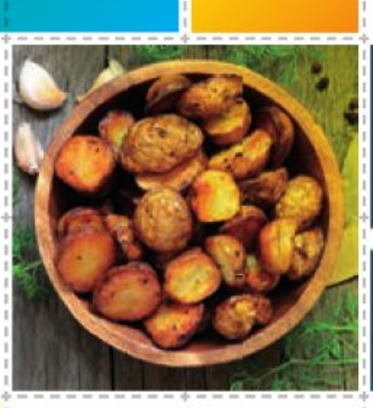


FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT MBYMONTCALM.CO.UK

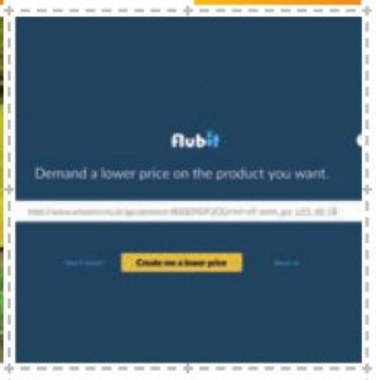
Stuff

PROJECTS

MAKE. DO. UPGRADE.



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More sprouts, less flatulence? Find out how!



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Clever ways to save Santa from the sack



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Because you're never too old, even if you are



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INSTANT UPGRADES: SNOW SPORTS
Have the right stuff for the white stuff





CHRISTMAS DINNER

Making the big lunch? Les Dunn, managing editor of food magazine *Delicious*, shows how to avoid tough turkey, gelatinous gravy and average accompaniments

THE BASICS

■ **Don't give the bird the bird...** Everyone expects turkey, but make it an outdoor-reared one. Slow-grown beauts from Copas (copasturkeys.co.uk) or Kelly Bronze (kellyturkeys.co.uk) have more fat, for more flavour, and dense, rich meat. Plus they actually cook quicker.

■ **...and don't dismiss other fowl.** It's not cheap and its mildly gamey charms may be lost on your sister's sulky teenage daughter, but goose, as any gourmand will tell you, is the king of meats. Check out goodmansgeese.co.uk



■ **Make your tray *bien*.** You want a large, thick roasting tin that won't buckle and that you can make the gravy in (see below). Le Creuset's last a lifetime (3-ply stainless steel roaster, £155, johnlewis.com).

■ **Get probing.** Your bird will be succulent if you take it out when its internal temperature is 65°C; a digital probe thermometer will tell you that without you opening the oven. The ChefAlarm (£42, thermometer.co.uk) is a cracker.

■ **Have a cunning (time) plan.** Out of the oven on a board, the bird will continue to cook then tenderise as it rests, uncovered, for two hours plus. That's plenty of time to do everything else. Get the bird in early – sorted.

■ **Sod the nut roast.** My veggie friends love Christmas dinner for the same reason as everyone else – the fantastic trimmings. So eschew a dodgy meat-free centrepiece... but make a veggie gravy and cook the spuds in vegetable oil.





VEG PREP

■ **Roasties with the mosties.** Peel, quarter, boil for seven mins, drain and let dry. Put the lid on, shake until fluffy, add salt, toss in melted goose fat and roast at 200°C (180°C fan, gas mark 6) for 50-60 minutes.

■ **The 's' word.** Don't avoid sprouts – just choose the small ones, which are less sulphurous. Steam for seven mins then mix with crisp-fried lardons.

■ **Make it easy on yourself.** Carrots and parsnips tossed in oil and some salt and pepper, then simply roasted, will taste as good as anything on the plate.



LEVEL UP WITH...

The Perfect Christmas Dinner

THE APP

THE PERFECT CHRISTMAS DINNER

£free / iOS

This app from the Ashburton Cookery School in Devon has 26 HD videos, presented by the school's chef-tutors, covering canapés, mains (turkey, partridge and nut roast), trimmings and sauces. The only let-down is the puddings (there's no Christmas pud!) but the frangipane-topped mince pies are a winner and will make you the talk of the Christmas party circuit.



THE TV SHOW

EAT WELL FOR LESS? CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

BBC One

(date and time TBC)

Shouty Gregg Wallace from *MasterChef* and his greengrocer pal Chris Bavin aim to show you how to keep your Christmas food quality high without going bankrupt. If you still need convincing homemade is better (and better value), watching these boys give a spendthrift family a financial re-education should change your mind.



THE LESSON

HH & CO BACKSTAGE COOKERY SCHOOL: CHRISTMAS MADE EASY!

£200 / limewoodhotel.co.uk

(7, 8, 9 or 10 December)

Videos not cutting it? Head to this swanky hotel in the New Forest, whose restaurant and cookery school are co-owned by top chef Angela Hartnett. They pack a lot into a day, including canapés, mince pies and the big lunch. Take your main squeeze and make a night of it (credit card permitting).

[**Image** Laura Edwards]



SAUCE CODE

■ **Gravy-trained (serves 8).** Drain off all but two tbsp of fat from the bird's tin and mix in two tbsp of flour on the hob. Whisk in one litre of fresh chicken stock. Stir in the bird's resting juices, then strain into a gravy boat.

■ **Get-ahead bread sauce.** Make ahead, freeze, then on the day reheat it in a pan, stirring in the butter and cream to finish (see deliciousmagazine.co.uk).

■ **The right stuffing.** Stuffing the bird is extra work and you won't get a crunchy topping. Cook it in a smart baking dish instead and bring to the table.



LEFTOVERS

■ **Don't chuck the carcass.** Put in a pressure cooker (Tefal Secure 5, £55, amazon.co.uk), cover with water and add one carrot, one celery stick, 12 black peppercorns and a quartered onion. Once boiling, cook for 40 mins. Strain, freeze, then use for gravy, soups and stews.

■ **Boxing Day hash.** Fry torn ham and turkey in a little oil with chilli flakes until browned, then mix with chopped leftover veg and potatoes. Heat through, then crack four eggs on top and put under the grill until cooked with a runny yolk. Serve with ketchup, watching *Bad Santa*.



CHRISTMAS COCKTAIL: LUXE FIZZ

1 Through a sieve, squeeze the juice of 10 tangerines into a saucepan, squashing the pulp with a wooden spoon.

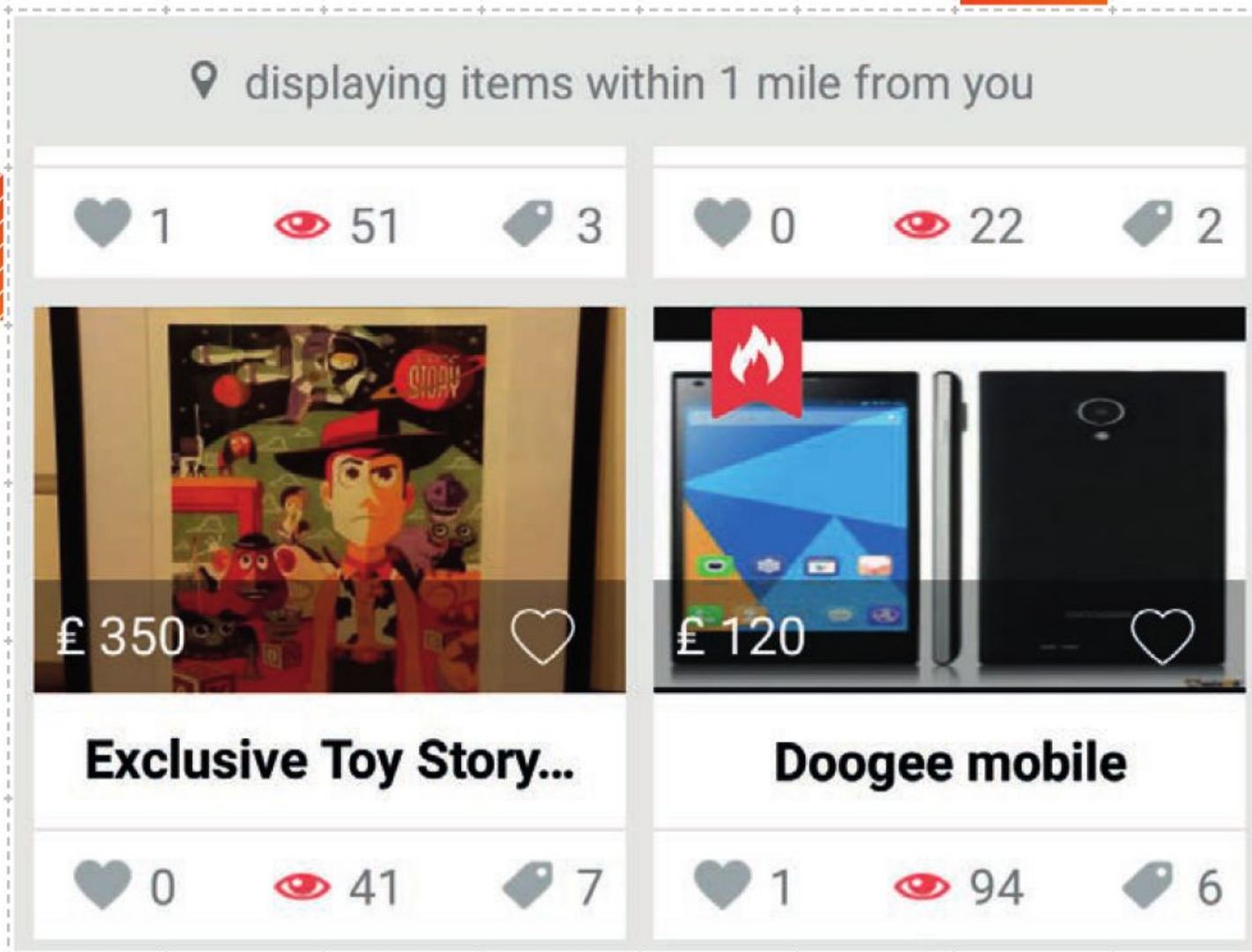
2 Add 30g caster sugar and heat, stirring so the sugar dissolves, until it bubbles, then cool and strain through muslin, using a funnel, into a sterilised bottle (makes 200ml).

3 On Christmas Day, pour 25ml cordial into a chilled glass. Top up with champagne, then add a dash of Campari and a few drops of orange bitters. Finish with a strip of tangerine peel.

PLAYLIST

SHOPPING TOOLS

Left your Christmas buying to the last minute again? What are you like? But don't panic – these free apps and browser extensions are the money-saving elves your wallet needs









Quidco

The old cliché 'You have to spend money to make money' might be a boardroom classic, but this cashback site brings the idea to online shopping. All you have to do is use one of Quidco's links before buying and it'll give you a cut of the commission it gets for sending you there.

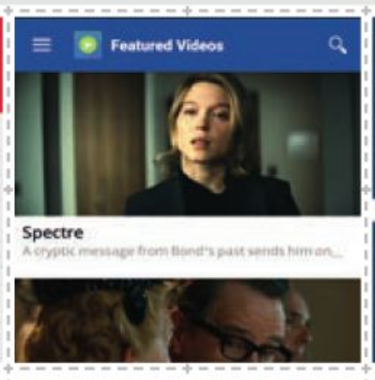
£free / Android, iOS, Chrome



Christmas Gift List

Did you buy that for your brother or dad? And was it £5 or £25? By mid-December, Christmas shopping can leave your mind in tatters. Keep track of everything with this app and you can use your brain shelves for storing more useful stuff. It keeps track of who's getting what, and how much you've spent.

£free / Android



Swagbucks

It might sound like a scam that promises to earn you thousands for working from home, but Swagbucks really can snag you vouchers for your Christmas goodies. All you have to do is, wait for it, watch ads or trailers on your phone. A lot. Tip: you don't actually have to be watching them.

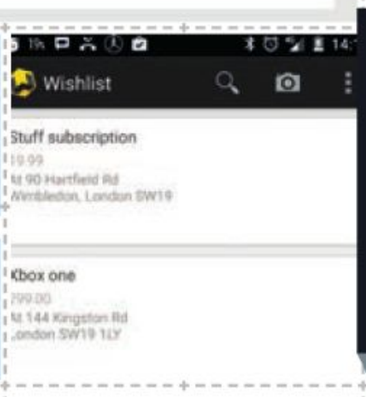
£free / Android, iOS, Chrome



Flubit

Try bartering in a real shop and you're more likely to get asked to leave than wangle a discount. But Flubit loves nothing more than haggling on your behalf – simply paste the thing you're after in its interface; it will approach retailers to get you a lower price. Too good to be true? Sounds it, but this actually works.

£free / Chrome



Wisher

Cross Twitter with a Christmas list and you end up with this. Wisher is a social network app where you set up a list of gift requests and can check out the lists of people you follow. You can then buy gifts and see what has been bought, so they don't get three pairs of the same trainers.

£free / Android, iOS, Chrome

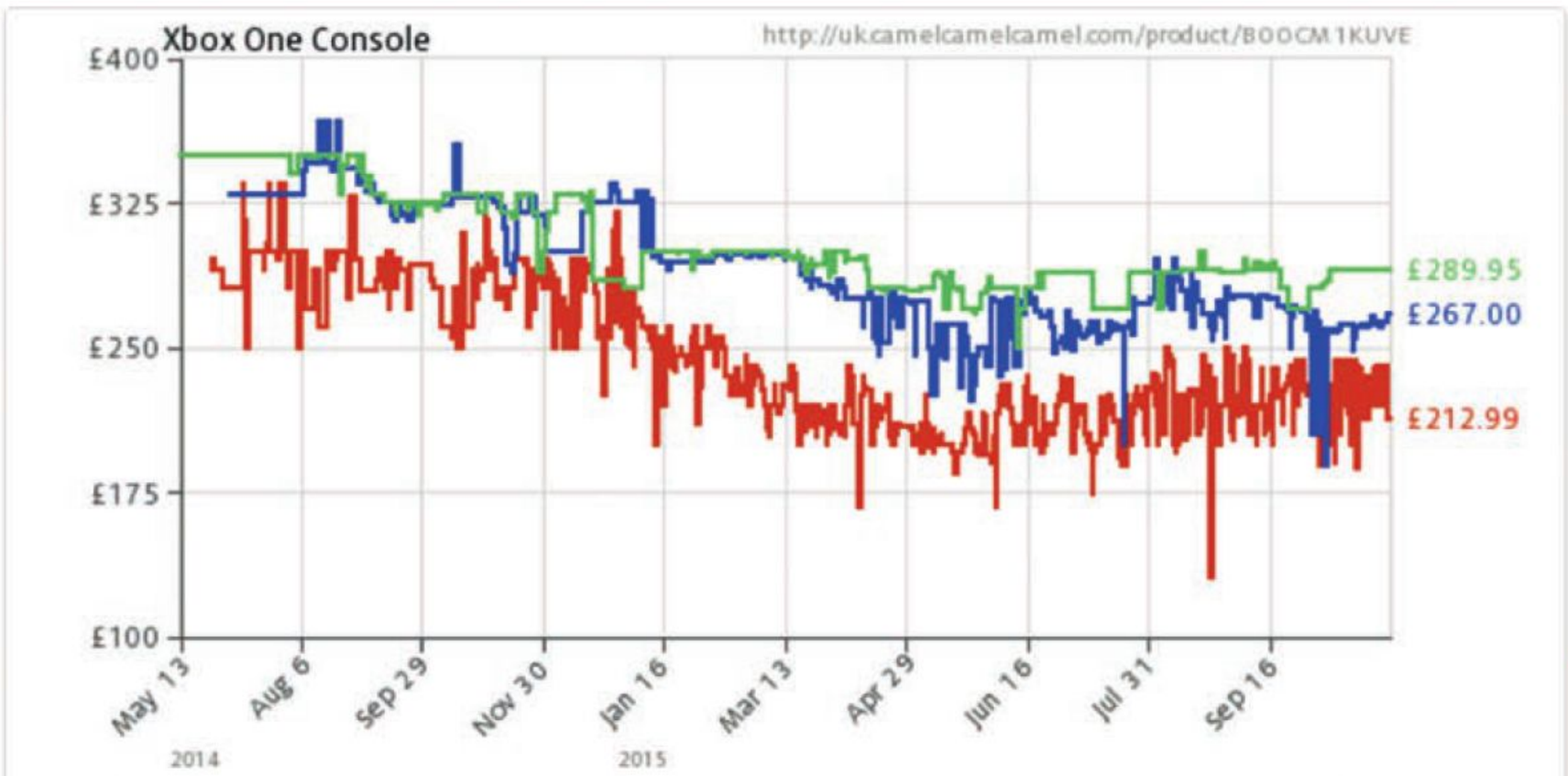


The Camelizer

If you want to do all of your shopping in just an hour or two rather than dragging it out, Amazon is the way forward. Its prices change all the time, though. To check you're not on the cusp of a radical price drop, you can use the Camelizer plugin to check the entire price history of products.

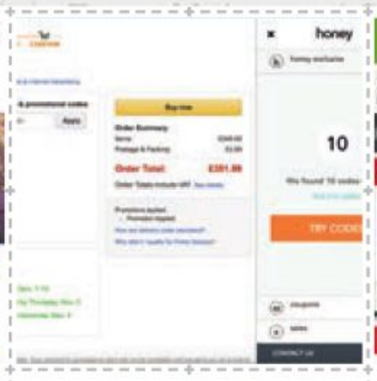
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[**Words** Andrew Williams]





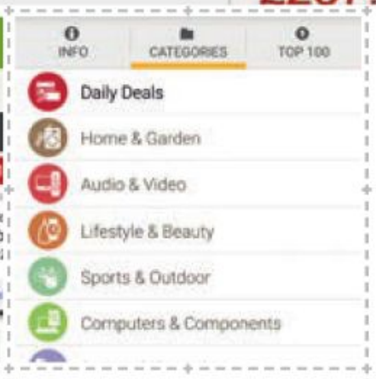
Zeek
Money may not feel real unless it has the Queen stamped on it, but a digital voucher will still buy Crimbo presents. Zeek is an app that lets you buy digital gift cards for all sorts of retailers at a discount, including Amazon, Starbucks and Topman. You can save up to 25%, though usually it's just a few quid off.
£free / Android, iOS



Honey
No-one wants to be that person at the checkout fumbling with tatty coupons and causing a grumpy pile-up. This plugin helps you find voucher codes for reams of retailers without doing the digging yourself. For some retailers it'll even try out all of the available codes for you.
£free / Chrome, Firefox



HotUKDeals
The best way to bag a bargain is to get someone else to do the legwork for you. This is a UK forum where rabid bargain hunters post online and high-street deals. You can end up saving hundreds with it, but it's more likely you'll just end up buying lots more stuff. You have been warned.
£free / Android, iOS, Chrome, Firefox



PriceSpy
One sure way to waste your life is to spend hours online looking for price drops. Comparison apps give you the results without the soul-draining effort. PriceSpy goes beyond most by letting you track products and get emails or push notifications when their prices go down.
£free / Android, iOS

SENT FROM ABOVE: MONEY-SAVING POSTAGE SERVICES

FOR HUGE GIFTS
Need a way to shift the grand piano you just bought for your gran? Anyvan is a service that lets you post details of your delivery, then large item couriers and 'man in a van' types can bid to shift your goods. You'll generally get a much better deal than from a courier quote.
anyvan.com

collect+
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Long queues, awkward locations and high prices make the Post Office a less-than-exciting prospect for those looking to post weighty parcels. CollectPlus lets you drop your gift off at newsagents and minimarkets across the land before delivering them by courier, all for very competitive prices.
collectplus.co.uk

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Not impressed with the quote you've had for your emergency Christmas delivery? Parcel2Go lets you check out all the major couriers at once, often with a discount. It sometimes gets really cheap deals on spare lorry spaces and offers worldwide delivery too.
parcel2go.com

SUPER GEEK



ACTION FIGURES

Toys have moved on since that plastic He-Man you got for your eighth birthday. Collector Peter Brown reveals why it's time to rediscover your love for miniature heroes...

If the '70s and '80s were the golden years for action figures, today is the platinum age. There are now toys for almost every film, video game and TV show, aimed at all ages. And when you get to the big leagues (in particular, Hot Toys) the detail is astounding – metals and plastics, lights and sounds, and beautiful, lifelike sculpts. Hot Toys even recently previewed a 1/6th-scale figure of comic book legend Stan Lee to watch over the rest of your collection.

My addiction started when I was a poorly child in hospital having my tonsils out. My parents got me a Transformer (Sideswipe, a red Autobot Lamborghini Countach LP500S) to keep me busy. The robot transformation was simple enough for seven-year-old me to change him from robot to car and back again. From there I moved on to He-Man figures with spring-action bodies and A-Team figures, while lusting after the M.A.S.K. Boulder Hill play set.

Action figure collectors tend to be one of three types: investors, casual collectors or nostalgia lovers. A few years ago I tried collecting for investment and found out how hard it is – you have to be single-minded, prepared to pay a premium for rare figures and happy to travel great distances to attend toy fairs 'just in case'. I'm now more of a 'casual nostalgia' hybrid – if I'm at a boot fair or on eBay and see something cool, I'll give it a punt, but I won't pay over the odds. A rare Palitoy Boba Fett recently sold for £18,000 at auction, a record for a Star Wars figure. That's ridiculous.

There's an emerging market for custom-built and modified figures. 'Kit-bashing' has always been popular in model-making circles, and now it's joined the action figure scene. You'll pay more for a customised figure, but pick the right artist and it'll be worth the investment.

My best advice for beginners is to start small – find a subject you enjoy and run with that. If you love a figure, buy two: one for storage and one to open. That way your collection stays clean, but you get to decorate the area next to your TV with posed battles between Aliens, Predators and superheroes.

JARGON BUSTER

MIMB
Stands for 'mint in mint box'. A factory-fresh (usually vintage) figure that's still in its original box, in perfect condition, with no dog-ears, tears or sun-bleaching. See also MOMC, or mint on mint card.

BNIB
'Brand new in box'. The same quality standard as MIMB, but used in relation to more modern toys.

LOOSE
The figure has been removed from the box or card. Do some research, and check if any original accessories are included. Expect the joints to be floppy, and paint to be chewed off.

POINTS OF ARTICULATION
These are the joints of a figure. If you're interested in realistic posing, the more the merrier. Be aware that over time joints will loosen and the figure won't be able to stand on its own as easily as when it was new.

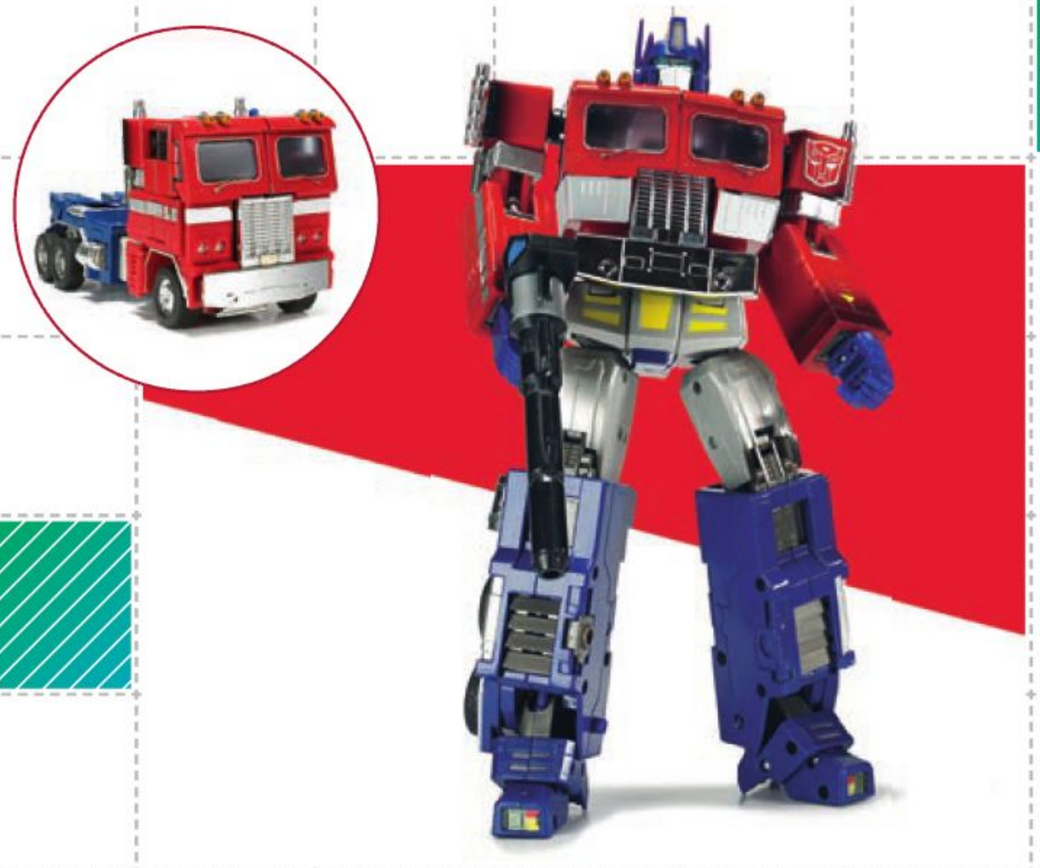


TV STAR MADE IMMORTAL

DELUXE ACTION FIGURE: RICK GRIMES

This 10in McFarlane Toys figure is one of the latest from TV zombie-fest *The Walking Dead*. It's a simple figure, with only a few points of articulation at the wrist and elbows, but comes with a pistol, shotgun and knife. It's also based on a 3D scan of Andrew Lincoln (who plays Rick Grimes in the show) and the paintwork makes for a very lifelike replica. The advantage over multi-articulated figures is that it won't ever sag, making it a great display piece. Figures from *The Walking Dead* should have long-term collectable appeal, aided by the recent spin-off *Fear Of The Walking Dead*.

£30 / forbiddenplanet.com

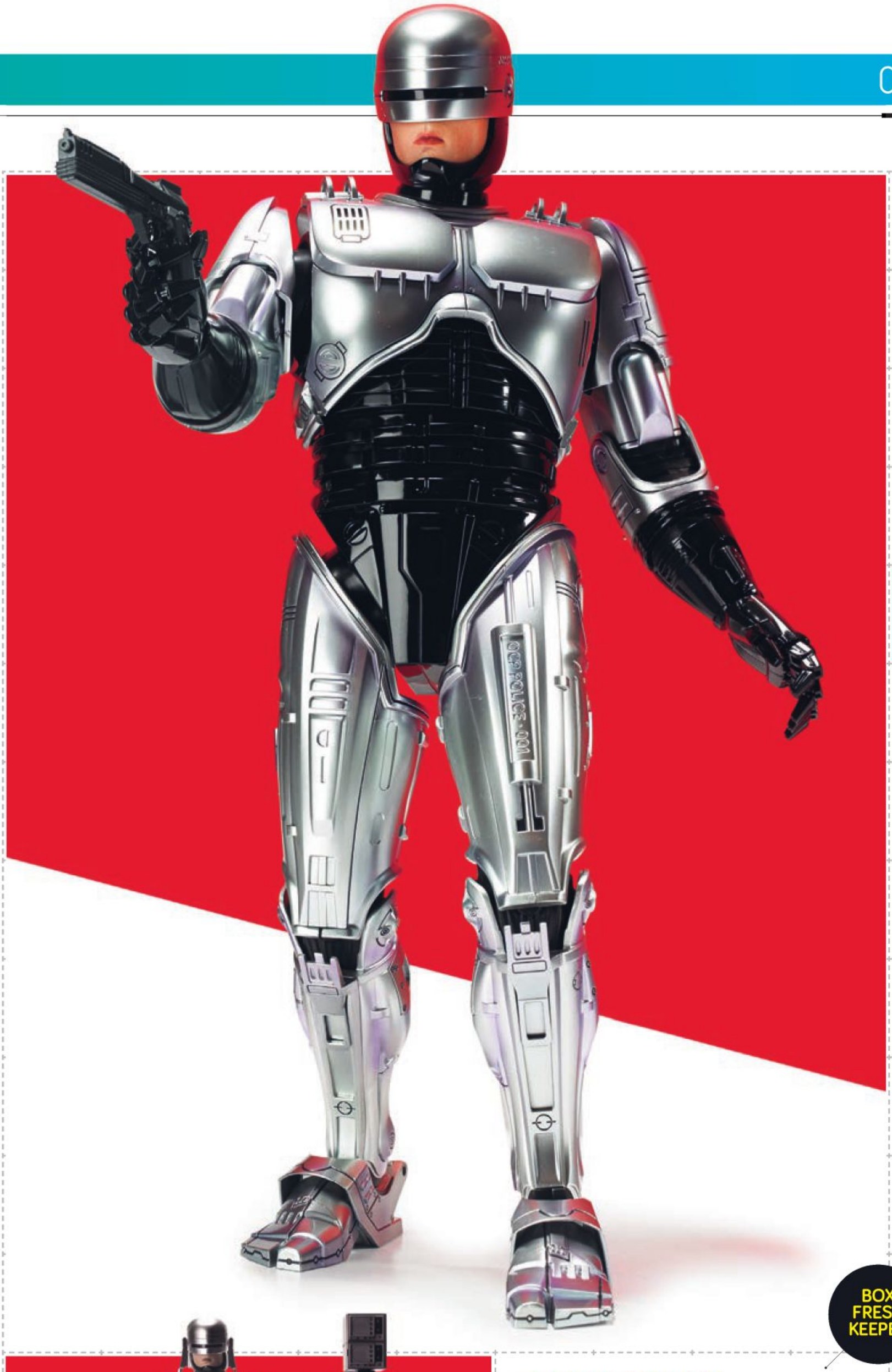


BIG IN JAPAN

HASBRO TRANSFORMERS 20TH ANNIVERSARY OPTIMUS PRIME

If you were a *Transformers* fan in the '80s, you probably had an annoying friend who was bought an amazing Optimus Prime figure. This version harks back to that G1 original, but adds scale and complexity. The transformation is fiddly (keep the instructions handy) and, unlike the original, it doesn't come with a trailer. But the European version is a perennial eBay find, with mint examples going for several hundred pounds already. The rarer Japanese version has über-cool sharp-sprung smokestack extensions, which add to its collectability.

from £150 / ebay.co.uk



LEVEL UP WITH...



THE WEBSITE

ACTION FIGURE INSIDER

Created by two collectors who have been nerding out about action figures since the '70s, this site combines daily news and an active forum with boards on everything from toy conventions to insider rumours. Its 'Toy Library' is also home to reviews of pretty much every action figure from the last decade.
actionfigureinsider.com



THE BOOK

STAR WARS: THE ULTIMATE ACTION FIGURE COLLECTION (STEPHEN SANSWEET)

More nostalgic guided tour than encyclopaedic reference, this 350-pager examines the 2500 Star Wars figures released over the past 35 years. The author is the owner of the world's largest Star Wars collection, housed at a storehouse called Rancho Obi-Wan.
£20 / amazon.co.uk



THE YOUTUBE CHANNEL

ANTHONYSCUSTOMS

When sizing up a figure, it always helps to get the thoughts of someone who makes them for a living. Every Monday this channel, created by a builder of high-end customs, posts a new unboxing, review or tour of a DIY custom or sculpting job. If you want to see where the hobby's rabbit hole leads, subscribe to this YouTube channel.

BOX FRESH KEEPER



ROBOCOP WITH MECHANICAL CHAIR

You'd buy that for a dollar? Sadly, Sideshow Collectibles is charging a lot more. This 1/6th-size set recreates Detroit's deliverer, and his mechanical chair, in incredible detail. There are regular and battle-damaged helmets, four mouth variants, a plastic and diecast metal gun, and so many hands that we lost count. The articulation is beautiful, so you can pose RoboCop standing next to, or sitting in, the chair to recreate your favourite scenes. If kept in good condition (or if you have the willpower to never open it), it may increase massively in value over the years.

£300 / forbiddenplanet.com

[Pictures Fullstop]

6 INSTANT UPGRADES

SNOW SPORTS

Plunging down the side of a mountain used to be something people tried to avoid, but with the right tech at your back it's an absolute giggle



[**Words** Nicola Iseard **Illustration** Jamie Sneddon]



1 SALOMON X-MAX PHOTOCHROMIC GOGGLE

The buzz phrase in the world of goggles this winter is 'field of view', and here you're getting a mighty wide one via a low-profile frame and Salomon's biggest ever lens. The tech is impressive: the photochromic lens responds to changing light, and the Twin Lock system allows fast lens changes without the need to actually touch them. On the inside, there's a flexible inner frame for a snug fit and quick-drying, triple-layer foam.
£215 / salomon.com



2 BACKCOUNTRY ACCESS BC LINK RADIO

If you're tired of mountainous phone bills and patchy reception during your ski trips, consider investing in a set of these. Aimed at those who spend their time in the backcountry, the two-way BC Link consists of a radio/battery unit that sits inside your bag and a lightweight mic that clips to the outside. Glove-friendly controls make it easy to use without freezing your 'tips off, you get a five-mile line-of-sight range and 140hr battery life, and it's compatible with all FRS/GMRS radios.
£115 / backcountryaccess.com



3 MARMOT ISOTHERM HOODY

The problem with most 'puffy' mid-layers is that they aren't breathable – so you can easily overheat and sweat. Not so with Marmot's industry award-winner. It's made with Polartec Alpha fabric, which has a unique knit structure that allows heat and moisture to move through the insulation, and is lined with a hyper-breathable mesh. The jacket is lightweight, has reinforced soft shell shoulders and an attached hood, and packs down small so you can stow it away when the mercury rises.
£180 / marmot.com



4 PEAK PERFORMANCE HELI VERTICAL SUIT

When you're slashing deep pow, there's nothing like a one-piece to keep the snow from sneaking in where it shouldn't. The Heli Vertical all-in-one is inspired by military drysuits, with its 'don't mess with me' camo green and minimalist styling. It's waterproof, made with Gore-Tex's breathable three-layer C-knit fabric, and features snow gaiters, a helmet-compatible hood with BOA system and double leg ventilation – ideal for letting off steam mid-run.
£925 / peakperformance.com



5 BLACK DIAMOND HALO 28 JETFORCE AIRBAG

The Jetforce is the first avalanche airbag to be powered by a fan rather than a compressed air canister. The battery-powered jet-fan inflates a 200L airbag in 3.5 seconds, followed by top-up bursts, and then deflates after three minutes to create an air pocket in the case of burial. It's good for four deployments per charge and is air-travel-friendly too. A dedicated pocket for avalanche tools tops it all off.
£900 / blackdiamondequipment.com



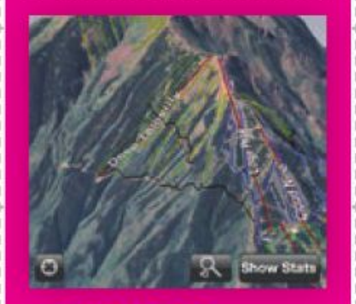
6 SWEET PROTECTION GRIMNIR HELMET

Sweet Protection's most advanced freeride helmet is made with light yet tough carbon fibre, while the shell and liner are separated by a low-friction layer that lets the helmet slide relative to the head during impact, dramatically reducing the rotational forces to the brain. The tech doesn't end there: among the shell's 26 vents are threaded fasteners for attaching action cams – it's certified for use with GoPros and Contours.
£330 / sweetprotection.com

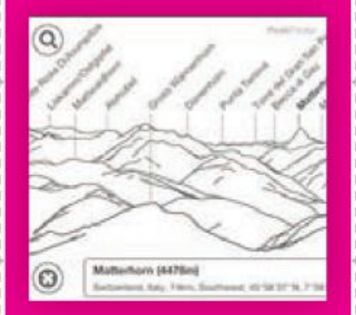
BEST SKI SMARTPHONE APPS



ZUMOBI SKI AND SNOW REPORT
Keep on top of the forecast with this app, which clearly presents information on snow depth, a five-day forecast, lift openings and live webcams.
£free / iOS, Android



ITRAILMAP 3D
Forget soggy paper maps; this app gives you a high-res 3D piste map covering 750 resorts worldwide. It'll show your GPS location and record skiing stats too.
£3.99 / iOS



PEAKFINDER EARTH
Arguing with your mate about which mountain that is up there? Load this app on your phone, hold it up to the horizon and it will provide its name and stats.
£2.99 / iOS, Android



TRACE SNOW
This snowy statfest logs the lot – from altitude, speed and distance to calories burned and airtime. It also shows your progress over time and replays runs in 3D.
£free / iOS, Android

GADGET DOCTOR

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facebook.com/joinstuff ● @stuffTV
google.com/+stufftv ● stuff@haymarket.com



MAIL OF THE MONTH

Q TELL ME THE 'TOOTH
I want to buy a portable audio system that's also capable of playing music straight through Bluetooth from my phone and laptop – something that can handle both late evening Sinatra and midday hip-hop. If it lasts 10 hours on a charge, that's a bonus!
Bill Locke

A Bill, we're not sure what your budget is, but the revamped Cambridge Audio Go (£120, johnlewis.co.uk) sounds about right. It has aptX Bluetooth as well as NFC for phone pairing. It's a little larger than most, but that means it fits in two main drivers, two tweeters and a bass radiator... and it has an 18-hour battery life.

Speak your brains to *Stuff* and you could win a six-month **TIDAL HIFI SUBSCRIPTION**
This letter wins six months of high-fidelity music and video streaming from TIDAL, worth £20/month

TIDAL



Q I'M IN A (MUD)FLAP
Hi *Stuff*. Bit of a specific question, this. The mudflap on my bike has snapped, but I've always thought it looked quite ugly anyway, so not that fussed. But I do need a new one, especially in this weather, and would like one that can be easily removed/stowed when not in use. Anything out there that won't break the bank?
Tim Danston

A A specific question requires a specific answer. And in this case, that answer is the £25 Plume (tokyobike.co.uk) Not only is it stylish (well, for a mudflap), but you don't have to bother removing it. It rolls up like a snap bracelet, whereupon it doubles as a rear reflector. You'll be the envy of the bikeshed, you will.

Q MY IDIOT BOX NEEDS A BRAIN
I've got a pretty old TV – well, around 10 years old. Obviously it doesn't do any of the smart streaming tricks that newer ones do, and I'd like to give it some brains instead of forking out for a new TV. I do have a PS4 in the games room, but I don't fancy carting it to the living room every time. And I don't really feel like splashing out a lot of money, as I just want something to tide me over until the sales next year, where hopefully I'll be able to pick up my dream 4K set at a sale. Any ideas?
Laura Bracknell

A Easy peasy, Laura. The new Google Chromecast should sort you out. Stick it in the HDMI port, make sure it's got access to a plug (your TV might not have a USB port if it's that old), and boom – welcome to the land of smart streaming. From Netflix to YouTube, and lots more besides, the Chromecast will kick your telly into the modern binge-streaming age. Best of all, it only costs £30 (currys.co.uk).

Q I'M BE-WATCHED
Stuff, I'm in the market for a smartwatch. I've got a Galaxy S6, which rules out the Apple Watch, and that's fine by me. I was going to nab the new Moto 360 as it's the best-looking one, but then I spotted the Samsung Gear S2. I understand that it runs its own OS, not Android Wear, so will apps be a problem? The rotating bezel is very appealing, so I'm willing to give it a shot as long as it gets the basics done.
Prithviraj Patel

A We won't detain you too long here, because there's a shootout between those two very products on page 84. But, in summary, the Moto 360 is indeed quite the looker, and if that's your most important buying criterion then we'd stick with that. We like the physical controls of the Gear S2's bezel, but its Tizen OS is still massively lacking in apps.

Q I'M RON BURGUNDY... OR COULD BE SOON
Hi Doc. I want to start my own YouTube channel reviewing gadgets and tech – but don't worry, I'm not asking for a freebie! I'm after a cheap teleprompter, but I have no idea where to look. I'm only 15 and I don't have that much cash to blow on equipment, so any help would be massively appreciated.
Chris Teller

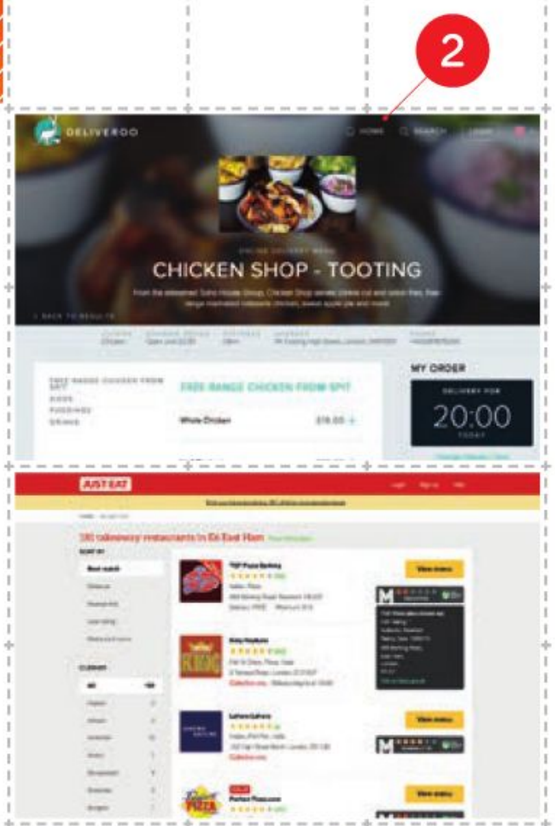
A Put that money towards a decent mic, Chris, because you definitely don't need to buy a teleprompter – there are lots of tablet apps out there that'll do the job. But even if you don't have a tablet, fear not, because there's a great free one online that'll sort you right out. Hit up teleprompter.com/app and begin your YouTube journey.

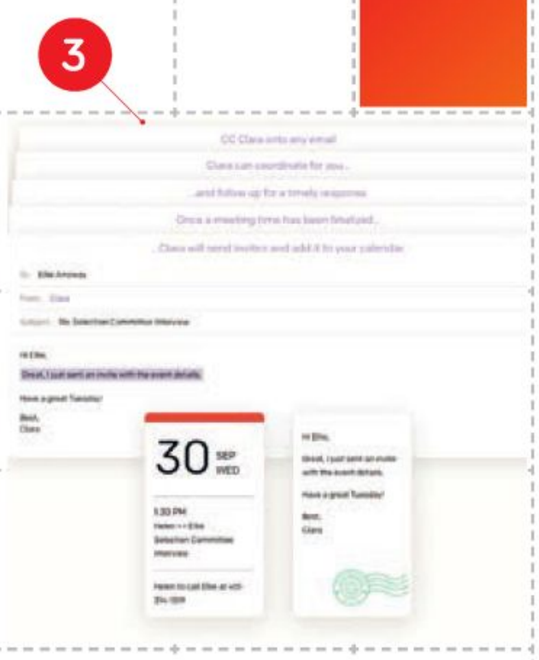


5-MINUTE HACKS

IF NOTHING ELSE, AT LEAST...







1 UNLOCK YOUR CANON DSLR'S POTENTIAL

If you want to open your Canon camera's eyes to a whole new world of software features (and don't mind potentially invalidating its warranty), give this free firmware add-on a spin:

Install the software. Go to magiclantern.fm and find your Canon model. Now download the files and copy them onto a blank memory card you've just formatted in your camera.

Find the lantern. Put the card into your camera and run the firmware update to install Magic Lantern. Restart it, then press the delete button to access the ML menus with dozens of new options.

Get tweaking. Our favourite features include Magic Zoom, which provides a magnified preview of your video subject to help you keep it in focus, and the intervalometer for setting up timelapses without the need for extra hardware.

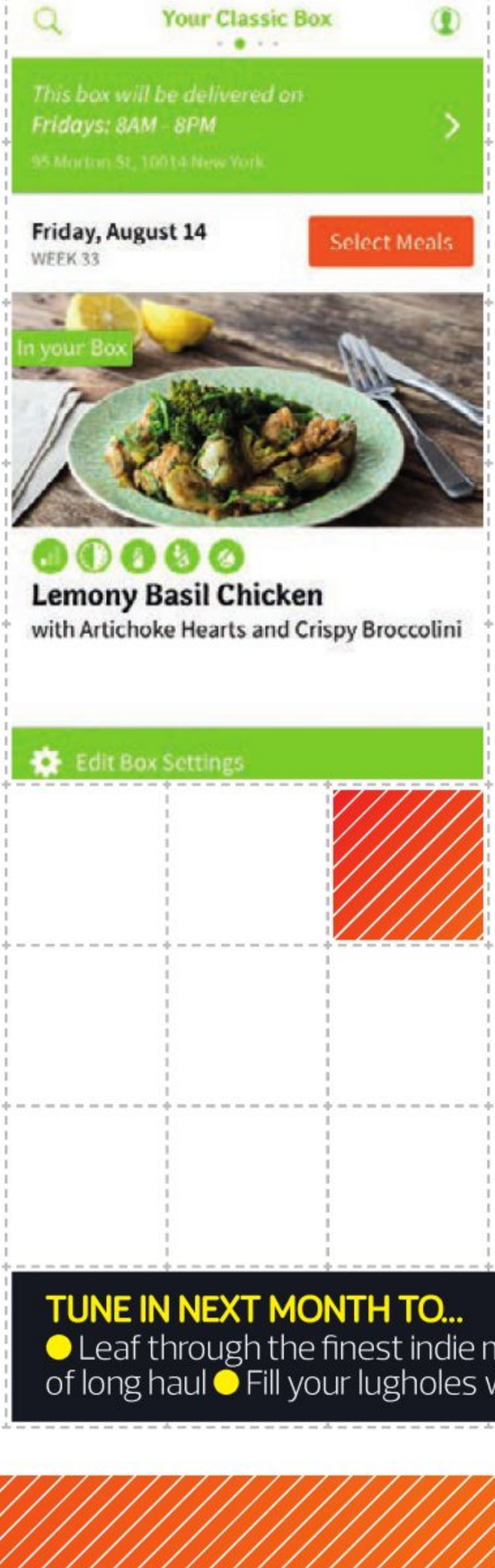
2 GET BETTER TAKEAWAYS

Getting food delivered directly to your rumbling stomach has never been easier, but quality can still be hit and miss. Boost your chances of a tasty takeaway with these tricks:

Inspect their kitchens. The Chrome extension MunchDB (£free, chrome.google.com) overlays official hygiene ratings from the Food Standards Agency on listings from JustEat and HungryHouse, rating them from nauseating to fantastic.

Broaden your search. Deliveroo (£free, iOS) offers takeaways from restaurants such as MEATliquor (or your local Italian) that don't otherwise do deliveries. It usually only charges an extra £2.50 on top of standard menu prices.

Cook it yourself. If you'd rather get the ingredients for a healthy meal delivered directly to your wok, HelloFresh (£free, iOS) sends boxes (from £40) for a week's worth of meals along with recipes that take under 30 minutes.



3 GET A ROBOT SECRETARY

Tired of endless back-and-forth chats about times for meetings? One of these automated calendar-comparing geniuses will organise it all for you:

For Slack, go to meekan.com and follow the instructions in the Slack Robot tab. Once set up, you can ask the Meekan robot to compare your team's calendars and suggest times that suit everyone. As long as everyone's calendar is up to date, of course.

For Google Calendar, Clara (from US$50/month, claralabs.com) is a more advanced automated assistant who can be CC'd into emails to help organise your work and social life. She currently only works in Google Calendar, but Outlook is in the works.

For everything, Genee (£free, web.genee.me) avoids platform compatibility issues by sending your invitees an email and asking them to pick a time that suits. You can speak to Genee via email, text, Twitter or its iOS app.

TUNE IN NEXT MONTH TO...
● Leaf through the finest indie magazines ● Survive the hell of long haul ● Fill your lugholes with awe-inspiring audiobooks

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Stuff TOP TEN OF EVERYTHING

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Home cinema 138
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Cameras 144

For full reviews of every product in the Top Tens, visit stuff.tv/reviews

1 HOT BUY



Samsung Galaxy S6

This is a new era for Samsung, with a smart upgrade that fixes not just things that were amiss in the Galaxy S5, but things that have plagued them for years. No plastic here: its front and back are super-tough Gorilla Glass 4, its sides aluminium. In terms of ergonomics and speaker quality, HTC still wins, but only just. And in the more important areas of camera performance, screen tech and raw power, the Galaxy S6 tramples its rival. We just wish it had a microSD slot.

STUFF SAYS
Samsung has proven its critics wrong – the Galaxy S6 is the new benchmark for flagship phones

from £400 ★★★★★

2		**Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge+** The Edge+ is a larger version of the curvy S6 Edge that wowed us earlier this year; its extra chunk of screen and camera are terrific, while it's also technologically superior to almost everything out there. For a money-no-object phone, it's an absolute corker.	from £550 ★★★★★	BEST FOR CUTTING-EDGE GADGETEERS
3		**LG G4** The leather-clad LG G4 is a treat for those who want something that looks and feels a bit different. Its camera is incredibly powerful, giving you almost as much control as a DSLR, and the large screen is brilliant... but the battery life holds it back from the top.	£330 ★★★★★	
NEW 4		**Google Nexus 6P** The 6P gets the Nexus series back on the rails. Camera? Design? Performance? Software? All get a serious thumbs-up. Standouts include the finger scanner and the front camera, which are among the very best available at any price.	from £450 ★★★★★	
5		**Apple iPhone 6s** "Everything's changed" is pushing it, but within the 6s's familiar body lies a surprising amount of innovation. You'll really notice the A9 processor's added speed, the 12MP camera's scope and quality, and of course, the time-saving delight that is 3D Touch.	from £540 ★★★★★	
6		**OnePlus 2** The second OnePlus phone massively undercuts the big names with performance, software and battery life that far exceed some of the £500-odd competition. The only thing that might put you off is simply how much of a pain the OnePlus 2 is to get hold of.	from £240 ★★★★★	
7		**Vodafone Smart Prime 6** Want the biggest, sharpest display for under £100? This 5in 720p screen wouldn't look out of place in a phone twice the price. If you like gaming or want to watch videos on the move, this is a real bargain – as long as you don't mind being locked to Vodaphone.	from £70 ★★★★★	BEST FOR SUPER VALUE
8		**Sony Xperia Z5** Do a higher-megapixel camera and neat fingerprint scanner revitalise this Sony? Nearly but not quite. This is a very good and attractive phone, but its price seems pretty steep when it has no killer feature to offer over other Android kings.	£480 ★★★★☆	
9		**Apple iPhone 6s Plus** The iPhone 6s Plus provides an expansive, immersive experience thanks to its giant screen. But many will find it too cumbersome, which defeats the purpose of those brilliant OIS and Live Photos camera features, and the 6s is clearly the faster phone.	from £620 ★★★★☆	
10		**Motorola Moto G (2015)** The third-gen model takes everything we loved about the previous Moto Gs, sidesteps the performance issues and adds in a great camera and waterproofing to finish off the package. However, the price hike means it's not quite as bargainy as before.	£160 ★★★★☆	

● Prices quoted are for handset only unless otherwise stated

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2. Open the app, hold your phone 10cm over the page and wait for the swirly vortex.



3. Scroll through the products and pick your options, just like a normal online purchase.



4. Hit 'buy' to get it now or the heart to save for later. Proceed to kitchen, make cup of tea.

1 HOT BUY



Apple iPad Air 2

The iPad Air didn't really need to be thinner, but that doesn't mean 6.1mm isn't mighty impressive. This combines with reassuring weight and impeccable build quality to make this the most desirable tab on the planet. While the display is the same Retina resolution as before, clever screen tech brings the pixels closer to the surface, and the whole experience is even faster than before thanks to the new A8X chip. Basically it's the best tablet in the world made even better.

STUFF SAYS
Thinner, lighter and mightier: Apple's iron-fisted reign at the top of the tablet charts continues unabated

from £400 ★★★★★

2 NEW



Apple iPad Mini 4

This is the mini tab we've been waiting for. It's 1.4mm thinner and 32g lighter, just the right size for a great portable entertainment hub, and subtle display tweaks will do justice to games and graphic novels alike. Plus it will easily last three days on a charge.

from £320 ★★★★★

3



Sony Xperia Z4 Tablet

Sony have added a keyboard to this already stunning tab, so now it's handy for work as well as play, just like a Windows hybrid. Superb battery life, plenty of power, a slim body and super-vivid screen make this the best Android alternative to an iPad Air 2.

£500 (with keyboard) ★★★★★

4



Samsung Galaxy Tab S2 9.7

Slimmer and faster, with a brilliant screen and serious stamina, the Galaxy Tab S2 sees Samsung back in the running for the Android throne. The Xperia Z4 just pips it with its bundled keyboard, but the S2's a versatile, big-screen tab first and foremost.

£345 ★★★★★

BEST FOR WATCHING MOVIES

5



Tesco Hudl 2

At this price, the Hudl 2 has far more tech rammed into its 9.85mm-thick body than you'd ever expect. It has a Full HD screen, and its 273ppi display offers the sharpest of images. This is a jaw-dropping bargain, as long as you can put up with Tesco bloat.

£100 ★★★★★

6



Microsoft Surface Pro 3

At last, Microsoft has delivered on the promise of the tablet-cum-laptop hybrid. It proves there's space in the world for a design that's more productive than an iPad or Galaxy Note, but easier to hump around than a traditional laptop.

from £550 ★★★★★

7



Asus Transformer Book T100 Chi

While it may sit in the middle of 10in hybrid range on price, the Transformer Book T100 Chi is classier than the average tablet. Improvements to design, screen and keyboard quality make it a neat choice if you don't mind working with a small screen.

£250 ★★★★★

8



Google Nexus 9

The design isn't as pristine, but this is a real Android contender to rival the iPads. You get the new Android 6.0 Marshmallow software, bags of power and a super-sharp display. With 12 hours of video play and two front-facing speakers, it'll be a great film buddy.

£220 ★★★★☆

9



Sony Xperia Z3 Tablet Compact

A slim, light and reliable couch or commute companion, with a screen that looks brilliant despite being 'only' Full HD. The waterproofing may sway people away from choosing an iPad Mini and every gamer's eyes will light up at the mention of PS4 Remote Play.

£260 ★★★★☆

10



Microsoft Surface 3

Microsoft finally nailed the hybrid formula with the Surface Pro 3, and now it's translated it to this: a smart, ultra-portable design with the benefits of full Windows 8.1. It's easily the best affordable Surface yet. Just make sure you buy the keyboard.

£420 ★★★★☆

FOR THE FULL REVIEWS AND OUR TABLET BUYING GUIDE, VISIT WWW.STUFF.TV/TOP-10S/TABLETS



HOT BUY

1 Sonos multiroom system



Who needs to drill holes and replaster walls to get a multiroom music system? Not you. With the addition of the cracking little Play:1 (£165) Sonos has made it easier than ever to start spreading your tunes around. Then maybe hook up a Connect to your existing hi-fi and router, and add speakers to a Connect:Amp in another room, or a SUB for a bass boost. You'll run out of rooms before you run out of options. For a further upgrade, the Arcam rSeries SonLink DAC works a treat with the Connect.

STUFF SAYS
Infinite music in every room without the need for custom installers? Sign us up now, please

from £165 ★★★★★

2	 **Naim Mu-so** How much for a wireless speaker?! Well yes, but what a wireless speaker it is. Naim has ploughed all of its high-end hi-fi experience into delivering a beautifully made, great-sounding device with AirPlay, Spotify Connect and aptX Bluetooth all on board.	£895 ★★★★★	BEST FOR ONE-BOX WI-FI HI-FI
3	 **KEF Muo** The KEF Muo sounds as good as it looks, which is very nice indeed. It may be the size of a beer can, but it creates a room-filling sound, brilliantly balanced and packed with vim and vigour. The Muo has the audio solidity of the B&W T7, but with even greater detail.	£300 ★★★★★	
4	 **Google Chromecast Audio** The original Chromecast was a very bright idea: a device to stream TV directly from the internet. Chromecast Audio has arrived to do the same to your hi-fi. It's smart and highly affordable, and makes a huge variety of apps such as Spotify and Deezer more fun to use.	£30 ★★★★★	
5	 **Bowers & Wilkins T7** The T7 is B&W's first attempt at a portable Bluetooth speaker, and its good looks and real hi-fi sound combine to make it a real winner. It's solid and easy to use, and has an attractive honeycomb structure that helps reduce cabinet vibrations.	£300 ★★★★★	
6	 **Monitor Audio Airstream S200** It may look a bit like a floppy skyscraper, but the Monitor Audio's Bluetooth-plus-AirPlay speaker makes a lot of sense, mostly because it takes up very little shelf/desk/table space but makes loads of lovely noise. It's a bit of a steal at this price.	£200 ★★★★★	BEST FOR PICNIC PARTIES
7	 **Cambridge Audio Go** There are loads of very cheap Bluetooth speakers out there, but we reckon it's worth spending that little bit more to get something that's really good – and that's the Go. It sounds awesome, it's really nicely built and its battery lasts a massive 18 hours.	£120 ★★★★★	
8	 **Bluesound multiroom system** Fancy a bit of Sonos-style multiroom but with better-than-CD-quality sound thrown in? You want Bluesound. There are all-in-one speakers, adapters for your existing hi-fi, and a Vault that rips and stores all your CDs. All can handle high-resolution audio.	from £270 ★★★★★	
9	 **Cambridge Audio Minx Xi** It might not look all that fancy, but the Minx Xi is like that micro system you had at uni, only it gobbles internet music rather than Rage Against The Machine CDs. Just add a pair of quality speakers (try Wharfedale Diamond 220s) and you've got a great hi-fi.	£500 ★★★★★	
10	 **Q Acoustics BT3** These ultra-versatile Bluetooth speakers have an optical input for waking up the audio of your flatscreen TV. The styling is simple and so is the sound – brilliantly so, with perfect hi-fi balance and an impressive focus to the stereo image.	£280 ★★★★★	

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4. Hit 'buy' to get it now or the heart to save for later. Proceed to kitchen, make cup of tea.

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SEVENOAKS SOUND & VISION

WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2015
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
Multi-room systems
Best multi-room system £500+
Bluesound Generation 2

HIGH RES AUDIO · aptX csr · Bluetooth



WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION WHATHIFI.COM ★★★★★
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BLUETOOTH SPEAKERS

NEW

Based on the timeless Podspeakers design, the addition of premium apt-X Bluetooth connectivity makes the MiniPod Bluetooth a great addition to the iconic Podspeakers range. These active stereo speakers also include minijack, USB and optical inputs and a 192 kHz 24-bit DAC.

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aptX csr · Bluetooth



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BLUETOOTH SPEAKER

NEW

aptX csr · Bluetooth

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WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2015
Wireless speakers
Best portable wireless speaker £200+
KEF Muo

Packed with innovative technologies to deliver uncompromised KEF quality sound when you're streaming music wirelessly from a computer or mobile device. Muo packs a punch that is out of all proportion to its size.

£299.95

B&W ZEPPELIN WIRELESS

WIRELESS SPEAKER SYSTEM

NEW

Introducing the Zeppelin Wireless. The instantly recognisable silhouette may be the same, but every element of the speaker has been redesigned to deliver superlative audio performance; once again redefining what is possible from a single speaker system.

£499



Spotify · AirPlay · aptX csr · Bluetooth

B&W P5 WIRELESS

BLUETOOTH HEADPHONES

NEW



P5 performance, no wires. P5 Wireless with aptX Bluetooth sets a new standard for audio quality and convenience. With universal compatibility, 17 hour battery and P5's award-winning drivers and materials, wireless Hi-Fi headphones are here at last.

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WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2015
On-ear headphones
Best wireless headphones £250+
Bowers & Wilkins P5 Wireless

aptX csr · Bluetooth



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1 HOT BUY



AKG K451

They've actually been around a little while now, but what put the K451 on-ears back on to our radar was an official price drop from £130 to £80, and a real-world price of just £50 or less. For that money they're unbeatable – awesomely agile and punchy sound wrapped up in a subtly stylish and foldable design. Add both standard and three-button control cables for maximising compatibility and there's practically no excuse for not getting brilliant sound from your phone.

STUFF SAYS
Fantastic sound and great portability at an almost unbeatable price: the perfect phone upgrade

£40 ★★★★★

2		**Bowers & Wilkins P5 Series 2** Even the most demanding audio buff would find it hard to fault these – B&W have delivered a pair of premium on-ears that look, feel and sound exquisite. You control playback and volume with your iPhone, while feeling like a VIP guest at an intimate gig.	£200 ★★★★★	
3		**Philips Fidelio M1 MkII** Your commute deserves a quality soundtrack, and second-generation Fidelio M1 headphones give you precisely that. There's oodles of detail to the sound and they punch harder than the Hulk. Beats and their ilk can't touch them.	£125 ★★★★★	
4		**SoundMagic E10S** This is actually the third version of SoundMagic's awesome, affordable in-ears – not that you'd tell by looking. They sound even better, though: a little smoother and more refined, with tight, weighty bass. Plus there's now a mic and button for smartphone use.	£40 ★★★★★	
5		**Sony MDR-EX650AP** If you're prepared to pay a little extra for your in-ears, these Sonys are even better than the SoundMagics above. The sound is that bit bigger, a little more detailed and a little more grown-up, and if you don't like the brass finish there's a silver version.	£40 ★★★★★	
6		**Bose QuietComfort 25** The best kind of silence is the kind you then fill with sweet, sweet music, and that's what the QuietComfort 25s give you. The active noise-cancelling quells office hubbub, air-conditioning and aeroplane hum, and delivers cracking sound in its place.	£230 ★★★★★	**BEST FOR** **SHUTTING OUT THE WORLD**
7		**Soul Electronics Flex** These simple in-ears are brilliant for workouts, as they stay put thanks to the comfortable and unobtrusive ear-hooks. Sound quality is excellent, with crisp treble notes, clean vocals and even a decent amount of bass for the money.	£50 ★★★★★	
8		**Philips Fidelio M2BT** Building on the award-winning M1BT, Philips has added NFC for its new Bluetooth headphones and swapped the dark blue design for an understated black finish. The smart built-in controls and rich sound performance remain.	£165 ★★★★★	**BEST FOR** **GREAT SOUND WITH NO WIRES**
9		**AKG Y50** The bright colour options (they're available in yellow, teal and red, as well as black) and massive logo have a slight try-hard feel about them, but the Y50s make up for it by sounding loads better than the more 'street' on-ear headphones out there.	£50 ★★★★★	
10		**Sennheiser Momentum** Classily styled, cushion-comfortable and smooth-sounding, the Momentums are the perfect over-ears for the dapper man about town. There's also an on-ear version, smaller and barely half the price, available in pink, blue, green, brown and, um, 'ivory'.	£160 ★★★★★	

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Samsung drives. Samsung style.

Samsung's new, modern USB 3.0 flash drives are the latest in an advanced line of ultra-portable memory products. Three options offer the design, reliability, performance and quality you've come to expect from Samsung—the most trusted name in memory.





Samsung USB 3.0 Flash Drive BAR

Capacity: 16GB, 32GB, 64GB*

The high-quality metal casing of the BAR offers a modern look and durability, while the streamlined, ergonomic design makes the drive easier to use. And with Samsung's reliability, data stays safe.



Samsung USB 3.0 Flash Drive FIT

Capacity: 32GB, 64GB, 128GB*

The high-quality, metal-based design of the FIT offers durability. And its supercompact size is perfect for the car or the office. It's reliability and performance in a beautiful, small package.



Samsung USB 3.0 Flash Drive DUO

Capacity: 32GB, 64GB*

The DUO offers best-of-both-worlds flexibility in a sleek, captivating design. With both a standard and a micro USB connection, the DUO is the all-purpose drive for smartphone, tablet and PC.

5-Proof Technology. Because data matters.

Samsung USB flash drives protect stored content, even in harsh conditions.

Waterproof
Upto 72 hours in seawater**

Temperature-proof
Operating temperatures from 0°C to 60°C (32°F to 140°F)

Magnet-proof
Magnetic fields of up to 15,000 gauss—the equivalent of a high-field MRI scanner

Shock-proof
Extremely high levels of shock, up to 1,500g. (g=gravitational acceleration)

X-ray-proof
Airport X-ray machines

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*128GB is subject to market availability. **Tested up to 1 metre depth. Specifications and designs are subject to change without notice. All data were deemed correct at time of creation

MYMEMORY

1 HOT BUY NEW



Amazon Fire TV 4K

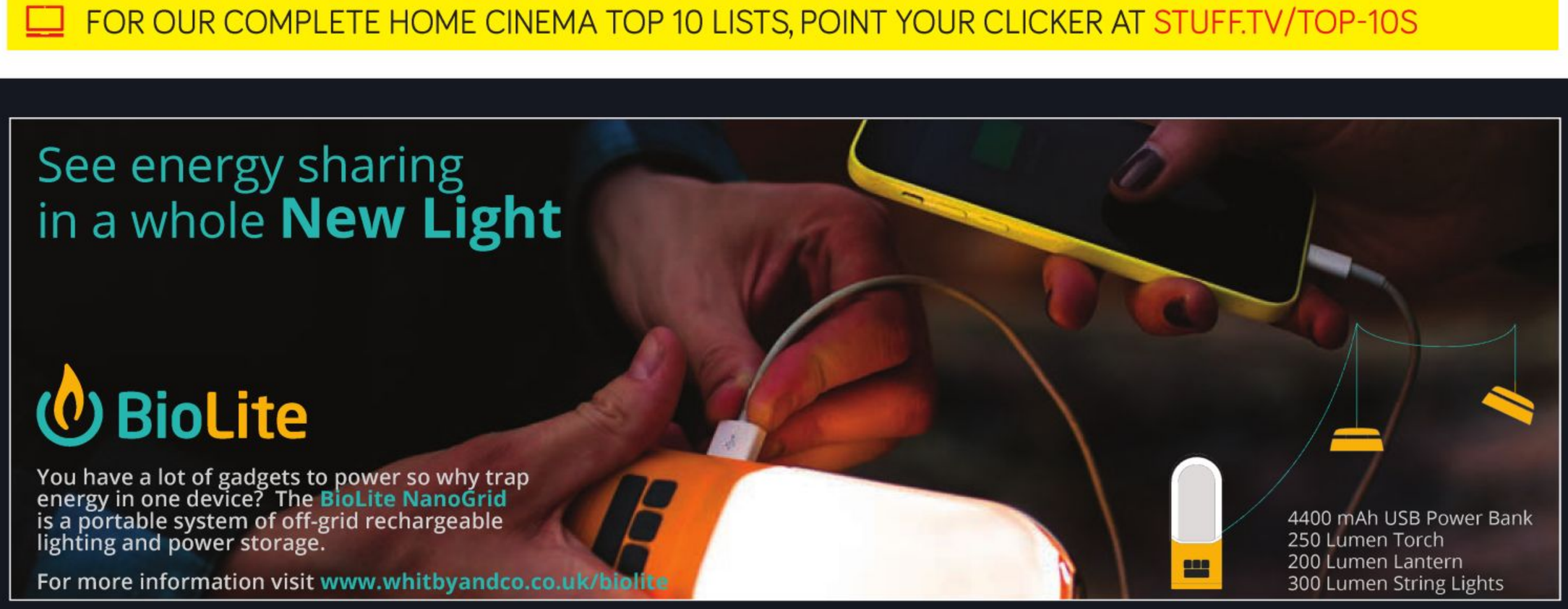
Amazon's new Fire TV is faster and more powerful than last year's model but more importantly, it supports ultra-detailed 4K video: TV and movies in four times the resolution of Full HD. Of course, you'll need a 4K set to enjoy all those extra pixels, but if you're thinking of making the upgrade soon, this streamer is a tele-futurist's delight. With the added attractions of neat voice controls and great gaming functionality, it's the most complete streaming box you can buy.

STUFF SAYS
Netflix, iPlayer, Amazon video and Android games in one 4K-capable box

£80
★★★★★

2		**Sky+ HD** With built-in Wi-Fi for easy streaming,a 2TB drive and more than 65 channels of HD, this is a set-top superstation. On the move, the Sky Go app is supremely slick. But the most important thing is this: Sky has more movie, TV and sport.	from £free + £20/month ★★★★★	
3		**Roku 2** Roku's new mid-range offering is the most compelling yet. It is essentially identical to the Roku 3, just without the smart remote. With a customisable feed, Netflix, Now TV, Google Play, YouTube and all the UK catch-up services, it's unbiased, slick and simple.	£55 ★★★★★	
4		**Sony BDV-N5200** A whole (home) cinema (minus a telly) in one box? That's the Sony BDV-N5200. A Netflix-toting Blu-ray player, an amplifier, five speakers and a subwoofer, all for a lot less than an iPhone 6. There's even a wireless adapter for the rear speakers.	£370 ★★★★★	
5		**Sonos Playbar** A characteristically Sonos take on the soundbar, the Playbar hooks up to your TV via its single optical input and fills your room with a big, detailed sound. And as with all Sonos kit, it can stream your own music files, Spotify and more as part of a multiroom system..	£550 ★★★★★	BEST FOR STREAMING MUSIC
6		**Sony BDP-S7200** Sure, you can pick up a Blu-ray player for just £50 these days, but if you're serious about your movies then you want to make sure they look and sound crisper than a Kettle Chip. That's where the S7200 comes in. It even throws Netflix and iPlayer into the bargain.	£175 ★★★★★	
7		**Yamaha YSP-2500** If your only requirement for a soundbar is that it should sound better than your telly, almost any will do; but if you want one that will fool your ears into thinking they're surrounded by actual speakers, you want the amazingly clever Yamaha YSP-2500.	£540 ★★★★★	
8		**Virgin TiVo** Hardware-wise, the taste-learning TiVo is a Sky+HD-beater, but it loses out on content. Mind you, subscribers to the 'XL' package now have free access to all the BT Sport channels: Premier League football, MotoGP and more, in lovely HD.	from £free + £22/month ★★★★★	
9		**BenQ W1400** What's better than *Inception*? *Inception* on a 300in screen, that's what. How do you get a 300in screen in your house? You buy the BenQ W1400. If your lounge isn't that big it can also project an 84in image from just 2m away. Try finding an 84in TV for this price.	£990 ★★★★★	
10		**Google Chromecast** The new Chromecast lets you search multiple streaming services from one app, offers better Wi-Fi and lets you use your phone to control Android games. For the seriously impatient, its smart preloading also loads Netflix episodes almost instantaneously.	£30 ★★★★★	

FOR OUR COMPLETE HOME CINEMA TOP 10 LISTS, POINT YOUR CLICKER AT STUFF.TV/TOP-10S



HOT BUY

1 LG 55EG960V



We knew that one day OLED and 4K would be joined in holy matrimony, and that the results would be rather special. That day is now upon us and 'special' doesn't quite do it justice. This 55in LG is the new pinnacle of TV tech and performance, combining the unbelievable colours, contrast and brightness of OLED with the super-sharp, ultra-detailed images of 4K to create a picture that's more real and enticing than looking out of the window.

STUFF SAYS
It's mighty pricey, but if you're after the finest flatscreen known to man, this is currently it

£3000 ★★★★★

2		**LG 55EC930V** Not everyone's got £4000 to blow on a flatscreen, and if you have to choose between OLED and 4K it's OLED we'd take right now. The awesome colours, super-deep blacks and amazing contrast will make everything you already watch look extra-amazing.	from £1600 ★★★★★	
3		**Samsung UE48JU7000** This 48in display is a crowd-pleaser, with great performance, good looks, web-based smarts and plenty of connections. Picture quality is stunning – super-sharp and clear in 4K, and brilliantly upscaled in 1080p. There's also a slick multitasking interface.	£1100 ★★★★★	
4		**Panasonic TX-50CX802B** After losing ground to other makers last year, can Panasonic's new flagships win big? Sporting a new 'Super Bright' LED panel and attractive Firefox-powered interface with customisable pop-up menus, this telly is intuitive and offers strong 4K performance.	£1380 ★★★★★	
5		**Sony KD-75X9405C** This is 75 inches of holy cow: the sort of thrilling picture that lets you see exactly how much hair gel Paul Hollywood uses, although the default setting is so bright you'll squint like Clint Eastwood. And those proper speakers at the sides make a real difference.	£6000 ★★★★★	
6		**Samsung UE55JS8500** Each of its 8.3million pixels is put to good use, filling the screen's handsome real estate with pin-sharp outlines, potent contrast and eye-popping colours. Sound-wise, it's way more powerful than bog-standard flatscreens. Worth the pretty penny? Oh yes.	£1560 ★★★★★	
7		**Panasonic TX-40CS520** Giant TVs aren't for every living room. Thankfully, you can still get hold of 40in screens, and the TX-40CS520 is testament to just how good an affordable TV can be. There's no 4K or 3D, but with smart features, apps and built-in Wi-Fi, this is an absolute steal.	£380 ★★★★★	BEST FOR A SMALLER SCREEN
8		**Samsung UE48J6300** The pronounced curve on this Samsung is the first thing you'll notice, as the picture may look a touch skewed from some angles; but if you're viewing from the centre it's totally immersive, and for a big TV on a budget, the picture quality is superb.	£500 ★★★★☆	BEST FOR AFFORDABLE CURVINESS
9		**John Lewis 55JL9100** Don't be confused – LG made a TV and John Lewis has slapped its logo all over it. This is an option for those who want a big 4K screen without paying big 4K prices. You will compromise on detailed video performance, but you'll still get LG's intuitive software.	£900 ★★★★☆	
10		**LG 65UF850V** Want a huge TV that could still just about fit under the roof and won't require you to take out a second mortgage? This 65-incher fits the bill. It doesn't have tip-top specs but does have LG's superb WebOS 2.0 channel-to-app bouncing interface.	£1730 ★★★★☆	

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3. Scroll through the products and pick your options, just like a normal online purchase.



4. Hit 'buy' to get it now or the heart to save for later. Proceed to kitchen, make cup of tea.

HOT BUY

1 Sony PlayStation 4



The best and most popular games machine on the planet. It has whisper-quiet operation, a sleek form and bags of power, with full 1080p on all titles and not a whiff of lag. And if 500GB of storage is too little for you, a 1TB model is now available. New features like Remote Play, PS Now and PS Plus also add real value and wow factor. With exclusive titles such as *Uncharted 4* and *No Man's Sky* still to come, the PS4 has plenty more to offer soon.

STUFF SAYS
The PS4 was brilliant when it launched, and it's undeniably even better now

from £280 ★★★★★

2 	**Microsoft Xbox One** This is very different to the Xbox One of 2013. Most significantly, the unpopular Kinect feature is now out of the deal, allowing Microsoft to drop the price and releasing enough extra power for developers to make their games look and play better.	£270 ★★★★★	
3 	**Alienware Alpha** It's not quite a PS4 or Xbox One-beater, but this is the most console-like PC there's ever been. Steam is the main interface, but it runs on top of Windows for maximum game compatibility, and performance is very impressive.	from £430 ★★★★☆	
4 	**Sony PS Vita Slim** If you're serious about gaming on the go, the Vita is way better than a smartphone, and when you get home you can play your PS4 games in bed thanks to Remote Play. That's gaming decadence, right there.	£170 ★★★★☆	BEST FOR GAMING ON THE MOVE
5 	**Nintendo Wii U** While it hasn't had the same impact as the original Wii, don't underestimate the U's fun factor. Nintendo's bottomless bag of superb game franchises rolls on with the excitement of *Mario Kart 8*, with its anti-gravity karts and submarine racing.	£180 ★★★★☆	

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HOT BUY NEW

1 Apple iMac with Retina 5K display (2015)



The 5K 27in iMac is the most desirable home computer in the world. It doesn't try any funny stuff or any 'revolutionary' gimmicks. However, fantastic hardware design, great software and a terrific screen make it a joy to use day to day. There are plenty of bits that could be improved, and despite the fancy screen this is ultimately a good old-fashioned home PC in a shiny box. But what's wrong with that, eh?

STUFF SAYS
What was already our favourite PC has been further finessed with Apple magic
from £1450 ★★★★★

2		**Sapphire Edge VS8** This mini-PC may look like the Terminator's lunchbox, but it houses AMD's 1.6GHz A8 APU and dedicated HD7600G graphics with 4GB of RAM. A capable little fellow, the VS8 even does a decent job with the latest gaming titles (with the detail dialled back a little).	from £245 ★★★★★	BEST FOR COMPACT POWER
3		**Alienware X51 (2014)** The X51 hasn't changed a huge amount, but the wee size matched with powerful components make it perfectly suited to HD gaming. Steam Machines are going to liven this market up but right now it's the best balance of power and form in PC land.	from £600 ★★★★★	
4		**Raspberry Pi 2** Tastier than ever, the reworked Raspberry Pi 2 is more grown-up and still just as cheap. The key upgrade here is the processor, now with four cores and double the RAM, from 512MB to 1GB. The Pi 2's speed has vastly improved but it still needs a microSD to boot.	£30 ★★★★☆	
5		**Zotac ZBOX Sphere OI520** About the size and shape of a cannonball or cantaloupe, this striking sphere will certainly draw attention. For media playback it's perfect, but high-end gaming is a no-go due to low frame rates. However, even in full swing it barely raises a decibel.	£425 ★★★★☆	

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HOT BUY

1 Apple MacBook Pro 13in (2015)



Apple hasn't changed too many parts of the MacBook Pro for 2015. There's a fancy new trackpad and the latest generation of Intel CPUs, which deliver better stamina as well as a chunk more power. This is an incremental upgrade, but given how good the Pro already was, that's more than enough to keep it right at the top of the laptop honours list. If you need power as well as stamina and portability, this is one of the best laptops money can buy.

STUFF SAYS
If it ain't broke... it hasn't radically changed, but the Pro's performance and trackpad are top of its class

from £1000 ★★★★★

2		**Asus ZenBook UX305** Asus knows what it's doing. It knows that the Apple MacBook Air laptops are treading water and the ZenBook UX305 is pretty much everything the 2015 Air should have been, with its fetching aluminium design and as good a display as any £1000 laptop.	from £550 ★★★★★	
3		**Microsoft Surface Pro 3** The fact that it's the only device to feature in two of our Top Tens is a testament to the Surface Pro's versatility: it's a strong tablet, but its full-fat operating system and powerful innards mean it's also a worthy adversary to Ultrabooks and MacBooks.	from £660 (with Type Cover) ★★★★★	BEST FOR WORKING ANYWHERE
4		**Asus ROG G751** The G751 is for the loud and proud PC gamer. While its design is rather brash, the awesome performance, good screen and highly effective fans that keep it pretty quiet under pressure make this one of the best gaming laptops around.	£1220 ★★★★★	
5		**Apple MacBook (2015)** This is no 'Air', nor 'Pro': a clear sign that this is what Apple sees as the future of the ultraportable laptop. And it's certainly very desirable: a 12in lean machine with a superb screen and haptic touchpad. The lack of ports can be frustrating, though.	from £1050 ★★★★★	
6		**Aorus X3 v3** This high-end gaming PC is packed into one of the smallest chassis we've ever seen, complete with a drool-worthy Ultra-HD screen, good sound quality and all the storage you'll ever need. It is pretty pricey, but it will keep you at the top of your game.	£1400 ★★★★★	
7		**Toshiba Chromebook 2** Toshiba has created the most desirable Chromebook to date with some well-judged upgrades. Smaller, lighter and great value, the screen's resolution now has pin-sharp HD and the Skullcandy speakers are distortion-free. It lasted eight hours on test.	£200 ★★★★★	BEST FOR VALUE FOR MONEY
8		**Apple MacBook Air 13in (2015)** Apple is scraping by with pretty much the same Air design as before. You get a new processor, new connectors and slightly improved battery life, but still no Retina screen. However, if a portable road warrior is what you're after, this is still a great choice.	from £850 ★★★★☆	
9		**Dell XPS 13** This nippy ultrabook packs mucho screen into not much space, without compromising on usability. With a backlit keyboard, decent battery and full HD screen, only its lack of gaming power holds it back. It's also thinner and lighter than the average 13-incher.	£850 ★★★★☆	
10		**Google Chromebook Pixel** The new Pixel comes within a hair's breadth of five stars. With its pin-sharp screen and class-leading design, it is a superb laptop. But it's a superb laptop that still only runs one browser. Still, you could always install Ubuntu on it...	from £800 ★★★★☆	

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WEARABLES

HOT BUY 1		**Apple Watch** Apple's Watch is by no means the first smartwatch, but it is the most desirable. It's more luxurious (and yes, more expensive) than its rivals, its software is better thought out, and in the coming months you'll see an explosion of new apps for it.	from £300 ★★★★★	BEST FOR TECH YOU WANT TO WEAR
2		**Jawbone UP3** With its latest band, Jawbone has delivered meaningful fitness data in a stylish package. The splashproof UP3 is unobtrusive, lasts over five days and does well not to overwhelm you with stats; instead it provides useful information at relevant times.	£110 ★★★★★	
3		**Garmin Fenix 3** This is a serious sports watch. It's especially geared for triathlon, with a dedicated race mode, but it's also a great training tool for each discipline and other sports besides. It doesn't do heart monitoring, but a 10-day battery life is your compensation.	£275 ★★★★★	
4		**Pebble Time Steel** It's very similar to the Pebble Time, but the extra Gorilla Glass 3 on the front makes it a bit less damage-prone and the bonus battery life means it'll last for a solid week of proper use. These tweaks ensure that the Time Steel is the best Pebble you can buy.	from £230 ★★★★☆	BEST FOR BATTERY LIFE
5		**LG G Watch Urbane** While the original G Watch R didn't exactly set our hearts aflutter, the handsome Urbane is currently the best Android Wear smartwatch we've tried. It boasts a slick, superior screen that'll last you nearly two whole days on a single charge.	£175 ★★★★☆	

SMARTHOME

HOT BUY 1		**Nest Learning Thermostat** Nest has a smart design paired with a ton of features to control your heating in style. We recommend making use of its IFTTT channel: it offers map-based geofencing, or you can fire up the boiler with a text. There's even voice control via Google Now.	£180 (with installation) ★★★★★	
2		**Synology DS214se** Within this entry-level hardware beats the best NAS (network attached storage) software yet. Not gorgeous to look at, but at least it's small and easy to hide away. If you're new to the NAS party, the DS214se is the cheapest way to get onboard.	£110 ★★★★☆	BEST FOR BACKUP AND STREAMING
3		**Honeywell EvoHome** Set schedules to control the precise temperature of each individual room of your family home, using either the tablet-like central controller or the free Total Connect Comfort app. It's a big old investment, but you'll soon pity anyone living without it.	£220 + £70/radiator + installation ★★★★★	
4		**Netatmo Welcome** Netatmo's smartcam now has added face recognition capability, which works reliably well once it knows a face, and all the usual motion and noise detection is controllable. We also like the way individual profiles can be adjusted. Slick and hugely informative.	£180 ★★★★★	
UPDATE 5		**Philips Hue (2015)** While Hue once stood alone in its own colourful smartbulb world, recent updates mean it'll now play nice with Apple HomeKit, which brings Siri voice control. Not an Apple fan? There's also support for Samsung SmartThings, and Nest Weave is on the way.	from £50 ★★★★☆	

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3. Scroll through the products and pick your options, just like a normal online purchase.



4. Hit 'buy' to get it now or the heart to save for later. Proceed to kitchen, make cup of tea.

SLRs

HOT BUY NEW 1		**Fujifilm X-T10** For rich landscapes, detailed macro shots, stunningly sharp portraits and everyday photos, the X-T10 beats most other choices at any price. It also handles beautifully and can be paired with some of the most consistently superb lenses you'll ever find.	£500 (body only) ★★★★★	
NEW 2		**Canon EOS 5DS** A fantastic piece of kit that any pixel-peeping DSLR owner will get heaps of enjoyment out of. The astounding 50MP sensor puts an incredible amount of pictorial detail at your fingertips, and the 5DS is very much pitched as Canon's ultimate stills camera.	£3000 (body only) ★★★★★	
3		**Sony A6000** Sony's new system camera may be tiny but it packs a big photographic punch. There may be no optical image stabilisation but the incredible speed and accuracy of the A6000's autofocus is a real highlight, as is its large, clear electronic viewfinder.	£370 (body only) ★★★★★	BEST FOR ALL-ROUND VALUE
NEW 4		**Olympus OM-D E-M5 MkII** A number of upgrades make this tempting even for existing E-M5 owners. It's just as attractive if you're looking for your first advanced camera, or jumping from a lower-specced model – it's solid but highly portable, and the images are gorgeous.	£790 (body only) ★★★★★	
5		**Canon EOS 750D** The 750D redefines what an entry-level DSLR can be: it's remarkably easy to use, will help you take stunningly good photos whatever your experience level and won't ever let you down.	£390 (body only) ★★★★★	

COMPACT CAMERAS

HOT BUY 1		**Sony DSC-HX60** The current HX60 isn't a huge departure from its predecessor in terms of build quality, ease of use, specifications and 30x zoom lens – all of which are excellent. What it does add is NFC and a newer Bionz X processor, making it a slightly nippier performer.	£180 ★★★★★	
NEW 2		**Sony DSC-RX100 IV** The RX100 IV is a superb premium point-and-shoot that offers all the versatility, flexibility and dependable all-round performance you could need. And while you may hesitate at the price, no other current pocket-sized camera can best it.	£650 ★★★★★	BEST FOR POCKETABLE POWER
3		**Panasonic Lumix LX100** This is one the most capable premium compacts on the market – and the LX100's 4K capabilities give it a crucial edge over its rivals. HD video capture and superb stills performance make the Panasonic a star performer when it comes to the basics too.	£430 ★★★★★	
NEW 4		**Sony RX10 II** Sporting a memory-attached sensor, this camera has the ability to record video at 1000fps or stills at 1/32,000 of a second – speeds usually reserved for pro kit. As an all-rounder with a non-interchangeable lens, there's no other model that can touch it.	£1180 ★★★★★	
5		**Panasonic Lumix FZ1000** Bridge cameras often feel like a compromise, but the FZ1000 is incredibly versatile: a fixed-lens camera capable of shooting fantastic stills and video in almost any situation. And yes, it's nearly the same as the Leica V-Lux 114, but much cheaper.	£510 ★★★★★	

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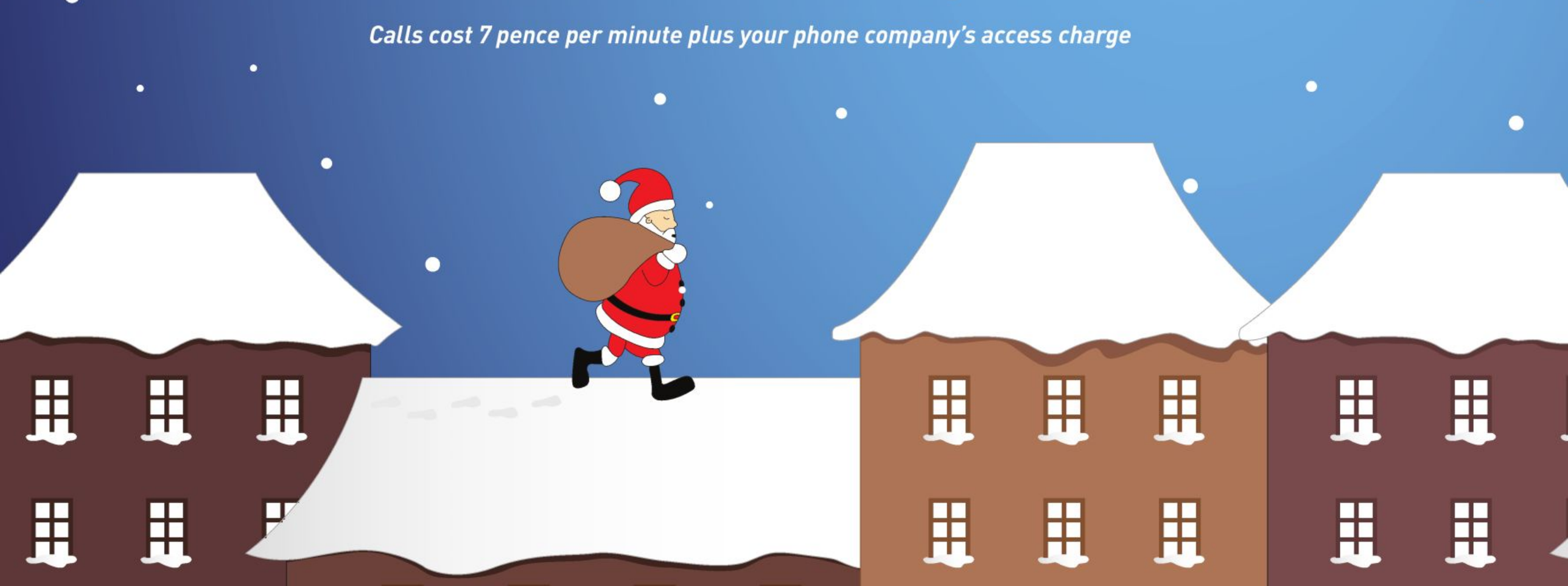
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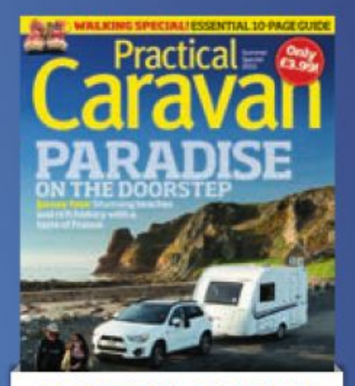
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Is that a popcorn machine on wheels?
Not quite. It's actually a self-driving robot, and its entire purpose is to safely traverse pavements, potholes and pedestrians, delivering items you've ordered online straight to your front door. Here's how it (might) work: the retailer ships your goodies to a local delivery hub, where it's collected by a cooler box on wheels. You'll then choose a delivery time and track your robot using an app. Think of it as an all-terrain Santa Claus, minus the festive paint job, beard, reindeers... and soul. It can carry roughly two shopping bags' worth of stuff, and its rechargeable battery means it's good for the environment too.

What happens if it meets a cat?
Well, nothing presumably, minus a curious sniff, and probably a bat of a paw. With a top speed of just 4mph, it's not going to splatter any furry friends it meets along the way. Your cargo will be safe, as no one will be able to open it but the recipient thanks to its inbuilt smart locking system. If a particularly ambitious thief makes off with it, they'll be caught in no time by, we're guessing, drone reinforcements. With lasers.

It seems overly complicated. What's the point?
According to creator Starship, last-mile delivery methods are often the priciest link in the postage chain. Robots like these can help reduce these costs by up to 15 times, while reducing the environmental impact of gas-guzzling delivery vans. Plus, you know, it's a self-driving robot – do you really need any other reason? Starship is planning to launch tests in the UK within the next year. If we can look forward to a future in which freshly made sausages are automatically carted to our house by a miniature tank, then you're not going to hear us complain about it.

[**Words** Esat Dedezade]

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