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HTC One

Exclusive first impressions



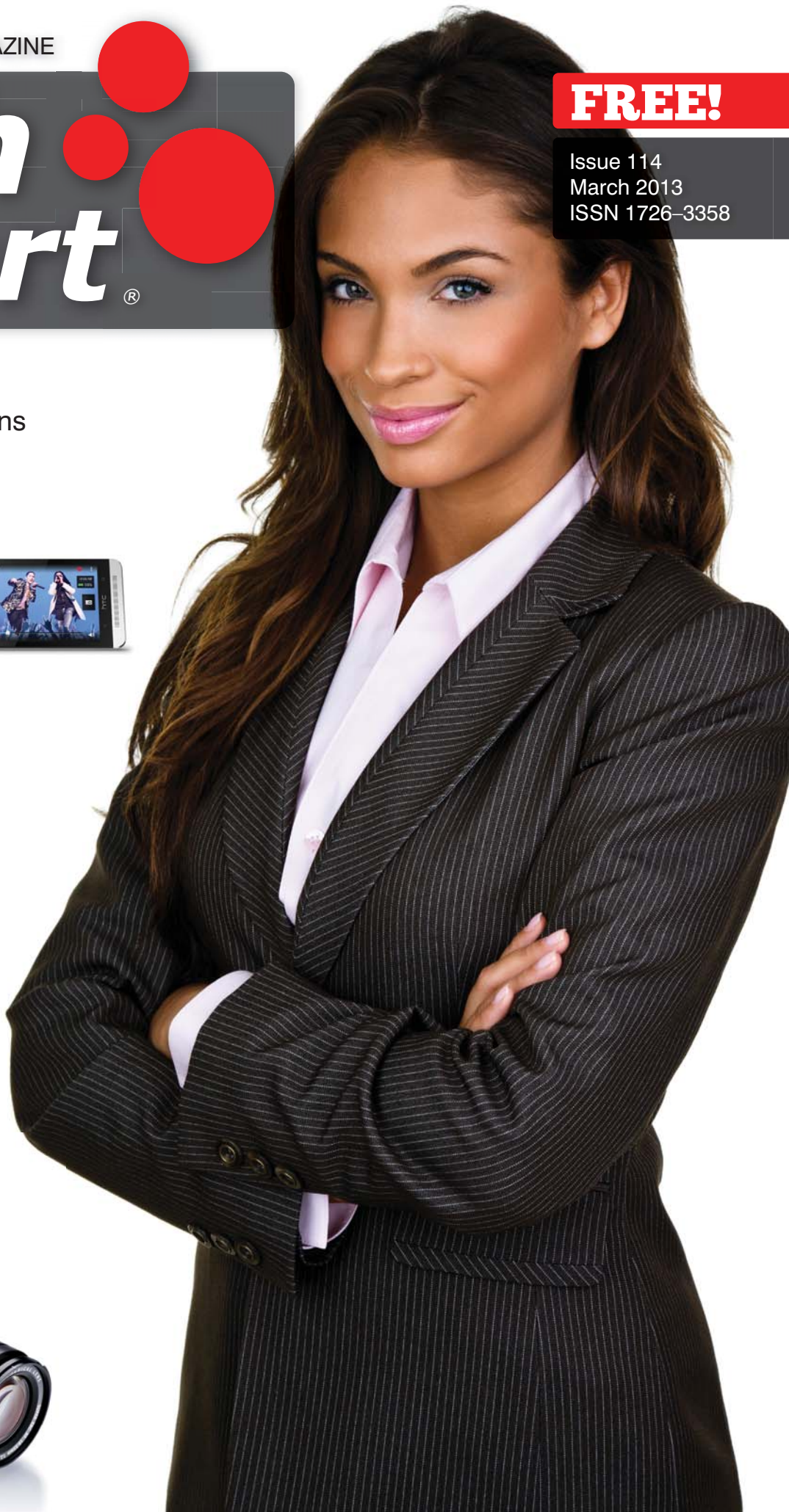
Razer Ouroboros

The next-level mouse



Fujifilm X-E1

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And now for the news on Twitter...

If ever there was a turning point regarding the way news is covered in South Africa, it was Oscar Pistorius's appearance in the Pretoria Magistrate's Court last month. Far from relying on radio for breaking news, many instead turned to Twitter. Here you could find journalists live tweeting the exact happenings in court, with especially Eyewitness News' Barry Bateman (@barrybateman) doing a sterling job (his Twitter follower count grew more than 600% since 14 February). Debate about the Oscar Pistorius case being a media feeding frenzy aside, it's quite clear that news organisations will pay a lot more attention to cultivating a solid Twitter strategy when it comes to breaking news.

On a different note, seeing that this is our tenth year of existence, this is as good a time as any for TechSmart to start providing video reviews. We've been doing a few shoots the past month, and we should have them ready during the course of March, so watch our Twitter (@techsmartmag) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/techsmartmag) pages for more details.

Enjoy the issue,
Mike (michael@techsmart.co.za)

The winner of the Xbox 360 is


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Gaming Def is proud to announce that a console LAN gaming centre will be opening around Pretoria soon. We would like to thank everyone who participated in the survey. For more info like our Facebook page; www.facebook.com/gamingdef

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It has old-school looks to die for, but don't underestimate the shooting power behind Fujifilm's X-E1 mirrorless camera. Here are five things we thought was great about this shooter.

20 Razer Ouroboros

Razer's Ouroboros looks more at home in a sci-fi romp than on a desk, but put this mouse to work in-game and it will quickly show you where its strength lies.

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End of 2013. Expected date when there will be more mobile devices on Earth than people. Robot takeover cometh?

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Top Tech Titbits



Sony announces PlayStation 4

Sony has got the jump on Microsoft by announcing the PlayStation 4 before the next Xbox. As expected the PS4 is massively powerful, boasting a custom chip that features eight x86 64-bit CPU cores, along with an AMD-developed graphics processor unit. Just like the Wii U with its Gamepad, the PS4 sports the ability to wirelessly stream games to the PS Vita and can also record gaming footage for uploading to social networking sites.

Most notable though was Sony's reluctance to actually show off the device, since the only images that were revealed were that of the new controllers and PS Eye accessory. The PS4 is expected to launch at the end of the year.



JoziHub caters to local entrepreneurs

In some good local news, JoziHub, Johannesburg's first technology incubator, has opened its doors. The technology hub, which can count tech giant Google as one of its funding partners, is aimed at becoming the epicenter for technological development and entrepreneurship in Johannesburg. To this end, JoziHub will be the facilitator for interactions amongst stakeholders in the research, private sector and public sector. Emphasis will be placed on the development of internet, social media and mobile technologies that address the country's most pressing social challenges.



Microsoft to give Africa a boost

Microsoft has announced its new 4Afrika Initiative through which it aims to boost Africa's global competitiveness by empowering African youth, entrepreneurs, developers and civic leaders. The software giant aims to help Africans transform innovative ideas into community upliftment projects and has set certain goals to be achieved by 2016. These include helping place tens of millions of smart devices into the hands of African youth (including the Huawei 4Afrika, pictured); bringing a million African SMEs online; and helping train 100 000 new graduates as well as 100 000 already employed workers.



Nvidia unveils Tegra 4i

At the beginning of the year Nvidia announced its new Tegra 4 mobile processor, which led the way in terms of gaming performance, but unlike its CPU rivals the Tegra 4 missed out on a trick by not offering LTE (4G) support. This base has now been covered with the unveiling of the Tegra 4i, which boasts a 2.3 GHz quad-core CPU along with a fifth battery saver core and 60 custom Nvidia GPU cores. An optimised version of Nvidia's i5000 radio modem provides LTE capabilities, bringing the Tegra 4i on a network support par with the likes of Qualcomm's Snapdragon 800. 🌟

Hot New Products



Mercedes-Benz A45 AMG

AMG's first attempt at making a proper hot hatch sees the performance division of Merc working its magic on a four cylinder turbocharged 2-litre that develops an astonishing 265 kW at 6000 RPM and 450 Nm of torque between 2750 and 5000 RPM. This is enough to see the Stuttgart stallion galloping to 100 km/h in approximately 4.2 seconds, onto an electronically limited top-end of 250 km/h. This AMG aims to leave rivals including Audi's RS3 and BMW M135i trailing during September 2013, when it launches locally, probably sporting a potent price tag to match its lethal performance and killer good looks.

Adidas Energy Boost running shoes

Most running shoes are designed for maximum comfort, absorbing the impact of your run via padded cushioning, but Adidas' Energy Boost running shoes differ by quite literally putting the spring back in your step. Instead of EVA foam commonly found in the midsole of running shoes, Adidas utilised Energy-returning boost material that bounces a jogger's foot back up during a run.



Bang & Olufsen BeoLab 15 and 16 speaker system

Dynamite comes in small packages and now the same applies for speakers, courtesy of Bang & Olufsen's new BeoLab 15 and 16 speaker system. This integrated system consists of twin 150 watt, two-way active speakers (BeoLab 15), an active subwoofer (BeoLab 16) and a rack-ready amplifier (Amplifier 1) which are all housed within stylish anodised aluminium discs, designed to be mounted on a user's bedroom or living room walls. At around R40 000 these speakers won't only bring the house down, but also your bank balance.



Wikipad tablet

Google's Play Store boasts many decent gaming titles, but using touchscreen controls do not make for the most immersive playing experience. Like Razer's Edge, the Wikipad addresses this issue by incorporating a detachable game controller that sports dual analogue sticks and D-pad buttons. This Android Jelly Bean running, 7" (1280 x 800) tablet is PlayStation Mobile certified providing users with access to Sony's mobile gaming catalogue and, since it's Tegra 3-powered, Nvidia's Tegra Zone as well. It's set to launch this autumn in the US for \$250 (R2 200). 🌟





Dell

Technology Camp 2013

Customer, data and cloud are king

TechSmart attended Dell's Technology Camp 2013 held last month in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. It was here where the company highlighted its strategy and several of its technologies that will enable it to respond to the changing business landscape.

Tom Kendra, vice president and general manager of Dell Software Group, began the event by explaining that the company was implementing a strategy of being a provider of end-to-end services for the enterprise. With this in mind, he revealed that Dell had invested some \$10 billion (R90 billion) in acquisitions over the past five years.

Kendra continued that the trends that were shaping the industry included the cloud, mobility, as well as data. With regards to the latter, he explained that, while it was well known that the amount of data was expanding exponentially, key to this explosion of data is being able to aggregate it, search it and then use it to add value to a business's bottom line.

Not coincidentally, several of the companies that Dell had acquired over the past few years, such as Kace, SecureWorks and Gale Technologies, were in some way leading innovators in the fields of cloud computing, security, data, mobility or data accessibility.

It's all about the customer

One of the standout themes of the Dell Technology Camp, was just how customer-focused the company is becoming. Over the course of several presentations, one point was

Businesses should be able to cater their IT expenditure according to their unique workloads, while still being able to effortlessly expand their infrastructure as and when needed.

stressed over and again – the company's concerted, even intense focus on adding value to its customers. Aongus Hegarty, president of Dell for Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) asserted that Dell had the technology and the solutions to meet its customers' needs in the EMEA regions. He

added that Dell's ability to offer end-to-end solutions to small, medium and large organisations, not only put it in a good position as compared to its competition, but further enabled the company to work with and help its customers. More tellingly, he reported that he found the company's customers increasingly desiring Dell to work with them to meet their challenges and goals.

According to Tony Parkinson, VP of Dell Enterprise Solutions, this greater intimacy with companies that rely on Dell, was practically a phenomenon in its own way. He explained that while Dell had always had a strong relationship with its customers, it has more recently upped this to a new level, and explained that selling companies' notebooks and workstation was not quite as profound as being entrusted with a company's data. Indeed, this deeper relationship with customers follows some

Fisly beginnings. Korean tech giant Samsung started out by exporting dried Korean fish, vegetables, and fruit to places like Beijing in 1938.



Tom Kendra, vice president and general manager of Dell Software Group.

Tony Parkinson, vice president of Dell Enterprise Solutions.

Dario Zamarian, vice president and general manager of Dell's Enterprise Systems and Solutions.

guidelines common to all kinds of relationship, with foremost amongst these being honesty. While the company's main aim moving forward is to offer an end-to-end solution to customers, Parkinson stressed that Dell remained open with its customers, and if it could not meet all their needs, it would admit this and try find them alternative solutions.

More difficult for smaller companies

Parkinson added that it was the small and medium businesses which were facing greater difficulty in meeting the challenges posed by new technology, as compared with large enterprises, which typically have large teams or departments dedicated to managing information technology. Additionally, he pointed out that larger businesses tend to have a better understanding of IT than small and medium ones. However, clearly embracing IT was becoming not just important, but essential, for businesses regardless of their size. The reason for this is simple: in a distressed economic environment, savings, profitability and financial efficiency are essential and rapidly reach the forefront of any business' priority list.

According to Marius Haas, president of Dell Enterprise solutions, Dell can help companies deal with the economic pressure being placed on businesses in general. He added that the savings that a business could enjoy from taking advantage of Dell's offerings to meet its data centre needs timeously, could be substantial. As an example, he cited an unnamed customer, which had managed to save in the order of \$75 million. This was due to Dell's ability to fulfil an order for thousands of servers in one month, rather than 90 days.

Data centre evolution

Another major theme of the conference focused around workload-centric IT infrastructure, a development which Forrester Research has cited as being the future for technology deployment models. The research company argued that IT infrastructure should become workload-centric, whereby organisations would design the server, storage, and networks in their data centre based on what matters most (a company's workloads). This is contrary to the old approach, whereby companies would acquire IT infrastructure in anticipation of what they might need in the future to meet their server, storage and networking needs. These separate components, or silo's in IT lingo, were largely

regarded as separate entities, even though they needed to work together. Indeed, there is a strong move towards integrating servers, storage, and networks in a more cohesive manner, which is known as converged infrastructure.

Now, for an announcement

To this end, Dell made two particular announcements of interest to IT professionals. The first entails new workload-optimised solutions for the SAP HANA platform that enable customers to deploy Dell server, storage and networking systems running SAP HANA. The company explained that these pre-integrated systems are based on the same architecture employed in Dell's single-server appliance, and boast configurations that scale from one terabyte to more than four terabytes. In a nutshell though, Dell explained that the SAP HANA solutions are intended to enable customers to run and deploy business-critical applications and effectively meet their workloads.

Also announced was the company's new Active System Manager 7.0, the management layer for Active System, which is Dell's answer to converged infrastructure. The company explained that the new offering, which is notable for integrating intellectual property from one of Dell's strategic acquisitions, Gale Technologies, enables users to rapidly deploy business applications and IT services.

Key to this explosion of data is being able to aggregate it, search it and then use it to add value to a business's bottom line.

It's all about workloads

Dario Zamarian, VP and general manager of Dell's Enterprise Systems and Solutions, explained the significance of the new announcements, elaborating that these will provide its customers with the agility they need to implement the workloads that matter most to their business. This while lifting the financial burdens placed upon them by offering better total cost of ownership and lower operating expenses. "Customers should focus on their business and the applications and workloads

that will help them compete in today's dynamic marketplace. This means using integrated infrastructure and solutions that are optimised for applications," he continued.

Indeed, the main thrust of Dell's argument during the course of the day was that businesses should be able to cater their IT expenditure according to their unique workloads, while still being able to effortlessly expand their infrastructure as and when needed. This customisable, flexible and personalised approach to a business's unique IT needs was quite reminiscent of Dell's more personal approach to its customers in general, which the company stressed during the opening of the Technology Camp.

Forecast: Cloudy, with a strong likelihood of progress

However, no conference on IT or databases would have been complete without mention of the cloud, and on this front, Dell certainly obliged. According to Stephen Davies, the Consulting Services Alliance manager at Dell, cloud was far more than just another industry buzzword. Indeed, he noted that the view of and receptivity towards cloud technology were changing rapidly and profoundly. Davies elaborated that, for example, chief information officers were increasingly realising that if they employ clouded solutions effectively, this would free them up to focus on their critical business concerns. Thus from a technology point of view, deploying at least some functions to the cloud was becoming more enticing.

To the point

While the information provided at Dell's Technology Camp, the demos we saw and the hands-on workshops were exhaustive, they were not exhausting. In fact, quite the contrary, as we walked away from a busy and buzzing event feeling like we had witnessed a company that had plenty to offer, and more importantly, was excited about moving forward. It was little wonder then, that shortly after the Technology Camp concluded, Dell's founder, Michael Dell confirmed that he was in fact taking the company private.

Whether these changes could be called an evolution, revolution or just plain progress, Dell's quiet message to other companies, both within and without the technology sphere, appeared to be that there is more to be gained from embracing change rather than fearing it. [RN]

Hands on with the HTC One



Is HTC's latest the One to beat?

At a packed and bustling launch event in London, HTC unveiled the newest addition to its range – the HTC One. TechSmart was on hand to gather first impressions on this 'new kind of smartphone.'

Firstly, the basics: the HTC One sports a slim aluminium unibody and a 4.7", full HD (1920 x 1080) screen, while the scratch resistant display boasts 468 pixels per inch (ppi), running on top of the Android Jelly Bean operating system. The Qualcomm 600 quad-core processor, clocked at 1.7 GHz, and 2 GB of memory accounted for the zippy experience we had with the device in our hands-on time.

Progress, in hand

The phone is certainly beautifully crafted while gently rounded corners made it pleasingly ergonomic to hold. Somewhat deceptively, the phone's 143 g mass felt surprisingly lightweight, but without the plasticity feel that haunts some other phones. One thing is for certain, the full HD screen with its deep, vibrant colours, is simply stunning.

In general use, the HTC One appeared extremely fast, as flipping between apps – multimedia and otherwise – exhibited zero lag, no matter how hard we attempted to push it to its limits. HTC made a big deal of the smartphone's sound capability, and we can attest to its claims. Sound was loud and rich without being tinny.

Users take notice: New features unveiled


HTC's re-imagining of what a smartphone should be, consists of a plethora of new features and enhancements. The first of these is HTC BlinkFeed. This feature essentially transforms the home screen into a single live stream of personally chosen information that is

of interest. BlinkFeed is designed to give flashes of fresh content from sources that are of personal interest to its users, along with the option to easily focus on particular topic or category at any time.

HTC has also overhauled its camera offering, as the company announced its UltraPixel Camera with HTC Zoe. The UltraPixel Camera offers an f2 aperture lens and a 'breakthrough sensor' that will apparently gather 300% more light than traditional smartphone camera sensors, for much improved low-light performance. Alongside this is HTC Zoe, which captures three second video snippets for every still frame. These so named 'Zoes' then make a traditional photo gallery of still images appear as a gallery of stories in motion.

Another feature on offer is HTC BoomSound, which incorporates two front-facing stereo speakers with a dedicated amplifier, and naturally, Beats Audio is integrated as well. The HTC One further changes the way users record and capture audio as well, by using two microphones to capture a broader range of sound, rather than one mic.

To the point

It may very well be too early to call the HTC One the smartphone of 2013, considering there is still plenty of the year ahead. This though, we can say: we certainly have a contender on our hands, and local buyers are likely not going to be disappointed by what the company has to offer when it is expected to land locally in April. No RRP is available yet. [RN] 

One thing is for certain, the full HD screen with its deep, vibrant colours, is simply stunning.



50%. More than half of all phones sold during 2012 in the US were smartphones.



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Touch me

Asus ventures the Windows 8 path

For Microsoft, Windows 8 is more than its latest operating system; it's a clear signal that the Redmond behemoth believes that the future is touch, while the OS is the product of Microsoft's intent to reach out to it.

Hardware vendors such as Asus have quickly responded to this, offering tablets, new notebooks and ultrabooks on Windows 8 that boast not just touch-pads but touchscreens as well.

The implementation of Windows 8 on a tablet, most often via Windows RT, which is a scaled down version of Windows 8, firmly places this OS in competition with the likes of iOS and Android. Helping it along are tablets such as Asus' VivoTab, which looks, and in some regards functions, similarly to the notable Android-based Transformer Prime and exemplary Transformer Pad Infinity.

The key differentiating factor is that it brings the Windows RT style to a touch tablet, which can then be docked with a keyboard, turning it into a content creation as well as content consumption device.

Moving on and touching tomorrow

So why is touch so important for notebook users? Firstly, because thanks to tablets and smartphones, touch interfaces have become *de rigueur* for most forms of technology, and thus notebooks and ultrabooks were a logical choice for implementation of the technology to keep them relevant.

Additionally, it offers those users who are touch-inclined another way – a more tactile way – to interact with their device. It must be mentioned though, that for traditionalists, the mouse and keyboard interface is still available.

Also, with an increasing number of convertible form factors being favoured by manufacturers, having a touchscreen makes it possible for a convertible notebook to quickly become a touch tablet when the keyboard is removed.

Benefits, explored

This means that users who cannot decide whether to buy a conventional notebook or a tablet can have the best of both worlds in one device, and thus have to carry less with them. It also enables users to effortlessly switch from being content consumers to content creators.

What's more, it is also responding to and fueling the exponential explosion of data that is currently occurring in our world and has


become a major trend in business as well as in other arenas.

When one considers therefore that the standard entry point to content consumption is a tablet, and the traditional entry point to content creation is a notebook, the marriage between the two worlds seems logical and inevitable. Reassuringly, Asus has excelled on both fronts in their own rights to date, and thus its foray into the touch screen Windows 8 space is exciting.

However, like many newborns, Windows 8 is not without its teething problems, such as a lack of a start menu, which has been a familiar entry point for those who have been working on Windows since the 90s. Thankfully, this can be remedied by third party software.

To the point

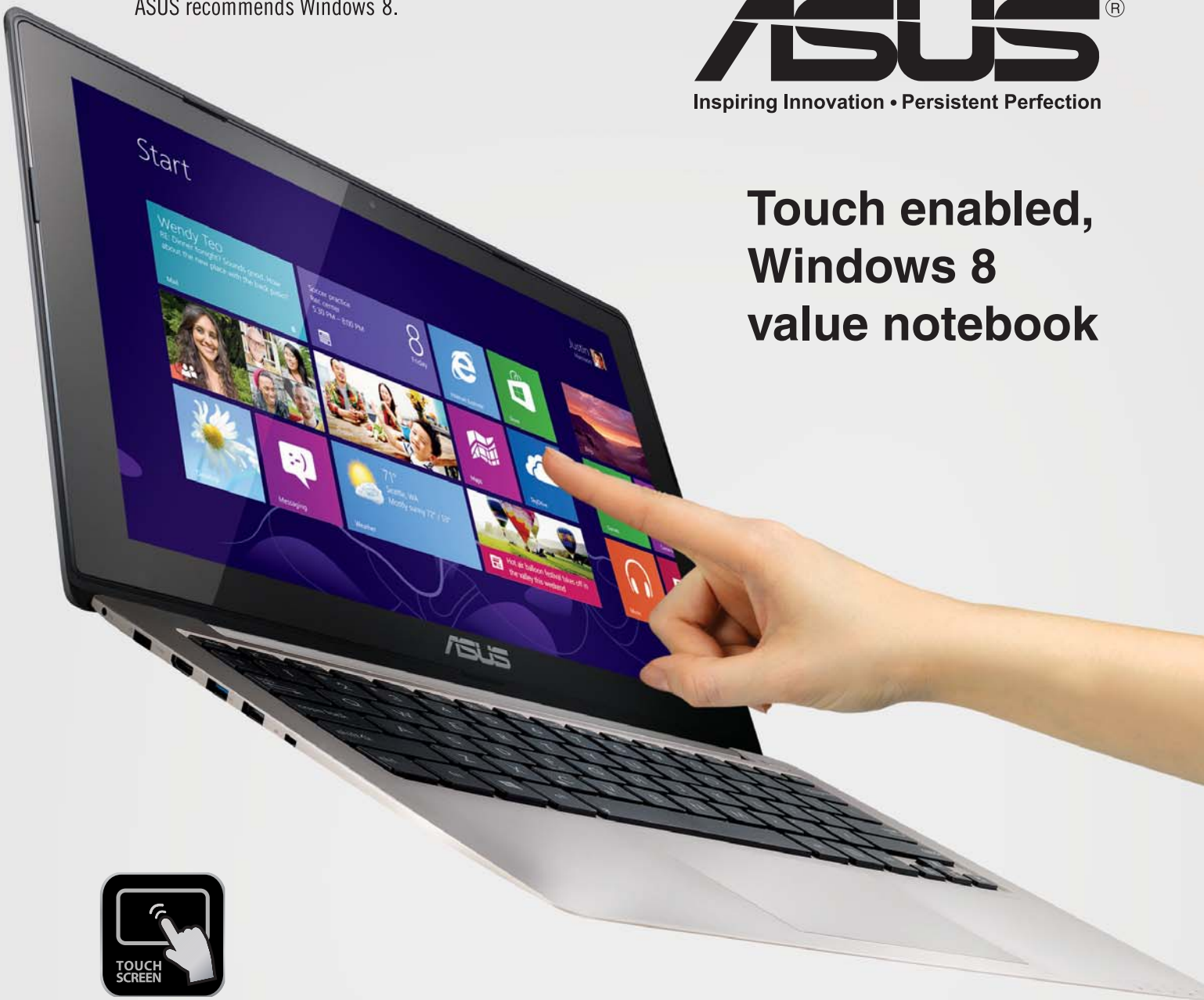
Particularly worth noting is that Asus' Zenbook Prime offering seemed to be able to cope better with Windows 8's other quirks. This fact placed it more closely on par with the Windows 7 Zenbook ultrabook, which caused us to go weak at the knees last year.

This is promising, as it means that the Zenbook Prime and other well done Windows 8 products will likely only improve as Microsoft issues its inevitable service pack(s), and actually spells hope for Windows 8's future. 

ASUS recommends Windows 8.

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value notebook**



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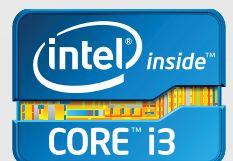


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HP Envy x2

Where in the past tablets were believed to be for content consumption, and content creation best left for notebooks, that distinction is beginning to blur. This is evident in HP's Envy x2 with its keyboard dock.

HP calls the Envy x2 a notebook that doubles as a tablet, but when you look at its processing power, we would rather say it's the other way around. With its dual-core 1.8 GHz Intel Atom Z2760 processor, and not one of the stronger Core I ones, the Envy x2 is not one for heavy lifting. Luckily it does run on a full version of Windows 8, which means you can run certain computer programmes associated with Windows and not just applications.

As with most new touch-based Windows machines it's easy to switch between the Metro Interface and your desktop via Touch or using the Windows button located beneath the screen.

Much like Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson, this tablet and keyboard dock work much better as a pair.

Take this tablet

As a tablet the x2 feels solidly constructed, encased in aluminium with speakers at the bottom of the screen. At 400 nits the big 11.6" IPS display is very bright making it easier to use outdoors, but its resolution of 1366 x 768 is not quite as delicious as the iPad with Retina display. On a full charge we managed to watch two full movies while being connected to the net.

In the dock

Much like Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson, the tablet and keyboard dock work much better as a pair. It clicks easily in place and feels solid, but there is a bit of looseness noticeable. The keyboard itself is pretty close to full sized, but unfortunately the tablet makes it top heavy and prone to fall over on your lap. It adds not only an extra two and half hours of battery life to the device, but also two USB ports (USB 2.0 and not the faster 3.0 unfortunately) and full sized HDMI to hook the Envy x2 up to a second screen.

To the point

If you've been looking for a full Windows 8 tablet with an added keyboard, the HP Envy x2 machine is definitely worth investigating. But with the x2's limited power and mediocre screen, we find the R11 000 RRP a bit expensive. [MJ] 🍷



Acer Iconia W700

The Iconia W700 tablet from Acer is strong enough to kick a few notebooks up the backside when it comes to performance.

Doing the hard work inside the W700 is an Intel Core i3 (second generation 2365M) running at 1.4 GHz, helped along by 4 GB of RAM with a 64 GB solid state drive.

It's for this reason that, when it came to benchmarking, the HP Envy x2 (left) with its smaller Intel Atom processor could simply not keep up. The W700 scored 2523 in Futuremark 3DMark06, while the Envy only managed 456. As expected, the i3 processor of the W700 could not outpace ultrabooks containing the faster Core i5.

Acer proves a point with this 1920 x 1080 full HD screen, which offers a sterling movie-watching experience.

Great screen and extras

Another very notable aspect of the W800 is its quite lovely 11.6" full HD screen. Acer proves a point with this 1920 x 1080 screen, which offers a sterling movie-watching experience and excellent viewing angles. The onboard speakers were also impressive, able to go quite loud at reasonable quality. Along the side, you'll find a full-sized USB 3.0 port for fast transfers, and a mini HDMI port (a VGA dongle is included too) but unfortunately no SD card slot.

Acer provides a few more extras with the W700, including quite a nice brown carry pouch that enables you to prop the tablet up into different viewing positions, and a plastic stand. This stand also allows for a few different support positions, but more importantly, ups the amount of USB 3.0 ports to three.

With all the processing power and USB ports available, we were ready to work, but it's here we picked up a bit of hassle. Acer provides a Bluetooth keyboard, but unlike a notebook's keyboard, no track-pad is included, so you need a mouse. If you do want to use the tablet for work on the move, you have to pack this as well, unless you feel comfortable with the on-screen keyboard and touch control.

To the point

Android and iOS cannot be used for certain Windows-based programmes, making tablets such as Acer's W700 the preferred choice. With its excellent screen and above average tablet processing power, it works well, but we would have loved to have seen it with a proper keyboard docking station. It goes for a recommended R11 000. [MJ] 🍷

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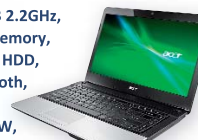


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Zoom to the max

Canon's PowerShot SX500 IS is one of those cameras that is as easy to use and navigate as it is to carry around. It is also a bit of an odd beast, but in a good way.



The PowerShot SX500 IS is not quite as compact as some of Canon's other offerings, due to the large zoom that juts out in front of the camera. But this 30x optical zoom offers fantastic range, namely 24-720 mm (35 mm equivalent), providing flexibility for a variety of photographic situations, particularly for the casual photographer.

Zoom in to find

Considering the long range zoom on offer here, it is a good thing that the camera boasts image stabilisation (IS), and we were actually pleasantly surprised by how far we could zoom into a scene and still have a steady composition.

If you're using the camera for capturing school sports, you'll find Servo autofocus

(AF) quite useful, which keeps a subject in focus in a blue bounding box, and tracks the subject as it moves across the frame. Particularly innovative is the camera's Zoom Assist functionality, which takes Servo AF a step further and is particularly aimed at keeping track of a moving subject (such as someone playing sports, for example) as they move across the field.

We were actually pleasantly surprised by how far we could zoom into a scene and still have a steady composition.

More specifically, the Zoom Assist button enables users to firstly focus on the subject in question, and then, at a press of the button, zoom out for a wider view. This is useful if, for example, the subject has moved out of the frame and needs to be quickly relocated. Releasing the Zoom Assist button quickly zooms back in automatically, enabling users to zero in on their subject again without having to waste time doing so manually. It is certainly a nifty and clever feature, and one that fits very well with a superzoom's main purpose of capturing far away subjects.

Also onboard

The one disappointment posed by the PowerShot SX500 IS is the all plastic body, which isn't terrible, but not as hardy as what we are accustomed to from Canon. This aside, everything else that a good portable camera needs to have is here, such as HD video (1280 x 720 but alas, no 1080p) recording with its own dedicated button. Also onboard is a variety of useful modes, such as aperture priority (f3.4 to f8), shutter priority (15 seconds to 1/1600) and full manual modes, along with macro, portrait and a discreet mode, which turns off all sounds and the flash.

Image quality, however, is something that was exactly what we expected from Canon, in a word, beautiful. Colours in particular managed to retain the balance between being striking without appearing unrealistic. Nor is the ISO range too shabby for a portable camera – an OK 100 to 1600, although of course at the higher end of that, noise does become more noticeable.

To the point

The PowerShot SX500 IS is certainly an interesting camera, which boasts particular versatility thanks to its wide zoom in a portable frame. 30x zoom not enough? Then check out the massive 50x zoom on Canon's SX50 HS. The SX500 IS has an RRP of R3 000. [RN]

Power to explore

Explore the full-frame world with the compact and lightweight EOS 6D. Featuring integrated Wi-Fi and GPS the EOS 6D is ideal for travel photography from stunning landscapes to pin sharp portraits.



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Aperture | f/11.0
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ISO | 400

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Canon

Nikon unveils new Coolpix superzoom cameras

Nikon has revealed three new offerings in its Coolpix range, in the form of the S9500, P520 and L820, all of which cater to capturing action stills and video from a distance.

Coolpix P520

The 18.1 megapixel P520's claim to fame is the 42x optical zoom, which offers the equivalent 35 mm zoom range from a wide 24 mm to a whopping 1 000 mm. Lens-shift Vibration Reduction (VR) alongside the new Active Mode also feature and assist in capturing blur-free images and video, while full manual controls are on offer. Full HD (1080p) video recording with stereo sound is possible via the dedicated movie record button, and recording should be easy thanks to a versatile 3.2" Vari-Angle LCD monitor. Rounding off an impressive list of features is the fact that the camera comes with built-in GPS capabilities, while both the P520 and S9500 offer Wi-Fi connectivity



Coolpix S9500

The S9500 sports a 22x optical zoom (25-550 mm equivalent) and appears to be the travel friendly option of the bunch. While, like the P520, it offers an 18.1-

megapixel BSI CMOS sensor, the camera is apparently small enough to keep at hand in a shirt pocket. The S9500 also offers full HD (1080p) movie recording with stereo sound, viewable on a bright 3" OLED screen, and is able to record your position via GPS.



Coolpix L820

The L820 is no slouch in the features department since it offers a 16-megapixel CMOS sensor and Vibration Reduction (VR) technology to help keep shots steady. This while its 30x super wide-angle lens covers a broad range, from 22.5 mm to

super-telephoto 675 mm. A 3" monitor, ergonomic design, along with the convenience of AA-size batteries and a dedicated video button (full HD), clearly indicate that the camera is aimed at those looking for a convenient user-friendly device.

To the point

The cameras will only be launching next month though, and thus there is little indication of local pricing and availability as yet. •



Nikon D600: Thinking of going full-frame?

We recently had the Nikon D600 at our disposal for a few weekends of shooting pleasure. Here are some of our thoughts on upgrading to Nikon's entry to the full-frame market.

Great exposure

Point, shoot and don't worry about checking if your exposure is correct. The D600 captures light just right and we barely had to reshoot or to adjust exposure compensation.

No crop factor

Since the APS-C sized sensor of Nikon's DX range is smaller than the full frame (36 x 24 mm) FX range, you typically have a crop factor of 1.5x on the DX line. This means a 50 mm lens will provide a focal length of 70 mm when fixed to a DX camera, but on the D600 50 mm means 50 mm. For us the biggest benefit is that we received much wider angles than what we were used to, which was great for landscapes. But, when doing sport or wildlife, we missed the added range the 1.6x crop provided.

Image quality

While it might not be that noticeable on postcard-sized prints, there is a generous jump in image quality overall. Start zooming in on photos and you'll notice sharper detail on the edges of your subjects. All this adds up to images that are crisp, making it clear why you are paying more for these full-frame cameras.

Size

Although the Nikon D600 is the smallest full-frame in Nikon's range, it's not exactly what one would call discreet. Compared to the D7000, Nikon's top of the line in the APS-C range, the D600 is both bulkier (132 x 105 x 77 mm vs. 141 x 113 x 82 mm) and heavier (850 g vs 780 g, but less than the D800's 900 g). Add a good piece of glass on the front and at the end of the day you'll know that you've had a full day of shooting.

Larger viewfinder

The D600's full frame sensor results in another interesting extra – a larger optical viewfinder. When switching between the DX D7000 and the FX D600, the difference is very noticeable. And while both provide 100% coverage through the optical viewfinder, composing on the D600 is much easier thanks to the 30% size difference of the viewfinder. In fact, many pros swear by the larger viewfinder and we now know why. [MJ] •

The Nikon D600 retails for R24 000 and for R28 000 with the 24-85mm kit lens.

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5 things we want from the Samsung Galaxy S IV

With sources claiming a 14 March launch for the Samsung Galaxy S IV, and an appearance here in Africa between May and June, we thought it a good time to list five things we hope to see in Samsung's new flagship.

Whereas in the past the release of the latest iPhone was met with great fanfare, let's face it, for the 4S and the new 5, reception was lukewarm at best. In most part this was due to only incremental upgrades to the iPhone, with no killer 'wow' factor to bowl crowds over. Samsung should learn from Apple's mistakes and need to push the boundaries on the Galaxy S IV to entrench their status as the world's leading smartphone maker. In our opinion, they can start with these improvements:

1 Metal design

Stop it with the plastic Samsung, dammit, we want metal. Please, no more back covers that feel like they will snap when you split them off the back. No more 'chrome' edges that start peeling after a couple of months. Rather, take a good look at the materials used in Apple's stylish iPhone – still the main reference point when it comes to classic design.

2 Longer lasting battery

Ok, so this is not exactly only a Samsung problem, but improved battery life can help. We liked the 3100 mAh Li-Ion in the Note II, so just stick one of those in there.

3 Full HD screen

Sony has set the precedent here with the Xperia Z and its 1080 x 1920 resolution on a 5" screen. Anything less will be a travesty.

4 Keep at it with the Samsung tech

We like Samsung's added extras such as Pop Up Play and Smart Stay. It goes a long way to distinguish their offerings from the rest of the Android masses. Can we look forward to even more special features on the S IV? For one, we would love to see an improved PopUp Browser as featured on the Note II.

5 Even faster

We want class leading performance from the S IV, since in practical terms the Galaxy S III actually felt slower than HTC's One X. Cramping the Exynos Octa 5 processor with eight cores we saw at CES earlier this year, rather than saving that for the Note III, will certainly give the S IV an edge. [MJ]

For five more things we want, visit bit.ly/10samsungs4.



Nokia Lumia 820

Nokia's Lumia 920 flagship makes for a great all-round top-end smartphone, but its hulking frame and tank-like bulge is not for everyone. Enter the Lumia 820, which offers the same smartphone experience within a more compact package.

The Lumia 820 fits more snugly in hand than its bigger brother, measuring 123.8 x 68.5 x 9.9 mm and weighing in at 160 g (25 g less). Although it features solid construction, we did find the overall square-loving design uninspired and a bit on the boring side. Despite the smaller frame, you get the same processing power under its hood as the 920, with the 820 packing a 1.5 GHz dual-core Qualcomm Snapdragon CPU, 1 GB of RAM, Windows Phone 8 handling the operating and all the excellent Nokia-exclusive apps in tow including Nokia Drive and Mix Radio.

Despite the Lumia 820's smaller frame, you get the same processing power under its hood as the 920.

Display and optics

The feature differences starts at the screen, with the 820 boasting a 4.3" (480 x 800; 217 ppi pixel density) touchscreen, instead of the 920's 4.5" (768 x 1280 resolution; 332 ppi) PureMotion HD+ screen. We found the WVGA resolution to be more than suitable for most tasks and since it's an AMOLED screen, the viewing angles and colour saturation are great. To store your photos, videos and other media, you only get 8 GB worth of internal storage, but that is expandable up to 64 GB via microSD memory card slot. To access this slot you have to remove the back cover, a rather difficult affair which should not be frequently attempted.

Battery performance from the 1650 mAh battery is poor right out of the box, considering we barely received eight hours, but after tinkering with the settings (check full review at bit.ly/nokia820) battery life improved considerably to a full 12 hour working day.

To the point

Nokia's Lumia 820 makes a great choice for people interested in a Windows Phone 8 device, who cannot afford the Lumia 920 (R8 000) or simply want a more grip-friendly smartphone. For everyone else, there are a number of similarly specced Android-powered smartphones available, that go for a lot less than the pricey R6 400 asking price of the Lumia 820. [HD]

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Sigma 12-24 mm f4.5-5.6 II DG lens

For many photographers constantly seeking different kit to spice up their photography, the ultra wide angle Sigma's 12-24 mm f4.5-5.6 II DG will certainly fit the bill.

The first and primary reason to employ this ultrawide lens is for a new perspective. Using this lens on a full-frame camera like the EOS 5D Mark III produces a true 12-24 mm range. If you instead mount it on a Canon APS-C camera with a 1.6x crop factor, this effectively becomes a 19-38 mm wide angle. On a full frame camera, the change in perspective is noticeable and dramatic. Objects that are relatively close up are suddenly thrust into the distance, and this adds a great deal of depth to an image, making the lens ideal for landscapes and environmental shots.

On a full frame camera, the change the Sigma brings in perspective is noticeable and dramatic.

Positive qualities

We were pleased to see that this Sigma lens' build quality is top notch, right down to the metal, rather than plastic, mount. Additionally, the zoom and focusing rings were stiff enough for our liking, without requiring too much effort to turn.

The most important part of any lens is the image quality it is capable of producing, and on that front, we were quite happy. While we did find the most noticeable distortion at 12 mm (which we expected). The lens appeared to improve as we moved up the range, with 16 mm up to 24 mm particularly producing sharp images, especially when we stepped up to f11. No less importantly, we found that the lens' focusing was quick, responsive and quiet.

Something else we appreciated about the lens was its weight (670 g), and its relative portability. Sigma's offering is about the same size as the EFS 17-85 mm Canon lens, and just fractionally heavier. Together the two lenses made up a very nice kit that provides an ultra-wide to medium range reach.

To the point

In short, our time spent with the Sigma 12-24 mm f4.5-5.6 II DG lens was overtly positive. It had us longing to go find some windswept beach; and it was certainly a lens we wouldn't hesitate to slip into our camera bag. It has a pricey RRP of R11 700. [RN] 

Black Rapid RS-Sport sling camera strap

The default camera strap that comes with most DSLRs is generally functional, but can quickly become a tangled nuisance at best and a literal pain in the neck at worst.

The RS-Sport owes its comfort to a wide, padded section which rests on the user's left shoulder and crosses over their body, leaving the camera hanging at their right hip. The strap itself is secured to the camera using a small carabiner, that hooks into a solid steel attachment, which firmly screws into the camera's tripod mount. The strap's design enables photographers to simply curl their hand around the camera grip and lift the camera to start shooting. In use, we found this meant we were able to more quickly respond to photographic opportunities unfolding before us.


The strap's design enables photographers to simply curl their hand around the camera grip and lift the camera to start shooting.

Design delights

What we particularly appreciated about this design is that the RS-Sport strap doesn't get in one's way, hang in front of the lens or become entangled at the most inopportune moments; a pet peeve that previously hampered our photography when using the default strap. Additionally, the camera can be secured in place on the strap, using two cleverly integrated 'bumpers' which prevent the camera from swinging too far behind one and thus inadvertently smashing into an unnoticed wall or tree. Unique to the RS-Sport is an underarm strap that is secured under one's left armpit, providing additional support to the strap as a whole.

The only fault we could find with the strap setup is that it essentially occupies the tripod mount at all times. There is however, an extra accessory (R173) available that makes the strap tripod friendly.

To the point

This one inconvenience aside though, the Black Rapid design quickly won us over and showed that it really is the small details – such as a camera strap – that makes a big difference. It has a RRP of R825 and is available in stores right now. [RN] 

WIN 2x straps, see page 19!



Five things to love about the Fujifilm X-E1

We loved the image quality on Fujifilm's top-end X1Pro, but its R20k price-tag was a bit rich. Now make way for the smaller, more affordable X-E1. Here are five things that impressed us on this mirrorless camera.

1 Old school look and feel

We dig the old-school rangefinder look on the X-E1. With its silver magnesium die-cast top and black leather-like styling, it's easy to think that this is a camera straight out of the seventies. Except for its cheaper price, certainly the best improvement of the X-E1 over the X-Pro1 is its more compact body – a more manageable 350 g compared to the bulky X-Pro1's 450 g. Having said that, it's still a fair deal bigger than Olympus's smart E-M5.

2 Dials and controls

We might show our age, but we really enjoyed the fact that, much like old film cameras, you control the aperture on the lens itself. Add to this your speed dial to the top, plus exposure compensation that can be easily adjusted with your right thumb while shooting, and you have a camera that will allow you to do what you want, quickly and easily. Alas, there's no direct ISO adjustment, but you can program a Function button to make this easier. Talking of which, press the Fujifilm Q-button and you have access to a large amount of functionality, including custom settings, ISO, self-timer, and focus mode. Once you learn how to use it, it makes shooting a breeze.


3 Drive modes to pick and choose

Situated just left of the screen is a Drive button. Press it and you can select three or six frames per second shooting, or hedge your bets with a number of interesting bracketing options. The common exposure bracketing is present, but also a not so common ISO bracketing, dynamic range bracketing (unfortunately not in-camera HDR) and Film Simulation bracketing. Film Simulation is interesting, since Fujifilm programmed the look of a number of their old film types into the camera, but in practice we would have preferred to have this option rather as a post processing in-camera option.

4 Great sensor

The X-E1 inherited the X-Pro1's smart X-Trans CMOS sensor, capable of 16 megapixels images and ISO of 6500 (boost 25 600). It is the same sized APS-C sensor that is usually found in DSLRs and we received high quality images with exact details.

5 Above average kit lens

The Fujinon 18-55 mm kit lens might not be overly ambitious when it comes to zoom, but we were pleasantly surprised at the fast f2.8 stamped on the front. This allows you to shoot without a flash in bad light plus have a very shallow depth-of-field for those sharp stand-out portraits. Keep in mind the 1.5x crop factor, which translates to a real world 27-83 mm. [MJ] 

The Fujifilm X-E1 retails for R10 000 for the body and R14 000 with the kit lens.




WIN 2x BlackRapid Sport Slings!

TechSmart, in conjunction with the Sunshine Company, distributors of BlackRapid products, is giving two lucky readers the chance to win a RS-Sport sling camera strap of their own.

We're asking: "What feature is unique to the BlackRapid RS-Sport?"

Write the answer on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/pages/TechSmartMag) and you could win this excellent accessory.

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Hint - the answer can be found on p18. 

Competition ends 31 March 2013, winners announced on our Facebook page. Terms and conditions apply.



CORRECTION

Razer Blackwidow Ultimate gaming keyboard

In our February 2013 issue, in the 'Also in the office' section, the *Razer Blackwidow Ultimate gaming keyboard* was incorrectly priced at R1 900. The correct price is in fact R1 400.

We apologise for the mistake.



Razer Deathstalker Ultimate Elite keyboard

If the Deathstalker gaming keyboard was a mythological hero, there would have been songs sung about it and statues dedicated to its epic feats.

The Razer Deathstalker Ultimate Elite gaming keyboard's imposing presence is only surpassed by its formidable features. As this is primarily a gaming keyboard; it certainly looks the part, with an overall oblong shape, being robed completely in black. It is also built as a solid slab of hard plastic that certainly seems up to a fair share of abuse during heated gaming sessions. Additionally, unlike other less niche keyboards, the Deathstalker (which is wired rather than wireless) lays unapologetic claim to not one but two USB ports. However, this means no batteries are required.

This keyboard has a great deal more to offer the object of its attention, namely, gamers.

Fundamentals and beyond

The backlit chiclet keys themselves have decent depth and springiness, which certainly make for a pleasant typing experience. However, beyond these requisite fundamentals, this keyboard has a great deal more to offer the object of its attention, namely, gamers. For starters, it provides five customisable macro buttons, which is particularly useful in massive multiplayer online (MMO) games such as World of Warcraft. However, where the keyboard truly shines with innovation is in its Switchblade user interface, which consists of a 4.3" touch sensitive trackpad/display. This versatile addition can work as a gesture responsive trackpad, allowing users to pinch to zoom as offered by many notebooks, or as an alternate way to access one's mouse controls. Alternatively, it can morph into a numpad at the press of a key, and be used to record additional macros as well.

Similarly, eight tactile keys just above the trackpad also change their function depending on your whim. Prefer to have quick access to Facebook, Twitter, email, or multimedia (as in game walkthrough videos) on the 4.3" screen while you are playing? No problem.

To the point

Ultimately, the Deathstalker is a very versatile armament in the gamer's arsenal, and its rich features only reinforce the argument for stalking, and capturing one. It has a RRP of R2 500. [RN] ❄️



Razer Ouroboros gaming mouse

Razer's wireless Ouroboros gaming mouse looks more like a prop from a sci-fi movie than a PC peripheral and boasts some out-of-this-world features that make it ideal for casual and professional gamers.

The Ouroboros features an ambidextrous layout, meaning it can be comfortably used by both left- and right-handed gamers, and offers customisable ergonomics highlighted by an adjustable arched palm rest and two interchangeable side panels. These panels allow you to tailor the device to your preferred style of grip and hand curvature, ensuring optimum comfort and minimal fatigue during extended playing time. Swapping them out is easy and quick since they click magnetically into place.

Razer's Ouroboros weighs in at around 115 g sans the rechargeable nickel metal hydride AA battery that powers it, giving it a nice weighty feel in hand. Just because the mouse feels sturdy and solid in hand does not mean its performance is slow and unresponsive. On the contrary, thanks to its blistering one millisecond response time and 8200 dpi 4G Dual Sensor System that sees the unit outfitted with a laser as well as an optical sensor, the Ouroboros provides exceptional tracking accuracy.

The rechargeable battery delivers up to 12 hours of continuous gaming from a single charge, and once its depleted you can either pop in any standard AA battery or connect the mouse to a PC via the provided USB cable to utilise the Ouroboros as a wired mouse whilst recharging the battery.

To the point

The Razer Ouroboros gaming mouse is one of the best on the market thanks a wealth of customisation options that even enables gamers to alter the physical appearance of the device to more closely fit your hand and grip style. Add to this a lighting fast response time and the ability to use it as either a wireless or wired mouse, and you have a very compelling all-round package, wrapped up in a unique design that will get noticed as much as its feature set. RRP is an exclusive of R1 400. [HD] ❄️



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TOP 5

Sport utility vehicles

The global economic crunch may have sent prospective SUV (sports utility vehicle) buyers scurrying to their nearest small hatch dealer, but these cars still provide drivers with the best mix of on road dynamics and some measure of off road ability. Here are our Top 5 pics.



5 BMW X3 xDrive20d 4x4 AT

The X3 is probably one of the least capable vehicles in this comparison when you venture too far off the beaten track, but one of the most car-like on tarred road. Its two litre four cylinder diesel motor cranks out 135 kW of power at 4000 RPM and 380 Nm of torque between 1750 and 2750 RPM.

Consequently, the X3 is able to bring up 100 km/h on the speedometer in an impressive 8.5 seconds, and go on to reach a 210 km/h top speed.

Even more impressive though is its claimed fuel usage figure for combined consumption, which comes to 5.6 litres per 100 km according to BMW.

Its on-road prowess and license for badge-snobbery comes at a price – namely R482 300.



4 Audi Q5 2.0 TDI S Tronic

The Q5 is the best looking vehicle in this comparison and as with the Beemer, it is the on-road abilities of the Q5 which may interest prospective buyers more than how well it fares on the dirt.

Audi's 2.0 TDI engine pushes out 130 kW, coupled with a maximum torque of 380 Nm at just 1750 RPM. This means you should reach 100 km/h in nine seconds, whilst more fuel conscientious drivers can get a frugal combined cycle fuel usage rate of between 5.3 and 6.4 litres per 100 km, according to Ingolstadt.

At R464 000, this German model does not come cheap, but at the same time is not the most expensive car in this comparison.



3 Chevrolet Trailblazer LTZ AT

Just like its main competition within this segment, Toyota's Fortuner, GM's Chevrolet Trailblazer LTZ goes for the rugged look, as opposed to the head-turning style of the Q5 and X3. The Trailblazer backs this tough-as-nails design bark up with some capable powerplant bite, as its 2776 cc Duramax turbo-charged diesel engine churns out 132 kW at 3800 RPM along with a massive 470 Nm of torque at a low 2000 RPM. This is enough go-juice to accelerate is sizable 2.75 ton frame to 100 km/h in under 11 seconds, onto a terminal top end of 180 km/h. Sensible drivers should obtain about 8.4 litres per 100 km on a combined cycle (town and highway driving). Pricing for the Trailblazer LTZ starts at R429 900.



2 Hyundai Santa Fe R2.2 AWD Elite

At a recommended retail price of R499 900, Hyundai's Santa Fe R2.2 AWD Elite might not be the most affordable car in this comparison, but it still manages to deliver a great deal of value via its standard feature set.

Powering the all-wheel-drive Elite model is a 2199 cc four cylinder turbodiesel that delivers 145 kW at 3800 RPM, 436 Nm of torque between 1800 and 2500 RPM, and 8.3 litres per 100 km on a combined cycle according to Hyundai.

While its design lets it go toe-to-toe with (but not beat) the X3 and Q5, it's this vehicle's long list of standard features, including a rear parking assist system, that help it stand out from the rest of the SUV crowd.




1 Toyota Fortuner 3.0 D-4D 4x4 Auto

The benchmark within the SUV segment is Toyota's Fortuner, which not only rules this segment but also frequently finds itself in the top 10 'best-selling passenger vehicles of the month' listings.

It may not be the best looking vehicle in this comparison, but it certainly doesn't stand back for any rival whilst venturing off the beaten track. Its 2982 cc turbodiesel engine cranks out 120 kW at 3400 RPM and 343 Nm of torque between 1400 and 3200 RPM.

Out of all the cars in this comparison the Fortuner will more than likely offer the best resale value come trade-in or selling time, due to a number of reasons not least of which is the Japanese car maker's tried and tested build quality.

This, coupled with impressive standard features the likes of a touchscreen infotainment system that also displays images from its reversing camera, and High Intensity Discharge automatic headlamps, make the Fortuner our Top SUV choice. RRP R476 700. [HD] 

Top spot: Microsoft's Xbox 360 was the best selling console Stateside for the last 25 months in a row.



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3DSystems releases new CubeX 3D printer

Looking for a 3D printer? 3DSystems has announced the release of the second generation Cube 3D Printer as well as the brand new CubeX 3D printer.

The original Cube 3D Printer has already won numerous awards for being both simple to use and the most reliable 3D Printer currently available in this market segment. The second Generation Cube is now 1.5x as fast while boasting twice the resolution.

Whereas the original Cube was only able to print using ABS plastic, the new Cube can now print using environmentally friendly bio degradable PLA plastic. The range of plastic colours has also been expanded, from 10 to 16 ABS colours and 16 PLA colours, including some metallic and glow-in-the-dark colours.

Easy to use and deploy

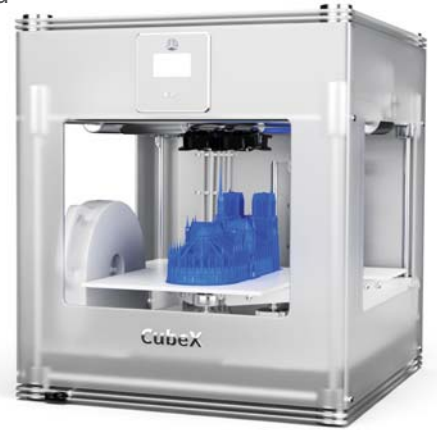
With Wi-Fi connectivity or USB flash drive, printing has never been easier, while a touchscreen user interface enhances the experience. Online applications allow kids to design jewellery and toys using drag and drop functionality, while general users can load their designs into Cubify software and start printing with ease. A cloud-based service can even take a video from a smartphone and convert this to a 3D object which can subsequently be printed on your Cube.

The CubeX has built on the ease of use of the original Cube and incorporated this into

the hugely successful 3DTouch. What does this mean? Quite simply, you now have the largest multi material Desktop 3D Printer available, which is more reliable and easier to use than ever before. Plus, it is twice as accurate, twice as fast, and more affordable than ever.

A cloud-based service can even take a video from a smartphone and convert this to a 3D object which can subsequently be printed on your Cube.

The CubeX has a build volume of 275 x 265 x 240 mm, about 45% larger than other competing systems. Along with up to 3 print heads, which allow for multi material and colour printing, CubeX now also incorporates smart materials. This means that the printer



knows exactly how much material is available and what colour and type is on offer.

Every CubeX comes complete with Cubify Invent design software, a material cartridge for each head, toolkit, USB thumb drive and 10 ready-to-print 3D models. Setup is plug-and-play and everything you need to get started is included in the box.

Where to buy

Cube, CubeX and the full range of 3DPrinters from 3DSystems are available from Centurion-based CAD House. Call them on 012-654-0559 or visit www.3d-printer.co.za.

A few unique gadgets from Mantality.co.za.

Struggling to find interesting or handy birthday-, housewarming- or bachelor party gifts for your friends? Check out the following products from Mantality.co.za.



LifeProof Bike and Bar Mount for iPhone 4/4S

If cycling forms part of your daily fitness regimen or you just enjoy the occasional motorbike trip, then the LifeProof Bike and Bar Mount for the iPhone 4/4S will enable you to take your smartphone along for the ride. This case holds your phone firmly in place on the motorbike or bicycle handlebars, allowing users to employ their iPhone as a GPS or easily view the cycling stats from a fitness app for instance.

RRP: R625 from Mantality.co.za.



Super Plantarium mini greenhouse

The Super Plantarium is a self-contained mini greenhouse that is constructed out of transparent casing and is filled with a NASA developed nutritive gel. This gel fulfills your plants' water and nutritional needs, meaning no more worrying over whether you watered the plants. Since the casing is transparent and the gel is translucent, users are able to see how much their plants grow and develop on a daily basis. Perfect for the nature loving home or eco-friendly office. Yours for R295 from Mantality.co.za.



iOpener for Apple iPhone 4/4S with bottle opener

Apple's iconic iPhone design remains the mobile industry benchmark when it comes to the perfect mix of functional form and eye-catching looks. However, having glass panels flanking the front and back covers of your iPhone, does not make for the most drop-friendly device. The iOpener case for iPhone 4 and 4S acts like a tough, thin, lightweight suit of armour for your smartphone, making it drop proof and also incorporates a handy, retractable bottle opener. RRP: R300 from Mantality.co.za.

Managing your customers and prospects from your tablet device

Imagine a world where you can access your data anywhere, anytime and from any device. Well this is now a reality with BluWave CRM.



BluWave has been a key Customer Relationship Management (CRM) player in the industry for more than 23 years, responsible for hundreds of successful CRM implementations.

With the inevitable adoption of cloud computing, BluWave has anticipated change with the latest release of web-based, cloud-application CRM software.

No expensive infrastructure is needed to make use of BluWave CRM since the software is browser based and can be run from any internet connected device.

Increase sales by 30% and more

According to the highly respected Harvard Business Review, by implementing CRM, sales may be increased by 30% and more, with a reduction in selling costs of 35%.

With Bluwave CRM implementation is quick and effortless. You are literally up and running with a click of a button. No more long, tedious and complicated user installations. "The system is very easy to use. As a sales person the quotes function saves me half an hour per quote" – Sales representative at Mercedes Benz Commercial Vehicles.

iPad and Android tablet friendly

Bluwave CRM leverages the power of tablet devices to ensure you have access to your data while you are on the move. Spend more time interacting with your clients and less time at your desk performing admin tasks. Data entered from different devices is stored in a single database so there is no synchronising and you always process and retrieve data in real time.



Features

- Performance Dashboard
- Activity and Diary Management
- Opportunity Tracking
- Quotes Automation **NEW**
- Customer and Contact Management
- Leads Management
- Document Management
- Automatic Push Reports
- Mail List Management
- Transfer leads from your website straight to BluWave CRM using a Web Service
- Graphical Route Planning **NEW**

Free software trial

TechSmart readers who would like to try out BluWave CRM can do so by heading to www.bluwave.co.za. The trial is available for 30 days, with no downloads or installations required. BluWave CRM starts at only R240 p/m. For more information call Tania Cooke-Tonnesen on 011-462-6871 sales@bluwave.co.za.



Why a cloud-based visitors register is better

By Marius Coetzee, MD, Ideco Biometric Security Solutions

Managing visitors has been a long-standing challenge for traditional access systems simply because the systems focus on controlling the access rights of people whose identities are already known: the employees. Visitors are generally received at face value.

The most common method of managing visitors is a standalone, paper-based register. Drive up to the main gates of many estates or organisations and the security guard will hand you some form of visitors register. All the visitors to the premises can see the personal information of previous visitors, including their names and contact details. This is the main

reason why most visitors scribble any irrelevant data on these registers.

Going cloud

Ideco's electronic Visitor Identity Management (EVIM) systems register the same information as what a typical visitor book does and further requires a visitor to sign off information with a fingerprint.

This information, with a template of the fingerprint, is then communication via GPRS within a few seconds to a central server to create an

accurate record of who visited the site. Moreover, the EVIM system verifies the identity number and prints the visitor's name after which the visitor is cleared to enter. This time-based visitor record is stored digitally and visitors' data is only available to the authorised security managers at the premises using the system.

Visitors' privacy

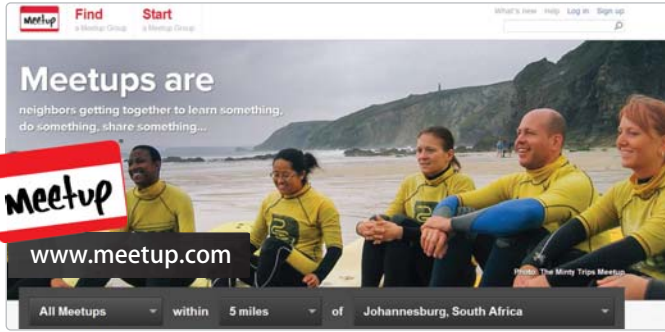
EVIM has been carefully designed to protect the visitors' privacy whilst offering the site an accurate register in line with OHSA requirements:

- The EVIM terminal does not retain any data as all data is relayed and secured on the cloud-based servers.
- The fingerprint is not used to verify a visitor's identity, but serves merely as proof that the specific visitor was at the site on a certain date and time.
- The visitor's identity number is verified against a reference database. This database came into being following Ideco's acquisition of two organisations that had been registered as credit bureaus.
- The cloud-based servers are hosted at one of the most secure data centres in South Africa, which also hosts disaster recovery systems for top banks.

For more information about Ideco's range of biometric security solutions, email contact@ideco.co.za or call them on 086-104-3326.



Web Time Wasters



If expanding your social horizons is up your alley, then Meetup.com is a must visit. The site enables you to meet new people who are nearby (from within three kilometres of your current location to any distance), as well as those who share a common interest. For example, we found a variety of groups in Johannesburg, including the Joburg Book and Movie Club, Fun Seekers, Joburg Photowalkers, and the enticingly named Lean Startup Circle. You can also start your own meetup group though, on any activity or interest of your choice.



Daily Inspiration

www.dailyinspiration.nl

Art is said to be 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration. If so, then daily inspiration certainly takes care of that 1/10th of the process, offering up a wealth of stunning images and portfolios across the spectrum of

visual creativity. Categories on offer include digital art, photography, photo manipulation, 3D, street art, character design and illustration, amongst others. Clicking on 'Inspire Me!' will deliver a random image for your perusal.



Get your book published

www.getyourbookpublished.co.za

For aspiring novelists particularly, the newly launched Getyourbookpublished.co.za is aimed at being a solid resource for writers. The site, which is still in its early stages, was founded by two local publishing industry veterans, Alison

Lowry and Tracey McDonald. As it grows though, it is expected to offer advice for local writers who are pondering the self-publishing as well as the commercial contractual route. Most notable is the advice on the four questions that every writer needs to ask themselves.



New Fantasyland

<http://disneyworld.disney.go.com/new-fantasyland/>

Irrespective of whether or not you are planning a trip to Disneyland, the New Fantasyland site tells an enchanting story that draws visitors into a quest to break an evil curse. Visitors do so by

exploring four symbols and the Disney stories they represent, such as *Beauty and the Beast* and the *Little Mermaid*. Beautifully presented (although you do require Flash and a decent broadband connection), the site has Disney's magic stamped all over it.

TechSmart's top tweets



Here are the tweets that struck our fancy last month.



Trevor Noah @Trevornoah

I feel so needy every time I ask a website to remember me.



David Kibuuka @davidkibuuka

I've never thought of stealing petrol until I filled up today.



kykNETdagbreek @kykNETdagbreek

@DalenLance en Mike Joubert, ons nuwe tegnologie-kenner van @techsmartmag gesels oor onder meer die nuwe BlackBerry 10. pic.twitter.com/W9iVUp3J



Kwena Kweza Phaka @Kwenaldo

My jaw just keeps dropping whenever I read the @TechSmartMag Magazine! Technology is so advanced today, its unbelievable.



Worse Than Crocs @WorseThanCrocs

People who instagram their meals... Are Worse Than Crocs



Zandi Tisani @ZandiTee

Paging through some design mags, you would think Africa wasn't actually a place but a trend.



NelsonMandela @NelsonMandela

"Our experience had made us acutely aware of the possible dangers of a government that is neither transparent nor accountable" #Madiba



Vlok Attorneys @VlokAttorneys

Given the appalling prevalence of rape in SA, we will be offering all legal help to rape victims completely free of charge #rape #timetohelp



Ed. @Zim1_Dawg

@techsmartmag SA best tech magazine. #Smart pic.twitter.com/XBe295am



andrew brauteseth @guy_with_camera

dropbox what are you syncing about.



Adrian Briggs @adrianbriggs

My passions include cooking my wife and giving up punctuation for Lent

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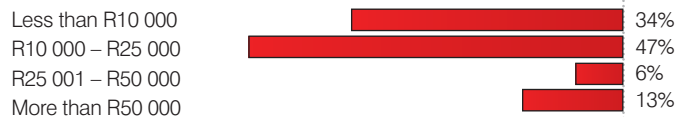


Neil deGrasse Tyson @neiltyson

Times have changed: Kennedy: "Let's go to the moon." Obama: "Lets repair our infrastructure."

TechSmart.co.za online poll results

How much have you personally spent on tech in 2012?



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Apple iOS Apps of the month



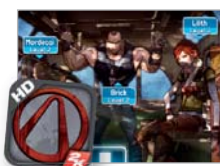
Zillow Digs

For home improvement/interior design aficionados, Zillow Digs is a must install. The app boasts an exhaustive database of images for every conceivable room that can be found in a house, as well as inspiration for outdoor spaces such as gardens and patios as well. The images on offer can be organised by room or according to design style (if for example modern, rustic or Mediterranean is up your alley) and saved photos can of course be shared with friends via Facebook.



DStv for iPad

One of our most often used apps on the iPad, DStv for iPad, may not be new, but it has received a bit of an update recently that makes it quite a bit more comprehensive and convenient. Joining the ever useful TV guide, which offers a seven day forecast across all channels, is a new 'On demand' tab. On demand enables one to search for a specific movie or TV series; sort shows by categories such as latest or most popular, and last chance.



Borderlands Legends

If you fancy some Borderlands action on your tablet, then Borderlands Legends, which has recently received an update, is well worth a look. The game allows you to play as Lilith, Mordechai, Roland and Brick, in a stylised world that reeks with character and brings some irreverent fun gameplay to the iPad. Along with a price drop to R9, the update brings iPad mini support, a new sniper mode and enemies that drop guns as loot. It also offers just enough inspiration to venture back to Pandora on the big consoles as well. ❖

Android Apps of the month



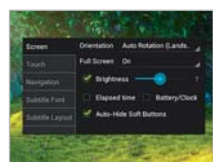
GroupVox

Mobile users suffering from texting fatigue and BlackBerry converts who miss the ability to send voice messages over BBM, can utilise GroupVox to fill that void. This free cross platform app brings a walkie-talkie feature to mobile phones, unfortunately only enabling communication with Facebook friends and not regular contacts. You can voice chat with Facebook contacts individually or host Facebook group chats. If your friends are offline, you can also record a voice message for them.



Red Stone

Like every other super addictive puzzle game title out there, Red Stone employs a simple premise that leads to a very challenging, rewarding, time-sucking challenge. You start off with a large King square which is four times bigger than the normal pawn squares surrounding it. Players must shuffle all the squares around until such time as the King square is able to get his royal *derriere* through to an exit at the top of the screen. Be careful, it's highly addictive.



MX Video Player

Ever waited for what seemed like forever for a movie or TV episode to finish downloading, only to find that you are unable to view it due to a format issue? MX Video Player will prevent this from happening since it uses both hardware and software decoding to play virtually any video format. In addition, users are able to control playback via simple swipe gestures and set subtitle options as well. Also try VLC for Android Beta as an alternative. ❖

BlackBerry Apps of the month



Ram Booster – Ram Optimizer

Need to speed up the performance of your BlackBerry device? Have a look at Ram Booster by Droom Soft. This R12 application is aimed at managing your BlackBerry's RAM which in turn allows your device to perform better. An easy to operate interface makes this application a breeze to use, do note however, that performance increase may vary depending on the phone you use.



Uno and Friends

If you a fan of Uno then you will appreciate Uno and Friends by Gameloft. Besides offering a rather short career mode, there are a number of mini games to improve your skills. Other features include decent graphics and customisable avatars. Although it should be noted that the five different game modes such as Duel and Partner found in Uno and Friends have not changed or improved from previous Uno versions. It will set you back R12.



Simple Password Keeper

Keeping track of all the different passwords for different accounts across the net can be a pain. Simple Password Keeper by iDong does what it says on the box. Besides being able to store your different passwords, this app includes editing abilities that allows you to change, delete or update passwords. Other key features include user friendliness and quick start up time. It retails for R18 which is not much considering the time and effort you save. [IF] ❖

Smartphone top tips

Struggling to master your new smartphone? TechSmart is on hand to provide some helpful tips.

Apple iOS tip

If you wish to reverse the colours of text (have white text on a black background rather than black text on a white background), this can be easily enabled across the gamut of the iPad's display. Open 'Settings', the 'General' tab and then select 'Accessibility'. To make it easy to toggle on and off, select 'triple click home' and then 'invert colours'. Now, clicking the home button three times will invert the black-on white colour scheme in any app.

BlackBerry tips

If you need to free up memory space and RAM try clearing the stuff your BlackBerry saves in your Event Log. How to access this you ask? Simply do the following: from your home screen press 'Alt' and type "LGLG", this will open the Event Log, and you will then have the option to clear it.

Android tip

Most apps take up just a couple of MB of space on your mobile device, so most smartphones and tablets can accommodate a plethora of apps before users run into storage space problems. When you do want to free up space by deleting ones you no longer use, simply go to Settings > Applications > Manage Applications. Select one you wish to remove and tap on 'Uninstall'. ❖



Sci News



Getting cold feet

This is enough to give you goosebumps. Or maybe not. Researchers report in a February issue of the *Journal of Neuroscience*, that they now understand the sensation of cold better. They tracked a group of

mice without a cold-sensitive protein called TRPM8 along with a group of normal mice as they walked across areas of various temperatures. The areas ranged from 0 °C to 50 °C. The group of normal mice preferred to stay on the mild spots, avoiding both the very cold and very hot patches. Mice without TRPM8, however, moved easily on the cold areas and avoided only the very hot spots. The results may help scientists to develop pain medication that can dull selective sensations while leaving other feelings intact. We think it's cool stuff.



Bouncy 'bots

Robots may soon have a spring in their step. Literally. According to a recent article in the journal *Angewandte Chemie*, researchers have developed a flexible silicone robot that can jump about 300 m high. The 'bot is connected to tubes that

deliver a mix of hydrogen and oxygen, which ignites upon a spark from high-voltage wires. The brief explosion causes the gas to expand, which, in turn, lets a soft valve in the robot's leg close. This increases the internal pressure in the leg, causing lift off. When the gas cools down, the pressure in the leg drops and the valve opens again, allowing the exhaust gas to escape. Further work to develop wireless devices could make these robots nifty little helpers in search-and-rescue operations one day.



The Achilles' heel of the Achilles

The Achilles tendon is a bit like Humpty Dumpty. If it breaks, you can't put it back together again. And according to a study published recently in *The FASEB Journal*, it's

because the tendon tissue does not renew itself. The finding follows after analysis of tendon tissue of people who grew up during the late 1950s and early sixties. During this time, atmospheric levels of the carbon-14 isotope spiked because of post-WWII nuclear testing. The carbon isotope was subsequently taken up by plants and so became incorporated in animal and human tissues. Decades later, tendon tissue samples still contain high levels of carbon-14. However, muscle tissue, which is constantly renewed, shows no trace of carbon-14 in these people. This suggests that the Achilles tendon does not regenerate, which explains why injuries are many an athlete's Achilles' heel. [LP]

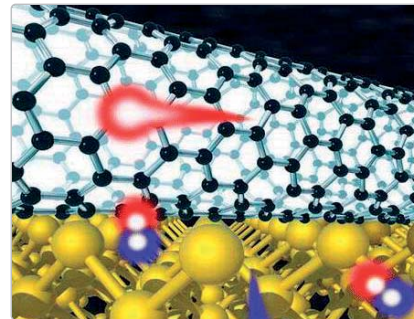
Green News



Kia Motors South Africa launches first solar powered dealership

Kia Motors South Africa (KMSA) has opened its first

eco-friendly solar powered dealership in Weltevreden Park, with this massive 3620 m² complex to become the company's flagship showroom. Powering this building is 288 roof-mounted solar panels, creating a daily maximum of 69 kW of electricity, enough to power 22 households per day. Low wattage lights are used within all the major areas of the structure, whilst water is also recycled via a state-of-the-art filtration system.



Carbon films deliver boost to solar power cells

New research by Yale University scientists has brought forth a cost-effective way to boost the efficiency of crystalline silicon solar

cells via the application of thin and smooth carbon nanotube films. These films can be used to produce hybrid carbon/silicon solar cells that deliver a significantly greater power-conversion efficiency rate than existing systems. Last year a lot of the research into solar cell technology focused on using organic solar cells as a cost effective alternative to crystalline silicon solar cells. In comparison to crystalline silicon, these organic solar cells deliver very low power-conversion efficiency.



Cold War era nuclear tech can boost eco monitoring

Under the auspices of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban

Treaty there are more than 254 sensor facilities worldwide to detect illegal nuclear tests. According to research papers published by scientists at the University of California and Harvard University, these can be used for environmental monitoring since they utilise the same sensors commonly employed for ecological reporting. This utilisation could significantly boost scientists' monitoring capacity for environmental issues such as climate change, and could also be counted as early warning systems for devastating events including tsunamis and earthquakes.

Gear in the office

The TechSmart office usually overflows with new products coming in for review. Here are our thoughts on a few of them.

Humanscale Freedom chair



With the Freedom chair, sitting at the desk all day was less of a chore and more of an experience. There are a large number of adjustments that can be made quickly and easily to fit the seat perfectly to your body, and with further functionality, such as position-sensitive headrest adjustment and a pivoting backrest, the Freedom chair is a blessing. At R10 800 it is an expensive comfort. Phone Formfunc on 0861-555-271 for enquiries.



LG 55" Full HD LED Cinema 3D and Smart TV

LG's 55" LED Cinema 3D and Smart TV offers premium full HD (1920 x 1080) visuals and impressive sound thanks to its twin 10 Watt speakers and 10 Watt subwoofer. A myriad of connectivity ports includes four HDMI ports plus three USB 2.0, but we loved ditching wired connections altogether by utilising Wi-Fi direct to stream movies directly from our tablet and notebook to the TV. RRP: R22 000.



Canon EF 100-400 f 4.5-5.6 L IS USM lens

This may not be the newest lens around, but it has certainly gained its fair share of admirers, particularly those photographing sport, action and wildlife. As expected from a Canon L lens, it is tack sharp and extremely well built. While the push-pull zoom takes a little getting used to, being able to zoom in from a safe distance and capture an intimate portrait of an animal is priceless. R15 000.




Kingston 64 GB MicroSD card

With digital cameras being able to record full HD video, regular 8 GB and even 16 GB cards can become a bit limiting. 64 GB provided us with some more room to move, while Kingston's MicroSD card can also be used in a phone or new ultrabook as added storage space. R673 with SD card adaptor.



FLD tablet carrying case

iPad carrying solutions cases may be a dime a dozen, but FLD's 10" tablet sling affords great protection while being light, comfortable to wear, and very affordable at R500.

The well crafted and stylish bag has a soft inner lining for protecting one's precious device, and we could easily fit our 9.7" iPad, with its own smart-cover. Available from Kalahari.com, contact lori@fldproducts.co.za. 

To watch



Warm Bodies

15 March 2013

We like our zombies served best with an axe to the brain, but what if zombies could transform back to humans? Would you still be as frugal with the shotgun? These types of questions are raised in *Warm Bodies*, a paranormal romantic zombie action comedy horror, starring British actor Nicolas Hoult (*About a Boy*) as R the zombie. After crossing paths with Julie (Teresa Palmer, *I Am Number Four*), his relationship with her strangely manages to simmer him back to life. If the trailer (bit.ly/zombierelax) is anything to go by we should be in for two undead thumbs up.



Jack the Giant Slayer

22 March 2013

We hope you haven't had your fill of Nicolas Hoult yet, since he also stars in *Jack the Giant Slayer*, a re-imagining of the classic tale of a boy who thought beans should be part of a growing investment portfolio. Our enthusiasm for this movie would not have been so great were it not for the fact that Bryan Singer (*X-Men*) is directing, so look out for sky-high production values, some giant special effects and an Englishman in bigger trouble than after Graeme Smith visited for a test series.



Oz the Great and Powerful


8 March 2013

After not getting his way with the 4th Spider-Man movie, director Sam Raimi put his talent to work on Disney's *Oz the Great and Powerful* (yes, we are conveniently forgetting the horrible *Drag Me to Hell*). The movie predates the events in the original *Wizard of Oz*, and stars previous Raimi collaborator James Franco (*Spider-Man 1-3*) as a circus magician who gets swept away to the Land of Oz. We could tell you how amazing the visuals will be, or how incredible the plot looks, but to be honest we'll be going to watch for the sultry Mila Kunis (*Ted*).



The Impossible

1 March 2013

The Impossible looks like a major tearjerker, and rightfully so, since it tells the true story of one family's survival of the deadly South Asian Boxing Day tsunami. It stars Ewan McGregor (*Jack the Giant Slayer*) and Naomi Watts (*The Ring*) as husband and wife, trying to reunite their family after the tsunami struck. Our advice? Take plenty of tissues. 

SPHERO



Sphero is a completely new type of gaming system. It's the world's first robotic ball that you control with a tilt, touch, or swing from your smartphone or tablet. You can drive Sphero, play tabletop and multiplayer games, hold Sphero in your hand to use it as a controller for on-screen gameplay, learn basic programming, and even explore augmented reality.



UBOOLY

Ubooly is an interactive pet that can tell your child stories and jokes, play games, and best of all, cuddle! Load your iProduct into Ubooly and the screen of becomes its face.



KIKKERLAND GEAR WALL CLOCK

Watch the gears move while the clock runs on this 35cm wall clock. Fun to watch and attracts attention. Metal and plastic parts.



POP BLUETOOTH

Go retro and sync this POP Bluetooth handset to your cell, laptop or tablet. You'll reduce 96% cell phone radiation, while chatting AND look super cool...



TETRIX



Tetrix is a holder for any Smartphones, Cellphones and GPS for your vehicle. It's magnetic, but there is no interference with your device (special magnet configuration international patent). You can mount Tetrix on the air vent or dashboard within a few seconds. It's universal, compact and portable. 100% MADE IN ITALY, high quality and reliability.

MOBILE NOTES FOR APPLE IPAD

Attach the e-pens base unit to the 30-pin dock port then write and draw freely on the iPad's screen. Convert handwritten notes to digital text with MyScript Notes Mobile.



ROPE IT

Less expensive than a golf net and more convenient than the driving range, it has never been easier to practice golf. With real ball feel and a flight path of 18 m it is perfect for golfers of any skill level.



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Dead Space 3



The first *Dead Space* was a delicious scare fest, and when *Dead Space 2* took a more action orientated approach, the question stalking *Dead Space 3* was whether it could terrify us silly.

Like most sci-fi, *Dead Space*'s story can be quite complicated, if not convoluted, so thankfully the game begins by bringing players up to speed. *Dead Space 3* continues following Isaac Clarke, the series' original protagonist and haunted survivor of the events of the preceding titles. Clarke is co-opted by Earth Gov into yet another nightmare involving the alien technology known as Markers, as he rushes to the rescue of his love interest, Ellie. He further needs to deal with religious zealots known as Unitologists and the mutant necromorphs, spawned by the monolithic Markers, all insisting that he prematurely activates his funeral plan.

Neatly complementing its high production values is some very visceral and intense action.

Brought to life

Neatly complementing its high production values (detailed graphics, superb scoring and fantastic voice acting) is some very visceral and intense action, which certainly is enjoyable, if not quite as suspenseful (read: terrifying) as the first entry. *Dead Space 3* is further enhanced by the addition of text and audio logs scattered across the game, which fleshes out (pun intended) the story. Additionally, the crafting system is a nice touch, enabling you to salvage components and then augment your own weapons to your liking. This makes for a more personalised play-style, and had us pausing to explore for more than just the much needed health-packs and ammo clips.

Also along for the ride is a co-op mode. This allows you to play with a friend, who steps into John Carver's shoes and will be appreciated depending on your multiplayer preferences. While it is well-done, to our mind it runs contrary to how *Dark Space* was originally conceived and dilutes the concept of surviving alone somewhat.

To the point

Dead Space 3 may not haunt our dreams quite like the first one, but it is still a memorable and enjoyable action title, and one we can still easily recommend playing, if not for the scares, then for the sheer fun on offer. RRP: R550. [RN] 🍌



Aliens: Colonial Marines



After six years in development, *Aliens: Colonial Marines* finally leaps out at FPS fans, latching onto their trigger fingers and keeping their faces hugged to the TV screen. Can it live up to the hype or has Gearbox pulled

another *Duke Nukem Forever*?

Aliens: Colonial Marines (ACM) has been developed as a video game sequel to James Cameron's *Aliens* movie, and takes place 17 weeks after the events of the film. Players fill the boots of Corporal Christopher Winter on a search and rescue mission to find Ellen Ripley and investigate what went wrong on the USS Sulaco.

The graphics might be decent overall, but nowhere near class leading, as both *Far Cry 3* and *Call of Duty: Black Ops II* outgun it in this department.

Familiar environments featuring new xenomorph species

From the start it feels as if you are in an interactive version of ACM's silver screen counterparts, with Gearbox making good use of their full access to the movies' sound recordings and set design. Making your way through the eleven missions of the single player campaign, you have to deal with wave upon wave of xenomorph attacks. These formidable foes may put Jaws' teeth count to shame, but due to a weak A.I. they quite conveniently leap in front of your weapon scope during every single encounter. This, coupled with an array of high-powered weaponry, means that close encounters of the xenomorph kind are rarely scary or suspense-filled.

Luckily there are a few run-ins with some new species of xenomorph, which include the ultra-creepy Boilers and a behemoth known as the Crusher, whose impenetrably thick hide and massive cargo-door busting head means you might as well have been using a water-pistol.

To the point

Another disappointing feature is the graphics, which might be decent overall, but nowhere near class leading, as both *Far Cry 3* and *Call of Duty: Black Ops II* outgun it in this department. *Aliens: Colonial Marines* is by no means a terrible FPS title, but it had the potential to rock the FPS scene. Thanks to its lack lustre graphics and A.I., it unfortunately ended up as a run-of-the-mill FPS, becoming, just like *Duke Nukem Forever*, a victim of its own hype. [HD] 🍌



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