

**From the
show floor**



**Digital cameras
Home entertainment**



Plus
- Top five of show
- Personal computing
- Portable audio

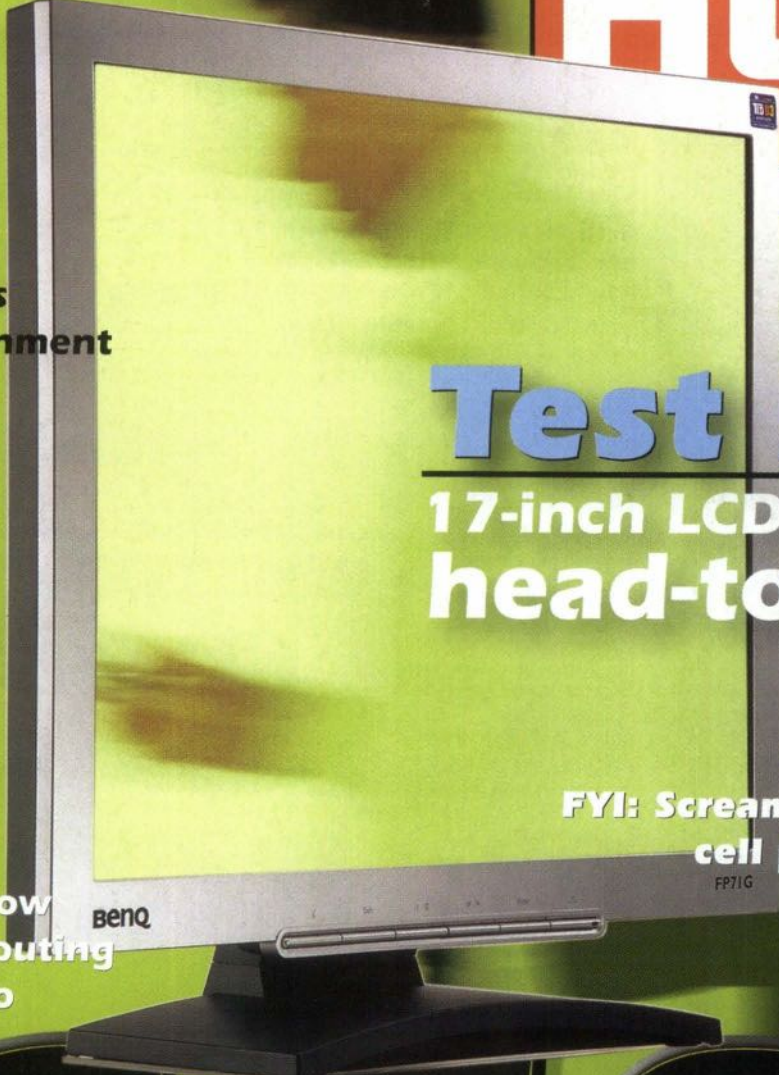
HUB

LIVING

Volume 18 Number 2

Test Lab: 17-inch LCD monitors head-to-head

Tech etiquette
**FYI: Screaming in to your
cell phone is passé**



CES

2005 Consumer Electronics Show

Digital Imaging

Home Entertainment

Personal Computing

Total Gamer

Wireless

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Digital Living

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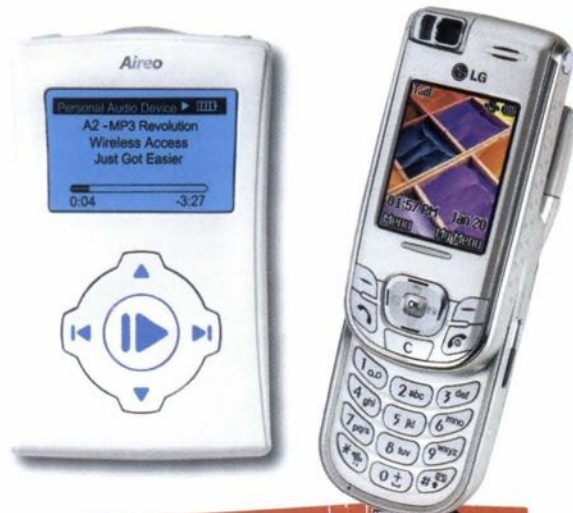
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Photo spree Regional sections

In selected regions ... and online

Not all stories run in all regions due to space constraints. Check our online archives for the full index of stories across all regions: www.hubcanada.com/TheMagazine





Distilling the capitalistic orgy that is the annual Consumer Electronics Show (CES) into a few hundred words is no easy task.

More than 140,000 people walk the 1.5 million sq. ft. floor of the Las Vegas Convention Center set aside for the show in which everything from the home PC to the lowly wrist watch, home furnishings and even appliances takes on a consumer electronics bent.

One of the predominant themes of this year's CES seemed to be "The Year of the Tiny, Shiny Lifestyle Accoutrement."

As our roundup of portable audio devices from the show floor will attest, everybody wants a piece of Apple's iPod action. Not satisfied to simply exclaim that "Product X is superior to iPod in the following, extremely compelling and irrefutable ways" (though there's a fair amount of that going around), manufacturers align their gadgetry — whether digital or video camera, MP3 player, speaker, PC, plasma TV — with a popular hobby. Also, the race to invade the living room continues. Major PC manufacturers and makers of the world's number one adopted operating system (no names) want to hang out with you and the family while you're watching TV. What's more, the PCs are finally starting to take the hint and are keeping it quiet with "silent" (read: very quiet) fans and non-moving cooling systems.

A few irrefutable facts were learned while trudging the show floor and afterward, being ferried from post-show event to post-show event via the moving walkways that seem to be a mainstay on the strip.

Letter of the Month

The Letter of the Month comes from **Nelson Nuguid** who writes: Before the end of the year 2004, I decided to catalog my mini-DV tapes (mostly video shoots of my daughter's moments since she was born almost three years ago). I have so many that I thought why not convert them to computer files for ease of use and manageability? And why not go a little further, edit the videos (adding captions, music and the like) and turn them to near professional DVDs?

The next day I showed the results to my wife. With the memorable clips she saw (which made her cry) and explaining to her that a new video-editing desktop (P4-2.4, 160GB harddrive, 1GB DDR RAM, personal cinema video card) which I desperately wanted for this new year is much less expensive than the laptop she wants to buy for my next birthday, I was able to convince her to get this new PC.

The only thing is I have left to do is turn the basement "dungeon" into the safest play area for my daughter and a clean mini-office for my new PC. So wish me

First, Las Vegas doesn't recycle; there are ashtrays every few feet along the strip but a recycling receptacle would be too much of an eyesore it seems. Second, comfortable shoes really are a requirement, as is talcum powder (so a show veteran tells me at least) to prevent uncomfortable chafing. Third, cell phones tend not to work when a medium-sized city's worth of people all with cell phones are crammed into one location. Text messages seem to get through however. Fourth, making predictions in print about major industry trade shows you've never actually been to is a bad idea, generally speaking. And fifth, there's a lot of cool stuff in the works where consumer electronics are concerned. I can't wait to get my hands on some of it.

Enjoy the issue,
Andrew Moore-Crispin
Editor-in-Chief

Dunc Petrie writes: RE: Photo printers deliver image quality, Jan. 2005 — Call me a luddite but ...

While I agree with the quality assessment of inkjet photo printers I can't get beyond the economics. Whether you choose the cheapest printer or the most expensive, it is ultimately the cost of the razor blades (or ink cartridges) that drowns you.

By using any of the numerous print services (local or online) I can have a lot of images (around 29 cents each) for the price of the printer ... and I keep on saving by not having to buy additional ink. The prints will likely last a lot longer too.

Rweez Syed writes: Not too far away comes a day when I will be wearing my external 80GB hard drive on a chain around my neck (similar to today's USB flash drives) or one the size of a fountain pen in my pocket. Then, I can plug my personal USB Hard Drive into any computer and boot from my drive giving me access to my personal programs and files.

good luck on this ... I don't want to break my New Year's resolution.

For his letter, Nelson wins a copy of Microsoft Digital Image Suite 10.

This month in addition to feedback on the issue we're asking you to tell us: **What gadget or device are you waiting for someone to invent?**

Send us your thoughts and general rants and raves: letters@ppublishing.ca

The Letter of the Month will receive a Zling Slot 256MB digital audio player from Z-Cyber.

The Zling Slot offers high quality voice and line-in recording, an FM tuner with 27 presets, and acts as a USB 2.0 flash drive for driverless direct file transfer. (www.z-cyber.net)



HUB

DIGITAL LIVING

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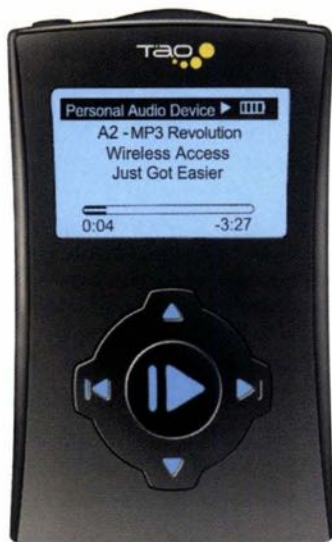
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It's not surprising that Alienware (www.alienware.com), a company known for its high-performance gaming PCs and laptops, has made PC gaming an important feature of its latest Media Center, the DHS 2. The incorporated DISCover "drop n' play" technology (an Alienware exclusive) allows users to play PC games on the television without having to go through an installation process. In addition, users can listen to music from CDs or radio streamed through either the Internet or an FM tuner, watch imported video clips or DVDs, and even communicate using MSN instant messaging – all from a single box in the living room controlled by keyboard, mouse, and remote control. Other goodies include Dolby Digital 5.1 and analog 7.1 surround sound support, FireWire, two USB 2.0 ports, and multiple TV tuners – meaning more than one channel can be watched or recorded simultaneously. Expect to pay just over \$2000 for the DHS 2 (from US\$1659).



Alienware DHS 2 Media Center



The Tao WiFi MP3 player from Giant International automatically scans for WiFi hotspots and allows users to download MP3s (as well as audio books and magazines) directly onto the device from online MP3 downloading services without having to go through a PC first. The device can also download tunes from a user's PC by way of the household wireless network.

The player has a built-in FM radio transmitter, which allows for listening to MP3s through a home or car stereo, as well as recording

songs or talk shows directly from the radio.

There's an impressive 20GB storage capacity (that translates into between 5,000 and 7,000 songs), and two headphone jacks so that two people can listen at the same time.

The player will cost approximately \$425 (from US\$349.99). For more details visit www.taolife.com.

Tao WiFi MP3



Konica Minolta's Magicolor line of colour laserjet printers (printer.konicaminolta.net) is challenging the notion that laserjet is traditionally used to print high-quality text pages as opposed to images. The company has even gone as far as to bill its newest machine, the

Magicolor 2430 DL, as "photo friendly." The 2430 DL is the first colour laser printer with PictBridge 1.0 support, meaning pictures can be printed directly from any PictBridge-compatible camera without needing a computer. The printer's base memory is 32MB but can be upgraded to a maximum of 544MB. The 2430 DL is capable of handling up to 2400 dpi (dots per inch) resolution, and will cost approximately \$600 (from US\$499).

Magicolor 2430 DL laserjet photo printer

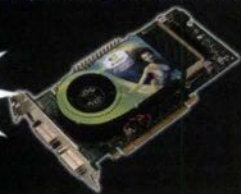
Casio's AP-80R digital piano is the newest addition to the company's Celviano line. With a wood cabinet and 88 weighted keys, the AP-80R looks and feels like an acoustic piano but has all the advantages of an electric keyboard including MIDI, microphone and headphone jacks and, for the first time, USB connectivity. Capable of 32-note polyphony, the piano comes with 258 tones, 120 pre-programmed rhythms and 80 songs – complete with lyrics that scroll across the backlit LCD display. Additional songs and lyric data can be downloaded from www.casiosongs.com and transferred via USB in conjunction with the integrated Smart Media Slot. The AP-80R's keys are touch-sensitive using a "dual element" system, where two different stereo grand piano samples are used for each note – one for the hard-hit sound, and one for the light-touch sound. The digital piano will cost about \$3650 (from US\$2999.95).



Casio AP-80R



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HUB @ CES 2005: Best of show

Sean Carruthers' picks

Robosapien v2.0

The hottest toy from Christmas grows up, with twice the height, twice the number of joints (including full-action fingers), motion sensors and a



gamepad-style remote control for even better motion control.

Olympus m:robe 500 with Cheap Trick back-catalogue

Who needs the U2 iPod when there's the Cheap Trick m:robe? With a 20GB hard drive, touch-sensitive screen and 1.3 megapixel digital camera onboard, the m:robe 500 is already cool. Unfortunately, the Cheap Trick version was only available to two lucky winners who saw Cheap Trick play at the Olympus booth ... nuts.

TMIO networked oven

This Internet-connected two-compartment oven keeps your meal cool until you send it the signal over the Internet or via cell phone when you're about to come home, and then it starts cooking your dinner. It'll be available in April for US\$7,500 (about \$9,100), but installation and food are extra.

Logitech Harmony 880 remote

Download all your remote control codes from the Internet and stick 'em in the Harmony 880, which now features a large colour LCD screen capable of displaying channel logos, screensavers and more. It has its own recharge station now and the volume and channel controls are conveniently placed at thumb level in a beautiful redesign.

U3

The ability to put your applications on a USB key is already a great idea, allowing you to do your work on any computer you run across. Giving one to each of your kids is an even better idea, so they won't mess up your computer with all of their own custom settings!

Andrew Moore-Crispin's picks

Philips Wireless Music Center – WACS700

The WACS700 stores up to 40GB worth of digital music files in one central location and plays or transmits them wirelessly to up to five diskless base stations around the house. A neat "follow me" function allows users to press a button (conveniently called "follow me") to transmit a song mid-play to their next stop in the house.

Philips Personal Sound System – PSS110

Another product that caught my eye in the Philips booth; the PSS110 is a boom box-styled MP3 playing travel clock. It makes for one bulky player as portables go, but the surprising amount of sound it kicks out from the onboard speakers makes it worth the extra suitcase space.

Spherex RX2 game chair

The RX2 is a well balanced 5.1 sound system "strategically installed into the frame of [a] chair." A comfy chair at that. While it may have been symptoms of Halo 2 withdrawal, I spent an inordinate (not to mention unfair) amount of time in the RX2. A host of technologies are crammed into the chair to ensure gamers feel every shot fired or explosion avoided, not least of which is the "Buttkicker Tactile Transducer" that physically shakes the chair when offered deep bass. I guess the title "Buttkicker Bowl Liquefier" while it may be more factual doesn't have quite the same marketing cache. Alas.

LG MW-71PY10 71-inch plasma

At better than \$60,000 a go, the odds of me getting one of these gems is



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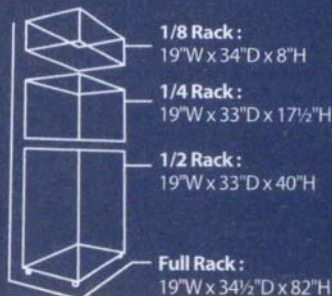
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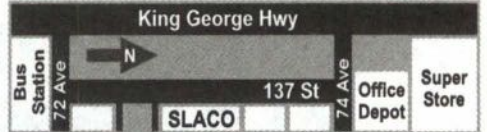
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Open AGI 8x Slot & Dual Monitor	
Sony CRX230E 52x32x52 CD-RW	
5.1 Channel 3D Sound Card O/B	
Enhanced PS/2 Keyboard	
PS/2 Wheel Mouse	
18" P4-ATX USB2.0-Front Case	
10/100Mb Ethernet O/B	
140w Speakers	
17" DAYTEK G701PF Flat Monitor	
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Enhanced PS/2 Keyboard	
Logitech Optical Wheel Mouse	
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 Sony DW-D22A dual layer DVD±RW
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 6-Channel 5.1 Sound Card O/B
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 Creative SBS560 6pc 5.1 Speaker
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ASUS ASROCK K7S41GX/P4I45GV	69/69
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MSI 925X Neo-Platinum	219
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MONITOR

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BenQ 19" LCD FP937-D Dual Analog/Digital	539
Daewoo/Daytek HL710S 16ms contrast 500:1	282
DAYTEK 17" G701PF Perfectly Flat .25mm	132
Daewoo/Daytek 19" 973DF Perfectly Flat	249
Impression 17" 7Plus	126
LG 17" 700S/ T110BH/F700P	134/149/189
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LG LCD 17" 710S 16ms Contrast 550:1	335
NEC 17" FE771SB/FE991SB	224/328
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Samsung 19" 955DF 1600x1200 .20mm dp	239
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Samsung 19" LCD 913V	529
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Sony LCD X73/X93B	648/898
ViewSonic E70F+/G75F/P75F+	179/209/249
ViewSonic E90F/G90F/P95F+	268/279/329
ViewSonic G220F/P225F	529/705
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Cable Assembly 25/50/75/100ft	9/14/19/24
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Canon I475D/19100/180	99/449/369
Epson C86/C86/1520	65/129/639
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Altec Lansing VS3151/MX5021/FX6021	94/189/269
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Aopen Titanium GT 360 degree Speakers	78
Creative speaker GD580 5.1/SBS560 5.1	199/79
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Tekram SCSI 395U/395UV	59/89	
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VIDEO

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ATI All-in-wonder 128M 9600/9600XT	219/249
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Leadtek A400 Geforce6800 128M DDR	378
Matrox G550 32M DH/Parhelia 128/256M	134/438/728
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HUB @ CES - Home Entertainment

Plasma Screens

Apparently, bigger is better in plasma screens. Samsung showed off its huge display at its press conference on the show floor. The 102-inch plasma screen was by far the biggest I've ever seen, which makes sense given that Samsung says it's the biggest in the world.

Last year, LG suffered plasma envy when its still-huge screen didn't quite measure up to Samsung's. If nothing else, a lesson was learned: before publicly comparing units, be sure to have a private "I'll show you mine if you show me yours" meeting. There's nothing worse than showing off your unit only to find it comes up two inches too short.

This year, LG's flagship plasma display was a more manageable but still living room dwarfing 71-inches. LG has committed to having the MW-71PY10 available within the first half of 2005. At 1,920x1,080 (full HD) resolution, the only thing holding me back from making a pre-order is the \$US50,000 (\$61,200) sticker price.

LCD Displays

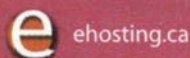
The biggest news surrounding LCD televisions is in the falling component cost that comes with wider adoption and an according drop in cost per diagonal inch of screen space at retail. Also, while displays continue to grow, manufacturers continue to improve the overall look by focusing

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attention behind the scenes ... or at least behind the screens. LCD monitors and smaller televisions are typically lit with four cold cathode fluorescent tubes. This allows for a uniform diffused backlight. As screens grow however, four lights aren't going to cut it. Major manufacturers showed off the guts of their screens, revealing new methods for lighting including a Samsung display using a diffused LED lighting system that requires less energy and casts a more even light behind the LCD screen. Meanwhile, Philips unveiled its new AmbiLight technology for LCD displays that gathers light hitting the front of the screen across vertical thirds of the screen and adjusts the lighting individually — either gradually or almost instantaneously — to give a more even picture. Philips also showed off a cool (if kitsch) full length mirror with an LCD television screen concealed in the bottom quarter. This mirror is designed primarily for high-end hotel applications but is marketed to high-end consumers too, Philips reps say.

DLP

Digital Light Processing (DLP) was another major contingent on the show floor. The Texas Instruments technology that crams millions of independent nanometre-sized mirrors that reflect light to a screen was shown off in rear-projection sets and projectors both. Benefits of the technology include a bright, sharp and responsive picture, the potential for huge images and TV sets at a low price point relative to large plasma and LCD screens. All major manufacturers showed off DLP sets and/or projectors from BenQ, Samsung, Philips and LG, among others. The only holdout is still Sony; the company derides DLP as an inferior technology and sticks with its own LCD projection technology in rear-projection TV sets bearing the Japanese giant's brand.


While DLP is not a new technology, some innovations on the show floor

were of definite interest. Perhaps most notable were two literally palm-sized DLP projectors shown off at the Texas Instruments and InFocus booths. Mitsubishi's tiny projector is expected to retail in the region of US\$600 (\$735) when it hits store shelves hopefully before the end of 2005. While Canadian availability has yet to be revealed, we should expect these projectors about the same time they arrive in the US, reps say. Using an LED light source to keep power consumption and heat down, the picture from a mini projector is noticeably dimmer than that of other projectors and is expected to cast about a 27-inch SVGA (800x600) picture. With its tiny stature and resulting portability however, the trade-offs may prove worthwhile. Did I mention it's battery powered?

Media Center

Microsoft was, as ever, putting the push on Windows XP Media Center PC Edition, now in its 2005 incarnation released late last year. Multi-tuner support is among the most needed of the updates, allowing users to watch one program while recording another. Also, users can now watch over the air HD programming. The real news however was the proliferation of Media Center Extender devices on the floor. Microsoft and those manufacturing PCs that utilize the software have their sights set on getting the PC into the living room; Media Center Extenders could prove to be their Trojan horse. Rather than asking users to grace the home theatre setup with a bulky Media Center PC, content is transferred to and from the home PC hidden elsewhere (running Windows Media Center). Similarly, HP among others has slimmed down and cleaned up the boxy PCs of old and created a computer that users won't be ashamed to dedicate entertainment unit shelf space to.

By Andrew Moore-Crispin



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Building the Ultimate Gaming PC: Part Four

Okay, this is it. In this installment, I finish building the Ultimate Gaming PC, plug it in and – gasp! – prepare to turn it on!

Step Ten: Installing the Front-Mounted USB 2.0 Ports

The Mutant Mods case comes with a front-mounted module consisting of two USB 2.0 ports. They are useful for plugging in joysticks, digital cameras, or anything else that you want to connect without messing around with the back of the case.

Unfortunately, the mount on the ABIT motherboard had nine pins, whereas each of the USB ports had a four wire lead; actually one three-wire and one one-wire lead apiece. It wasn't until I received feedback from Ben Bednarz at Startech, maker of Mutant Mods (www.startech.com) that I knew what to do: plug in one USB port on pins 1,3,5, and 7; and plug the second into 2,4,6, and 8. Weird, but it worked.

Step Eleven: Adding the Video Card

With the USB ports finally dealt with, it was time to add the ABIT RX800 Pro (a.k.a. ATI Radeon X800 Pro) video card: the monster equipped with 475MHz clock speeds and 256MB GDDR3 onboard memory.

As it turned out, only one slot on the AA8 mobo would accommodate this card, namely the PCI Express X16 slot fitted with a nifty white plastic lock-down clamp at one end. To insert the video card, I had to depress the clamp so that the card's hook-shaped end would fit into the slot. From there, I just pressed down gently, and the ABIT RX800 Pro was seated.

Step Twelve: Adding the Hard Drives (And Old CD-ROM)

It was now time to install the two Western Digital 10,000 rpm 74GB hard drives (for fast file-swapping during game play), and the two Maxtor 7,200 rpm 300GB drives (for data storage). I also chose to add an old Samsung SC-148C CD-ROM that I had on hand. Yeah, I do have the external Plextor PX-716A to read/write CDs and DVD, but I wanted to have a CD-ROM onboard for easy software installation. (Since the AA8 mobo also came with a floppy disk, RadioShack supplied an external Teac FD-05PUW USB floppy disk. I didn't want to add a 1990s vintage internal floppy to a 21st Century gaming machine!)

The Big Screw-Up!

Yikes! It happened: the Big Screw-Up that lies in wait for every PC builder. In this case, I couldn't install the drives or the CD-ROM into the case's two vertical plastic mounting panels without removing both side panels,



including the one with the mobo mounted on it. What?!

Frantically, I scanned through the case instructions. At first glance, I saw the apparent source of my problem: I should have installed the standoff posts for the hard drives before I mounted the mobo, it said. But wait: even with the stand-offs premounted, I still couldn't have screwed the hard drives and CD-ROM in place. What to do?

The Solution

A techie came to my rescue by suggesting removing the two vertical mounting plates, and then building the "tower" of hard drives and CD-ROM outside the case. Once it was ready, the whole rig was to be gently eased into the case and reattached.

Functionally, this was the answer. The only downside was that there wasn't enough room on the vertical panels for four hard drives; the case was only designed to hold two HDDs, a 3.5-inch floppy, and three 5.25-inch CD-ROMs. As a result, I installed the two Western Digital Raptors and one of the Maxtors.

Step Thirteen: Plugging In the Drives and Power

With the drives in place, all that remained was to plug in the data cables and the power cords. The Samsung CD-ROM required an IDE ribbon cable; the Western Digital and Maxtor hard drives used new serial ATA cables. All of these came with the AA8 mobo, thankfully. As well, I used one of the Mutant Mods lighted Serial ATA cables to dress up the interior.

Finally, I added some of the Mutant Mods lighting effects: two Bubble Light tubes (one red and one blue) and two Blue Meteor light tubes, all of which were mounted upfront inside the clear plastic case. These are controlled using buttons mounted in the PC's back slots; to conserve slots, I was able to plug a Bubble tube into each of the Meteor power inverters. This meant that I only needed to use two slots to support four lighting effects.

Step Fourteen: The Big Moment!

Now that everything was in place, it was time to close up "Mutant" (my wife's name for the Ultimate Gaming PC), plug in the components, and turn it on. Finally, I would know whether months of planning, PC assembly, and mistake-fixing would pay off!

After plugging in the essentials – the Samsung 17-inch LCD monitor, Logitech keyboard and mouse, plus turning on the power bar's power button – I nervously approached the front-mounted Power On button. Would Mutant spring into light-flashing life when I pressed the button? Would the ABIT logo blossom on my monitor screen as expected? Or would there be a Star Trek-style explosion of sparks instead; where did the Federation buy their hardware from anyway? Worse yet ... would nothing happen at all? Would the Ultimate Gaming PC turn out to be the Ultimate Newbie Nothing? With trembling hand and bated breath, I pressed the Power On button ...

Coming Up: All Questions Are Answered

In the final installment of "Building the Ultimate Gaming PC", we find out what happened after I pushed the Power On button. We'll also learn if Mutant loaded its Windows XP Professional operating system cheerfully and quickly; how the Altec Lansing VS3151 5.1 surround sound speaker system performed; and most importantly, how the Ultimate Gaming PC fared when loaded with The Sims 2 and other games. Stay tuned!

By James Careless

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Test lab - LCD monitors

As prices fall, so do response times, from around 15ms as last year's cutting edge to some 6ms displays today.

Response time stats, as with a great many stats in consumer electronic and computer products, don't tell the whole story, however. There isn't an industry consensus on how they're tested either, so while the specs may vary from manufacturer to manufacturer, they won't have been arrived at under the same circumstances using the same methodology.

While manufacturer-supplied response times are listed in the product info boxes accompanying each monitor review, we also tested using real world applications. Specifically movies as they will test response time, viewing angle, brightness, contrast and a host of other important factors to consider when purchasing an LCD monitor.

The major drawback with a slow pixel response comes in the form of streaking and ghosting when displaying fast motion. This is particularly problematic when watching certain movies or playing games. Conclusions about a panel's overall ability to show degrees of colour and greyscale along with any distortion issues, light leak from under the bezel, and image fuzzing were arrived at using the "technician's" version of Displaymate software (www.displaymate.com), which is designed specifically for monitor calibration and for such tests. The test area isn't outfitted with a photodiode nor an oscilloscope, and data from these devices is too specialized to be relevant to average consumers. Not to mention way over this writer's head.



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SyncMaster 710T

Manufacturer: Samsung www.samsung.ca

Estimated price: \$790 Horizontal / vertical viewing angle: 140/130

Response time: 12ms Brightness: 300 cd/m2 Contrast: 600:1

Samsung's SyncMaster 710T comes with the Japanese electronics giant's reputation for generally excellent display technologies attached. With the exception of a few quirks, the 710T doesn't disappoint.

A clean and understated thin matte grey-black bezel hides five buttons running along the bottom right of the monitor face. Recessing the symbols that explain what each button does is generally not a very good idea, but the 710T does just that. This makes brightness/contrast and other such adjustments (done in a fairly standard on-screen menu) difficult as the representative symbols are all but invisible. The problem persists until one gets used to the button layout.

With a 12ms response time, the display is suitable for casual gamers. That said, super fast action found in many current generation first-person

Pros: Balanced light/dark display, easy physical adjustment, DVI and D-SUB connections

Cons: Auto adjust puts image placement slightly to the left, slight fuzzing with tight and detailed patterns

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common to every monitor in this test, it doesn't allow users to make adjustments beyond brightness and contrast, potentially frustrating more meticulous and exacting users.

It's a shame, given that the FP71G+'s quick response time is the fastest of the monitors tested. For the less hardcore gamers among us, the almost non-existent ghosting won't prove an issue.

Unfortunately, this monitor doesn't

offer users any way to make physical adjustments beyond tilting the display; no height adjustment is present.

With no light leaks at the side of the panel, a relatively thin bezel and aesthetic appeal combined with a wide viewing angle, the FP71G+ is a good flat panel choice for the average user. More exacting users would prefer a little more control over display adjustments and better black reproduction at the low end of the scale.

Pavillion F1703

Manufacturer: HP www.hp.ca

Estimated price: \$850 Horizontal / vertical viewing angle: 140/120

Response time: Not disclosed Brightness: 250 cd/m2 Contrast: 350:1

The biggest selling points for HP's Pavillion F1703 LCD flat panel monitor come in the form of the easy and numerous physical adjustments, two Harmon Kardon speakers that plug directly into the monitor and can be

attached to the actual unit or placed independently within the proprietary speaker wire's span. The F1703 stands in the middle ground, satisfying both the high and low ends of the colour and grey scale. That said, what sacrifices it makes come on the lower end of said scales.

Getting a truly accurate on-screen black was impossible in our tests; even with the brightness set to zero in one stage of the monitor setup using Displaymate, blacks came across as dark grey, resulting in a washed-out feeling with dark images and to a lesser extent, across the board.

A relatively poor response time makes this monitor unsuitable for all but the most occasional game players while movie performance was good with generally brighter films but lacked contrast in darker ones. As with gaming, super fast action becomes a problem owing to the monitor's sluggish LCD response time.

Ideally suited to less taxing general PC use, the F1703 satisfies its niche. The more hardcore among us will want to step up to a faster response time and more accurate colour / grey reproduction at both the high and low ends of the scale.

Pros: Easy physical adjustments, included non-enclosed speakers and optional subwoofer

Cons: True black seems impossible to achieve, slow response

Direction L7AK5

Manufacturer: Direction Estimated price: \$450

Horizontal / vertical viewing angle: 140/130

Response time: 16ms Brightness: 250 cd/m2 Contrast: 400:1

Canadian company Direction is making a run at the big guys with flat panels in about the same price range that the company says include extra features not available in its competitor's lines.

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 LG 16x DVD-RW GSA 4160B **..\$91**

Keyboard and Mouse

 MS Multimedia KB+Optical Mouse **..\$35**
 Windows PS-2 KB / Wheel Mouse **..\$9/7**
 PS-2 or USB or Mini Optical Mouse **..\$15**

Video Card

 ATI Radeon X800XT Plat. 256M Box **\$669**
 ATI Radeon 9600 XT 128M DDR OEM **\$175**
 ATI Radeon 9200SE 128M **..\$59**
 MSI NX6600GT VTD128 TV & VIVO **\$285**
 nVidia FX5700LE 128M DDR **..\$99**
 G4 MX440 64M 8xAGP TV-Out **..\$55**

Modem & Networking

 PCI 56K Modem/D-Link DFE-530TX **\$18/19**
 Surecom 10/100 NIC **..\$12**
 4P 10/100 Switch Hub **..\$26**
 D-Link DI604 4P Router **..\$49**
 Linksys WRT54G Wireless Router **..\$75**
 Linksys WMP54G PCI Card **..\$65**

Software - System Only

 MS Windows XP Home/ Pro Ed. **\$119/179**
 Microsoft Work Suite 2003 **..\$75**
 Microsoft Office XP SBE **..\$239**

All Systems can be customized and come with 1 year parts & 3 year labor warranty, 1 month free internet access. All prices reflect 3% cash discount & subject to change without notice. Not responsible for typos.

The L7AK5 keeps with tradition offering a narrow gun metal grey bezel with bottom-mounted speakers.

As the newcomer, the L7AK5 surprisingly showed some of the best results in our tests; its

ability to display true blacks while not losing very dark greys and to simultaneously shine bright, clean whites with little loss of contrast at the high end of the scale went unmatched. However, in trying to attain a true colour spectrum on the higher end, dark greys take on a slight greenish cast.

It seems strange that the L7AK5 performed admirably on both the high and low ends since its adjustments seem crude in comparison to other LCDs tested. Upon entering the menu systems (using the five side-mounted and clearly visible buttons) and choosing either brightness or contrast, each adjustment up or down is quite noticeable on the screen. Other panels offer fine-tuning of sorts, as differences between 42 and 43 on the brightness scale, for example, aren't visible with the naked eye. By comparison, each single numerical jump is immediately obvious on the L7AK5. This makes it difficult to get a proper adjustment, as effective brightness and contrast adjustments are all contained within about 10 points on the scale, leaving 90 largely unused.

Pros: Wide viewing angle, speakers included, excellent range, DVI and D-SUB connections

Cons: Slight light bleed in both models tested, speakers too tinny, lacks fine menu adjustment

SDM-HS74P

Manufacturer: Sony www.sony.ca
 Horizontal / vertical viewing angle: 140/130
 Estimated price: \$699.99

Response time: 16ms Brightness: 400
 cd/m2 Contrast: 500:1

Sony's flat panel is the only monitor in our roundup that opts for a clear glass face as opposed to light-diffusing matte glass put on the viewing surface of the other monitors.



While the clear glass reflects room light, requiring that some thought be given to its positioning on the desk so as to avoid or minimize such reflections, it also gives the screen a much brighter and arguably better overall picture.

The SDM-HS74P features more user image adjustment options than other monitors tested. Most notable is a backlight control used to select from four settings: high, middle, low and user defined. That said, even adjusting the backlight to the lowest level can't get rid of a slight light bleed on the left and right edges of the screen.

While both the high and low ends of the greyscale display very well, both can't be satisfied at the same time; users must choose whether true whites or accurate blacks will take precedence.

Keeping the user control buttons on the underside left edge of the panel while putting the corresponding labels on the face of the monitor was a good choice. Likewise, a removable back panel hides the connections keeps things neat and tidy.

Pros: DVI and D-SUB connections, excellent industrial design, adjustable backlight

Cons: Slight light bleed on left and right edges, users must choose between accurate blacks and whites

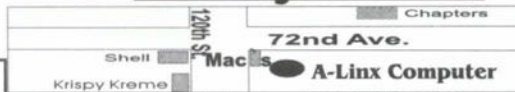
The panel's sleek lines, thin bezel and reflective glass screen make it something most would be proud to have on their desk.

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Http://www.alinx.ca

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Surrey / Delta



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 E-mail: sales@alinxcomputer.com

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- LG 52X32X52 CD-RW Drive w/Software **\$32**
- 11 in 1 Card Reader USB2.0 External **\$18**
- Sony DW-D22A Dual Layer (16X+-DVD-RW,48x24x48 CD-RV) **\$78**
- Microsoft Wireless Optical Desktop (keyboard & Mouse) **\$59**



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 - Norton Antivirus/Security 2005.....\$38/\$42
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 - Maxtor 40GB HD.....\$59
 - Wireless Multimedia Pro KB & Optical Mouse.....\$39
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 - LG 52X CD-Rom.....\$20
 - LiteOn 52XCD-RW,16XDVD Combo Drive.....\$49
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AMD Econ System

- AMD Sempron 2400+ CPU**
 ASROCK K7S41GX_6XUSB2.0 W/8XAGP Port Mainboard
 PC3200 256MB DDR400 (Infineon)
 Maxtor 40GB 7200rpm Hard Drive
 Sony 1.44MB Floppy Drive
 Up to 64MB AGP 3D Video(O/B)
 AC97 3D Sound(O/B),10/100 NIC(O/B)
 LG 52X CD-ROM
 18" 300W & 2XUSB Tower Case
 Logitech Optical Wheel Mouse
 PS/2 Windows Keyboard
 240W Speakers
- \$309**
- Sempron 2500+/2600+/2800+ \$325/\$339/\$375



Intel Celeron System

- Celeron D320-2.4 GHz CPU**
 ASROCK P4I45GV_6XUSB2.0
 PC3200 256MB DDR400 (Infineon)
 Maxtor 40GB 7200rpm Hard Drive
 Sony 1.44 MB Floppy Drive
 3D Graphic 4X AGP(O/B)
 5.1 Channel audio,10/100 NIC (O/B)
 LG 52X CD-ROM
 18" 300W & 2XUSB Tower Case
 Logitech Optical Wheel Mouse
 PS/2 Windows Keyboard
 240W Speakers
- \$319**
- Celeron 330-2.6G/335-2.8G \$339/\$369

AMD Value System

- AMD Sempron 2600+CPU**
 ASUS A7V400-MX_6xUSB2.0
 256MB PC3200 DDR400 (Infineon)
 Seagate 80GB 7200rpm HD
 Sony 1.44MB Floppy Drive
 VIA 3D Graphic Card(O/B)
 ADI SoundMax 6-Channel Sound(O/B)
 VIA VT6103 10/100 Network Card(O/B)
 LG 52x32x52 CD-RW Drive
 18" 300W & 2XUSB Front Tower Case
 Win Multimedia Internet Keyboard
 Logitech Optical Wheel Mouse
 780W 3D Speakers System w/ Subwoofer
- \$399**
- Sempron 2800+ \$435
 AOC FT700 17" Monitor Flat+ \$139

AMD Power System

- AMD Athlon64 2800+CPU**
 ASUS K8N nForce3_8xUSB2.0
 256MB PC3200_DDR400 (Infineon)
 WD 80GB 7200rpm-8MB HD
 Sony 1.44MB Floppy Drive
 ATI Radeon 9250 128MB_DDR
 TV out, 8XAGP Video Card
 Realtek ALC850 8-channel Sound(O/B)
 10/100 Lan, 2XSerial ATA(O/B)
 LG 52X32X52 CD-RW Drive
 18" 300W & 2XUSB Front Tower Case
 Microsoft Multimedia Keyboard
 Microsoft Optical Wheel Mouse
 780W 3D Speakers System w/ Subwoofer
- \$575**
- Athlon64 3000+/3200+ \$605/\$659
 AOC FT700 17" Monitor Flat +\$139

AMD Super System

- Athlon64 3000+CPU S939**
 ASUS A8V Deluxe_8xUSB2.0
 512MB PC3200_DDR400 (Samsung)
 Maxtor 160GB 7200rpm-8MB HD
 Sony 1.44MB Floppy Drive
 Nvidia FX5200_128MB_DDR
 TV out, 8XAGP Video Card
 Realtek ALC850 8-Channel Audio(O/B)
 Gigabit Lan,IEEE1394,4XSerial ATA
 *Sony Dual Layer 16XDVD+-RW Drive
 18" 400W & 2XUSB Front Tower Case
 Microsoft Multimedia Keyboard
 Microsoft Optical Wheel Mouse
 Creative SBS-330 Speakers System
- \$839**
- Athlon64 3200+/3500+ S939 \$899/\$989
 AOC FT700 17" Monitor Flat +\$139

AMD Super+ System

- Athlon64 3200+CPU S939**
 ASUS A8N-SLI Deluxe_10xUSB2.0
 1GB(512MBX2) DDR400 (Samsung)
 Maxtor 200GB 7200rpm-16MB HD
 Sony 1.44MB Floppy Drive
 ASUS EN6200GE 128MB DDR 16XPCI-E
 TV out, DVI Video Card
 Realtek ALC850 8-Channel Audio(O/B)
 Gigabit Lan,IEEE1394,8XSerial ATA(O/B)
 *Sony Dual Layer 16XDVD+-RW Drive
 18" Dual Fan 450W & 2XUSB Front Case
 Microsoft Cordless Multimedia Keyboard
 Microsoft Cordless Optical Wheel Mouse
 Logitech X530 5 Speakers w/ Subwoofer
- \$1239**
- Athlon64 3500+/3800+ S939\$1329/\$1779
 Acer AL1714CB 17"LCD +\$309

P4 Value System

- Intel Celeron D330 2.6GHz**
 ASUS P4VP-MX_6xUSB2.0
 256MB PC3200_DDR400 (Infineon)
 Seagate 80GB 7200rpm HD
 Sony 1.44MB Floppy Drive
 VIA ProSavage8 Graphics (O/B)
 Realtek ALC655 6-channel Sound(O/B)
 10/100 Network Card (O/B)
 LG 52x32x52 CD-RW Drive
 18" 300W & 2XUSB Front Tower Case
 Win Multimedia Internet Keyboard
 Logitech Optical Wheel Mouse
 780W 3D Speakers System w/ Subwoofer
- \$405**
- D330-2.8G/D320-2.4G \$435/\$389
 P4 2.4G/2.8G-1MB \$455/\$505
 AOC FT700 17" Monitor Flat+ \$139

P4 Power System

- Intel P4 2.4GHz CPU**
 ASUS P4S800_FSB800 6xUSB2.0
 256MB PC3200_DDR400 (Infineon)
 WD 80GB 7200rpm-8MB HD
 Sony 1.44MB Floppy Drive
 ATI Radeon 9250 128MB_DDR
 TV out, 8XAGP Video Card
 ADI AD1980 6-channel 3D Sound (O/B)
 10/100 Network Card(O/B)
 LG 52X32X52 CD-RW Drive
 18" P4 300W & 2XUSB Front Tower Case
 Microsoft Multimedia Keyboard
 Microsoft Optical Wheel Mouse
 780W 3D Speakers system w/ Subwoofer
- \$555**
- P4 3.0G/3.2G-1MB \$619/\$669
 Celeron 2.4G/2.6G \$489/509
 AOC FT700 17" Monitor Flat +\$139

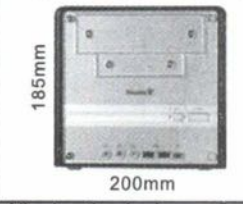
P4 Super System

- P4 530 3.0GHz CPU S775**
 ASUS P5P800_8xUSB2.0
 512MB PC3200_DDR400 (Samsung)
 Maxtor 160GB 7200rpm-8MB HD
 Sony 1.44MB Floppy Drive
 Nvidia FX5200_128MB_DDR
 TV out, 8XAGP Video Card
 Sound Blaster 6-Channel 3D Sound(O/B)
 Gigabit Lan,Serial ATA(O/B)
 *Sony Dual Layer 16XDVD+-RW Drive
 18" P4 400W & 2XUSB Front Tower Case
 Microsoft Multimedia Keyboard
 Microsoft Optical Wheel Mouse
 Creative SBS-330 Speakers System w/ Subwoofer
- \$849**
- P4 540 3.2G/550 3.4G \$899/\$969
 AOC FT700 17" Monitor Flat +\$139

P4 Super+ System

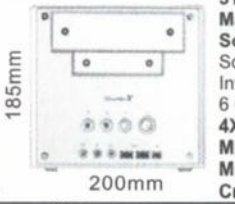
- Intel P4 540 3.2GHz CPU S775**
 ASUS P5GD1 i915P_8xUSB2.0
 1GB(512MBX2) DDR400 (Samsung)
 Maxtor 200GB 7200rpm-16MB HD
 Sony 1.44MB Floppy Drive
 ASUS EN6200GE 128MB DDR 16XPCI-E
 TV out, DVI Video Card
 Realtek ALC861 8-Channel Sound(O/B)
 Gigabit Lan,4XSerial ATA(O/B)
 *Sony Dual Layer 16XDVD+-RW Drive
 18" P4 Dual Fan 450W & 2XUSB Front Case
 Microsoft Cordless Multimedia Keyboard
 Microsoft Cordless Optical Wheel Mouse
 Logitech X530 5 Speakers System w/ Subwoofer
- \$1189**
- P4 530 3.0G/550 3.4G \$1139/\$1259
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Shuttle XPC SK83G



- AMD Athlon64 3000+CPU**
 512MB PC3200 DDR400 (Samsung)
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 VIA 3D Graphic Card w/TV Out & 8XAGP(O/B)
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 4XUSB2.0,2XFireWire,2XSerial ATA
 Microsoft Multimedia Keyboard
 Microsoft Optical Wheel Mouse
 Creative SBS-330 Speakers System w/ Subwoofer
- \$839**

Shuttle SB61G2V3



- Intel P4 530 3.0GHz CPUFSB800**
 512MB PC3200 DDR400 (Samsung)
 Maxtor 160GB 7200rpm-8MB Hard Drive
 Sony Dual Layer 16XDVD+-RW Drive
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 Intel Extreme Graphics 2 w/TV Out & 8XAGP(O/B)
 6 Channel Sound, 10/100 Lan(O/B)
 4XUSB2.0,2XFireWire,2XSerial ATA
 Microsoft Multimedia Keyboard
 Microsoft Optical Wheel Mouse
 Creative SBS-330 Speakers System w/ Subwoofer
- \$919**

All advertised prices reflect 3.0% cash discount. All Systems come with 1 year parts and 3 years labour hardware

Flatron L172WT

Manufacturer: LG www.lg.ca

Estimated price: \$785 Horizontal / vertical viewing angle: 176/176

Response time: 25ms Brightness: 450 cd/m2 Contrast: 600:1

The first and most noticeable difference between this and other flat panels submitted is visible on the face of the monitor in the form of a relatively large widescreen LCD display. Upon turning the monitor cum television around, users find a wide array of audio and video inputs from standard TV coaxial cable to composite, RCA and S-Video ins. The display also has front-mounted speakers that perform more impressively than other part-and-parcel speakers but still not well enough to act as a stand-alone. The L172WT displays the lower end of grey and colour scales well but at a sacrifice to the higher end. In attaining a true black, higher end colours

are blown out and whites become blinding and lack definition.

As a monitor, users can choose to have their desktop displayed in either 1:1 ratio with the sides of the screen unused for an image that looks about comparable to a 15-inch LCD screen or it can be displayed in full. Full screen mode stretches the desktop across the wide screen, resulting in a skewed look that becomes more noticeable when looking at pictures.

As a small LCD television, DVD and console gaming screen, its myriad input options, excellent remote control, onboard speakers and scaleable picture-in-picture make for a compelling argument. As a primary computer monitor however, the diagnosis isn't quite as favourable.

By Andrew Moore-Crispin

Pros: TV tuner on-board, DVI and D-SUB connections, widescreen TV
Cons: Washed-out whites, widescreen computing, some ghosting with fast motion

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<p>AMD Sempron 2400+ Value Model #A240002</p> <p>Asrock K7S41GX AGP M/B 256MB PC2700 DDR/ 1.44MB FDD Samsung 80GB UATA 7200rpm HD Integrated S3 3D Video Interface AOpen 52x32x52 Int. CD-RW/ Monitor Extra 6-Channel Audio / Pair of Stereo Speaker 107-key Multimedia KB / 10/100MB NIC 17" ATX Tower Case w/350W Power Supply</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">\$359</p>	<p>AMD Athlon XP2600+ Family Model #A260002</p> <p>Asus A7V400-MX AGP M/B 512MB PC2700 DDR/1.44MB FDD 120GB ATA133 7200rpm Hard Drive Integrated VIA UniChrome Video Interface AOpen 52x32x52 Int. CD-RW / Monitor Extra 6-Channel Audio / Pair of Stereo Speaker 107-key Multimedia KB / 10/100MB NIC 17" ATX Tower Case w/350W Power Supply</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">\$499</p>	<p>AMD Athlon64 2800+ Best Buy Model #A286402</p> <p>Asus K8V-X Socket 754 AGP M/B 512MB PC3200 DDR / 1.44MB FDD WD 160GB 7200rpm 8M Cache SATA HD ATI 9250 AGP Video, 128MB DDR, DVI LG 16x Dual Layer Int. DVD-RW/ Monitor Extra 6-Channel Audio/ AOpen Speakers w/Sub 107-key Multimedia KB / Gigabit LAN Interface 17" ATX Tower Case w/350W Power Supply</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">\$699</p>	<p>AMD Athlon64 3000+ Power Model #A306402</p> <p>Abit AV88 Socket 939 AGP M/B SATA, Gigabit LAN, 6-Channel Audio 1024MB PC3200 DDR / 1.44MB FDD WD 200GB 7200rpm 8M Cache SATA HD ATI 9550 8xAGP Video, 128MB DDR, DVI LG 16x +/- Dual Layer DVD-Rewriter 6-Channel Audio/ AOpen Speakers w/Sub Logitech Wireless KB & Mouse/ Monitor Extra 17" ATX Tower Case w/350W Power Supply</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">\$999</p>
<p>Intel Celeron D 2.4GHz Value Model #IC240002</p> <p>Asrock P4I45GV AGP Bus M/B 256MB PC2700 DDR/ 1.44MB FDD Samsung 80GB UATA 7200rpm HD Integrated S3 3D Video Interface AOpen 52x32x52 Int. CD-RW/ Monitor Extra 6-Channel Audio / Pair of Stereo Speaker 107-key Multimedia KB / 10/100MB NIC 17" ATX Tower Case w/350W Power Supply</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">\$379</p>	<p>Intel P4 2.4GHz Family Model #IP240002</p> <p>Asus P4-GE-MX AGP M/B 512MB PC2700 DDR/ 1.44MB FDD Samsung 80GB UATA 7200rpm HD Integrated S3 UniChrome Video Interface AOpen 52x32x52 Int. CD-RW/ Monitor Extra 6-Channel Audio / Pair of Stereo Speaker 107-key Multimedia KB / 10/100MB NIC 17" ATX Tower Case w/350W Power Supply</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">\$499</p>	<p>Intel P4 2.8GHz Best Buy Model #IP280002</p> <p>Asus P5S800-VM Socket 775 M/B 512MB PC3200 400MHz DDR 1.44MB Floppy Drive & Int. Card Reader WD 160GB 7200rpm 8M Cache SATA HD Integrated SIS Real 256E Graphics/ Monitor Extra AOpen 12x Dual Layer Int. DVD-Rewriter 6-Channel Audio / Pair of Stereo Speaker MS Multimedia Keyboard & Optical Mouse 17" ATX Tower Case w/350W Power Supply</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">\$699</p>	<p>Intel P4 3.2GHz Power Model #IP320002</p> <p>Asus P5P800 Socket 775 M/B 1.44MB Floppy Drive 1024MB PC3200 DDR Dual-Channel 400 WD 200GB 7200rpm 8M Cache SATA HD ATI 9550 8xAGP Video, 128MB DDR, DVI LG 16x +/- Dual Layer DVD-Rewriter 6-Channel Audio / Pair of Stereo Speaker 107-key Multimedia KB / Monitor Extra 17" ATX Tower Case w/350W Power Supply</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">\$999</p>
<p>AMD Athlon64 3200+ Performance Model #A326402</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asus A8V-DX Socket 939 Motherboard • Gigabit LAN / Firewall / 8C Audio • Kingston 1024MB PC3200 DDR Memory • 1.44MB Floppy Drive & Int. Card Reader • WD 250GB 8MB Cache SATA HD <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">\$1,299</p>		<p>Intel P4 3.2GHz Dream Model #IP320002</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asus P5GD2 Socket 775 Motherboard • SATA / Gigabit LAN / 8-Channel Audio • 1024MB PC3200 DDR2, Dual-Channel • 1.44MB Floppy Drive & 7-in-1 Card Reader • WD 250GB 8MB Cache SATA HD <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">\$1,399</p>	

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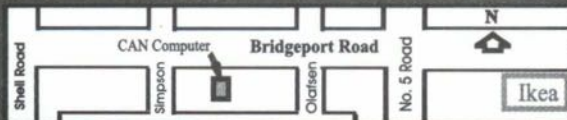
<p>Monitor</p> <p>Samsung 17" 793DF Flat CRT \$169 Samsung 19" 997DF Flat CRT \$299 LG 15" 1530S LCD Monitor, 16ms \$289 LG 17" 1710S LCD Monitor, 16ms \$355 LG 17" 1710BK LCD Monitor, 16ms, DVI \$389 LG 19" 1910S LCD Monitor, 25ms \$535 Samsung 17" 710N LCD Monitor \$419 Samsung 17" 710V / 713V LCD \$369 Samsung 19" 910V / 913V LCD \$559</p>	<p>Hard Drive</p> <p>Samsung 40 / 80G 7200rpm \$65/79 Samsung 120/160G 7200rpm \$99/115 Maxtor 120/160G 8M 7200rpm \$115/125 Maxtor 200/ 250G SATA7200rpm \$159/195 WD 40 / 80G 8M 7200rpm \$75/85 WD 120 / 200G 8M 7200rpm \$109/150 WD 160/ 250G SATA 7200rpm \$129/199</p>	<p>Motherboard</p> <p>Abit SG-72, 478, Video, Lan, Audio \$79 Abit AV8, 939, SATA, Lan, Audio \$130 Abit AS8, 775, SATA, Lan, Audio, DC \$135 MSI 865PE, 478, SATA, GBL, Audio, DC \$109 MSI K8T, 754, SATA, GBL, Audio, DC \$95 Asus P4P800S-X, 478, SATA, Lan, Audio \$89 Asus K8V-X, 754, SATA, Lan, Audio \$112 Asus P5P800, 775, SATA, GBL, DC \$125</p>	<p>Acer Notebook</p> <p>2201LCI-H Cel 2.6 256 15" 40/combo \$949 AS1414WLCI CelM1.3 512 15.4" 40/combo \$1049 AS1681-XPB Cent1.5 512 15" 60/combo \$1199 TM4001-P Cent1.5 512 15.4" 60/dvdrw \$1439 TM4002LMI Cent1.6 512 15.4" 60/dvdrw \$1459</p>
<p>Backup Device</p> <p>AOpen / LG 52x32x52 CDRW \$35 AOpen 12x +/- Dual Layer DVD-RW \$69 AOpen 16x +/- Dual Layer DVD-RW \$79 LG 16x +/- Dual Layer DVD-ReWriter \$95</p>	<p>Multimedia</p> <p>LG 52x CD-ROM Drive \$25 LG 16x DVD-ROM Drive \$39 SoundBlaster Live 5.1 (OEM) \$39 Logitech X230 2.1 Speaker w/Sub \$59 Creative SB S350 Speaker w/Sub \$39 Altec Lansing VS4121 Speaker \$99</p>	<p>Video Card</p> <p>ATI 9250, AGP8X, 128MB DDR, DVI \$65 ATI 9550, AGP8X, 256MB DDR, DVI \$99 MSI 5750, PCI-E, 128MB DDR, DVI \$159 MSI 6600GT, PCI-E, 128MB DDR, DVI \$239 MSI 6800, PCI-E, 256MB DDR, DVI \$439</p>	<p>Asus Notebook</p> <p>S5N Cent1.5 256 12.1" 40/combo 2.8 \$1739 A2K AMD64 3000+ 512 15" 60/combo \$1749 W1N Cent1.7 768 15.4" 80/combo \$2699</p>
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<p>CAN Sempron System \$289</p> <p>AMD Sempron 2200+ CPU ASRock K7S41GX Motherboard 256MB DDR333 RAM 3D Video with 64MB(shared) Samsung 40G(7200)Hard Drive AOpen 52x32x52 CD Writer 3D Audio, Speakers 240Ws Keyboard & Scroll Mouse</p>	<p>CAN P4 SOHO System \$299</p> <p>P4 Celeron 2.0GHz CPU ASRock P4I45GV Motherboard 256MB DDR333 RAM 3D Video 64MB shared Samsung 40G (7200) Hard Drive AOpen 52x32x52 CD Writer 3D Audio, Speakers 240W Keyboard & Scroll Mouse</p>	<p>CAN Athlon 64 Elite System \$449</p> <p>Athlon 64 2800 Abit KV80 S754 GigaLAN SRAID DDR 400MHz 256MB 3D Video Onboard 64MB Shared Samsung 80GB Hard Drive Aopen 52x32x52 CDRW Qtronix Scorpious Multimedia Keyboard and Optical Scroll Mouse, 720W Juster Speakers</p>	<p>CAN Pentium 4 Power System \$499</p> <p>Intel Pentium LGA775 3.0GHz AsRock 775i65GV Motherboard 256MB DDR400 RAM with Dual- Channel Support Intel Extreme Graphics onboard Samsung 80G(7200)Hard drive AOpen 52x32x52 CD Writer Scorpious Multimedia Keyboard Lynx Optical Scroll Mouse</p>	<p>CAN Athlon 64 Supra System \$599</p> <p>Athlon 64 Bit CPU 3000+ Asus K8V-X Motherboard DDR400 512M RAM HIS Radeon 9250 128MB Samsung 120GB Drive AOpen 52x32x52 CD Writer Juster Speakers w/Sub 720W Scorpious Multimedia Keyboard Lynx Optical Scroll Mouse</p>
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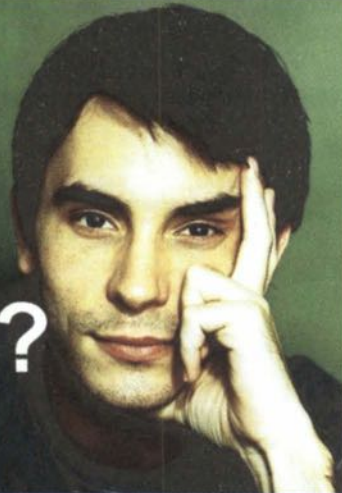


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HUB @ CES: Cell phones

It's almost getting to the point now where you can't get a cell phone handset that doesn't have something else added to it ... Bluetooth is becoming more and more popular, and while camera phones continue to spread like wildfire (or a fungus, depending on how you feel about them), videophones are the new hot thing.

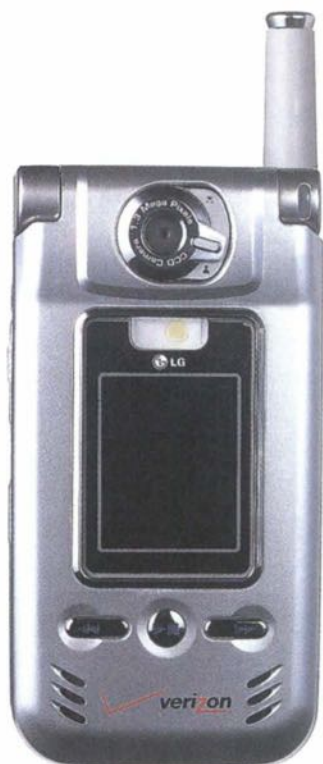
Fashion is also on the agenda with new phones, including a few prototypes from Nokia scheduled to launch later in the year. The sleek 7280 handset looks like a cross between a lipstick tube and an MP3 player, with an LCD window next to a spinning wheel. There's no number pad at all on this model; instead, you use the wheel to dial and to select letters for text messaging ... it takes a little bit longer, but the phone is much more discrete. That aesthetic also influenced the design of the 7270, though the wider 7270 flips open to reveal a number pad.

LG introduced new sliding handsets, including the PM-325 (its first Bluetooth handset), the A7110 EDGE phone, and the MM-535 1.3 megapixel cameraphone. Most interesting of these new sliding handsets was the F9100, which looks like a regular phone at a glance, but slides open sideways to reveal a QWERTY keyboard for use with the web and messaging applications. All of these handsets were scheduled for launch at the end of January. The company also introduced the new VX8000 handset, which includes both a 1.3 megapixel camera and video capabilities.

Audiovox's new CDM-180 has a difference: the LCD screen appears on the upper half of the clamshell phone in landscape mode, which the company feels will make it more compatible with photo and video applications, not to mention text messaging. The phone also features a built-in VGA-quality camera. If Internet access, instant messaging, photo and video aren't enough for you when it comes to your cell phone, how about television, too?

MobiTV offers 22 channels in real time over the data network to users of Cingular's Nokia 6620 handset for a US\$10 subscription fee (around \$12), in addition to the phone's regular data costs. If you can wait a bit longer, Texas Instruments announced development of its new "Hollywood"





chip, designed to put an actual TV tuner on a single chip inside a cell phone. By the time the product hits the mainstream in late 2006 or early 2007 it will support 24-30 frames per second – an improvement over what's currently available today using the standard cellular data networks.

Jabra's BT800 wireless Bluetooth headset is a bit bulkier than usual, and that's not just because it has Bluetooth onboard ... it also has a small LCD window on it. The LCD display shows caller ID, so you won't have to haul out the phone itself in order to see who's calling, but it also gives you access to some of the functions found on the phone, like the ability to change your ringtone, look through your address book, and more. It also uses Digital Signal Processing to cut down on ambient noises. Despite all of this, it still weighs under 30 grams. It will be available for around \$180 (from US\$149).

Rival headset maker Plantronics took a bit of a different tack with the L510S, a Bluetooth headset system that not only connects to your cell phone, but can also be used with your residential telephone, too. It does this through the headset's charging base. Right next to the spot where you plug in the power adapter, there's a telephone jack for your home telephone line. Inside the base is a Bluetooth tranceiver that will communicate with your headset while you're at home, allowing you to answer the home phone with the tap of a button on the headset. There's no call display, unfortunately, so you'll have to look at another phone in the house for that, but once you answer it, you'll be able to roam the house freely.

By Sean Carruthers

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HUB @ CES 2005: Portable Audio

Thanks to the insanely popular Apple iPod, which is now a fashionable cultural icon, dozens of companies are trying to cash in on the craze by launching their own digital audio players or accessories. Hundreds of such products made their debut at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas. The following is a brief look at what CES had to offer. Listen up!

Wireless transfer

While it's not a familiar name to portable music fans, the SoniqCast Aireo 2 is a second-generation product that wirelessly transfers music to and from a PC - without the need to connect it via a cable.

As with its predecessor, the Aireo 2 works with an existing wireless network and transfers music at roughly 11 megabits per second (Wi-Fi; 802.11b). But the Aireo is roughly 25 per cent smaller than last year's version, is now equipped with a 20GB hard drive instead of a paltry 1.5GB, and features a USB 2.0 port, which is roughly 40 times faster than the old USB 1.1 port (in case you don't have a wireless network).

Other features include a built-in FM receiver (and transmitter, to send the music to a FM radio for wireless listening) and a SecureDigital (SD) memory card slot.



While there are no plans to bring the product to Canada, the SoniqCast Aireo 2 can be purchased for roughly US\$299 through SoniqCast's OEM partners. Read more about it at www.soniqcast.com.

You talkin' to me?

What's a cell phone doing in this round-up, you ask? Motorola's E815 does a lot more than just make phone calls. When the product debuts later this summer (no carrier commitment as of yet), it will also be able to download and play MP3s and movie clips via a video-on-demand service (weather, sports highlights, music videos, news, etc.). The E815 is one of Motorola's first to feature the high-speed EV-DO technology for fast and secure transmission to the phone.

While the Bluetooth-enabled phone only has 40MB of internal memory (about 10 MP3 tunes), it is expandable (up to 256MB) via a TransFlash card slot. You can also shoot still images using the E815's 1.3-megapixel camera, or record up to 15 seconds of video to email or archive on the phone.

Look Ma, no hands

While Apple may be garnering all the love for its iPod products, Creative has quietly been pumping out – in this journalist's opinion – superior products that sound better, do more and last longer. Now the company has unveiled its wireless headphones solution for its portable Zen Micro player – so you can toss your portable audio player in your knapsack, pocket or purse, then throw on the wireless headphones for cord-free personal listening. A small plastic casing fits snug around the small Zen Micro and plugs into its headphone jack.

The Zen Micro is the first prod-



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<p>MOTHERBOARD for AMD CPU</p> <p>Asus K8V-X / SE Deluxe 64bit---105/143 Asus A8V-DX 64bit---163 MSI K8M Neo2 Plat/K8T Neo2-F 64bit---183/138 Asus A7N8X/VM/A7N8XE-DX---93/97/109 Asus A7V8X-X / A7V400MX---64/64 ECS 741GX-M Max. 64M w/Video, A---54</p> <p>MOTHERBOARD for Intel CPU</p> <p>Asus P5GD1-VM/P5S800VM---136/126/95 MSI 915P Neo2 Platinum---179 Asus P4P800-SE / E-DX---116/143 Asus P4S800 / P4S800MX---79/73 Asus P4VP-MX w/Video, Audio---65 ECS P4VMM2 / PM800-M2 All-in-1---54/58</p> <p>HARD DRIVE</p> <p>7200rpm 40 / 80 / 120G---56/67/93 7200rpm 8M 80 / 120 / 200G---75/99/136 S-ATA 8M 80/120/200G---85/109/148 Notebook 5400rpm 40/60/80G---89/129/175</p> <p>CPU & MEMORY</p> <p>Intel Celeron 2.0/2.4/2.6G---83/95/109 P4 1MHz 2.4G/3.0/3.2E---159/222/269 P4 775 520/530/540/550---195/228/269/339 AMD XP+ 2200/2600/3000---89/169/186 AMD 64bit 2800/3000/3500---156/179/329 AMD Sempron 22/24/26/2800---66/77/106/135 PC133 SDRAM 128 / 256---39/53 PC3200 DDR 256 / 512M---45/83 DDR2 PC4200 256/512/1G---78/149/289 Notebook SDRAM 128 / 256M---49/62 Notebook DDR 256 / 512M---59/105 Secure Digital 256 / 512M / 1G---39/59/99 CompactFlash 256/512M/1G---36/58/98 XD-Picture Card 128/256M---48/69 USB Flash 128/256/512/1G---32/39/59/99 Card Reader single/ 12-in-1 / Int.---15/28/12</p>		<p>VIDEO CARD</p> <p>GF4 MX4000 64M TVout---44 GF4 FX5200 128M / 5500 256M---65/98 MSI FX5200 128 / FX5500 256M---75/128 GF4 FX5700LE 128M / 256M---93/119 MSI FX5900XT 128M VIVO---245 PCI NX6800GT 256M---539 Radeon 7000 64M / 9250 128M---68/84 Radeon 9200se / 9550 128M---58/79 Radeon 9550 256M / VIVO---106/118 Radeon 9600XT 128M / 256M---182/199 Radeon X300se/X600XT 128M PCI-E---86/219 Radeon x600Pro/x700Pro 256M PCI-E---149/276 MSI VOX USB2.0 TVBox External---85 TV2000XP-Expert(Tuner & Capture)---79</p> <p>Multimedia</p> <p>CreativePCI128 / Live24bit---22/34 Creative SoundBlaster Audigy 2---56 MultiMedia Speaker / 2.1 Subwoofer---6/17 Logitech X230 2.1 / X530 5.1 spk---55/79 WebCam/1.3M Digi-Camera 2-in-1---19/39 Logitech Msr / Pro4000---31/79 CCTV Color Camera / Wireless---39/69 Firewire 1394 / USB 2.0 Card---19/19 Bluetooth / Infrared USB---29/29 Bluetooth Headset for CellularPhone---69 PCMCIA USB2.0/IEEE1394/Combo---36/38/49</p> <p>NETWORK & Modem</p> <p>56KfaxModem / Network Card---17/11 USB / PCMCIA Network Adaptor---29 Switching Hub 5 / 8 / 16 ports---25/33/79 SMC 4ports Router (after \$20 MIR)---29 Router 4ports w/PrinterServer---52 Wireless 802.11G Router D-Link/Aopen---73 Wireless 802.11G PCI / PCMCIA---45/45 Wireless USB Adaptor 11b/11g---34/45</p>	
<p>CDROM DVD CDRW</p> <p>16x DVD / CDRewriter 52x32x52---29/30 LG 16x DVD & 52x CD-RW Combo---53 Aopen DVD-Writer 16x / 12x---76/66 DVD-Writer 16x Pioneer / LG---92/79 CD-R 50pcs / CD-RW---15/1.5 DVD-R 25pcs / DVD+RW---9/2 mini-CDRW 8cm / Black CD-R Music---2/0.9 99min 870MB Blank CD-R 25pk---25</p> <p>MONITOR</p> <p>LCD 17" LGL1710S / QL711V---336/314 LCD 19" LG 1910S / L921G 700:1---519/479 CRT 17" AOC / MAG / KDS---129/147/149 CRT 19" AOC / MAG---209 CRT 19" Viewsonic G90F---289</p> <p>PRINTER & SCANNER</p> <p>Canon i250 / i475D / IP2000---65/96/96 Epson Direct CD/DVD R200/R300---125/211 Epson CX4600/6400MultiFunction---163/245 Samsung ML1520 LaserPrinter---159 Broq Scanner 4300U / 5250C---48/78</p> <p>MISC</p> <p>WinXP Home/Pro (w/sys only)---119/199 Norton Antivirus 2004/2005---35/55 Norton Internet Security 2004/2005---49/75 PS2 Win Keyboard / Wheel Mouse---6/4 Wireless Logitech Keyboard---25 Optical Mouse / Notebook Retractable---6/8 KVM Switch 2 / 4 ports w Cables---38/68 HDD Rack / Caddy---15/10 HDD/CD Enclosure 2.5/3.5/5.25"---12/25/29 PowerSupply 350/400/450W---21/32/39 USB to Serial/Parallel/Irda/PS2---29/29/29/12 ATX Power Tester / Anti-Static Wrist---16/7 Notebook & LCD Power Supply---45 2.5in Notebook HDD Adaptor---10</p>			

Price & Availability Subject to Change Without Notice. All prices listed are already cash/interac discounted



uct to feature the Aura LibertyLink LL888 chipset, a patented magnetic induction communications technology for stereo audio transmission. These comfortable headphones also enjoy up to 30 hours of continuous playtime from a single AAA battery. The only foreseeable downside is the fact these only work within two feet or so of the Zen Micro. Creative's Zen Micro Photo also won awards at CES 2005, it's a compact portable player that plays music, digital photos or both together in a slideshow presentation. The 1.5-inch LCD screen boasts an impressive 262,144 colours. The 6GB model can store up to 7,500 JPG images or 3,000 songs.

Creative hasn't confirmed a Canadian price or availability of these products as of yet.

XM unplugged

Finally, satellite radio fans were ecstatic at the unveiling of XM2go at CES, the world's first handheld XM Satellite Radio product that can receive 130 channels of CD-quality audio and even store up to five hours of commercial-free programming on its internal hard drive. In the U.S., XM Satellite Radio works from coast to coast, but until the debut of XM2go in January, this technology has been limited to in-car decks or home-based receivers. Other features of the XM2go include a rechargeable battery, remote control, headphones and a FM transmitter to wirelessly send the XM programming to any nearby FM radio. An LCD screen will show information such as stock tickers, sports scores and more. Companies that will make XM2go products include Delphi, Pioneer and Tao. Rumours that XM Radio (xmradio.com) and its competitor, Sirius Satellite Radio (sirius.com), are coming to Canada in 2005 have not been confirmed by either company at this time, but check with HUB for the latest news.

By Marc Saltzman

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Monthly Specials:

<p>HP CD-R 50 Pack \$ 13.50</p> 	<p>BenQ 15" LCD FP557 \$ 315 \$50 MIR til Jan 31</p> 	<p>Linksys WRT54G Wireless Router \$ 77</p> 	<p>PC Partner RS300 S478 w/ ATI 9200 \$ 89</p> 
<p>DVD-R 4X 25 Pack \$ 10</p> 	<p>LG 16X 4161B DVD-RW \$ 82</p> 	<p>Leadtek FX5200 128MB \$ 68</p> 	



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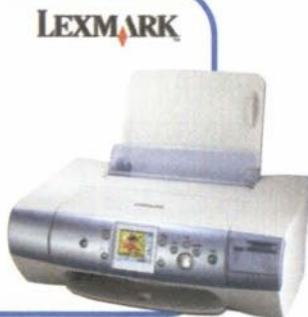
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HUB PRESENTS ITS Bi-Monthly PHOTO SPREE

THE CHALLENGE: Ice (use your imagination)

WIN!

Lexmark P915 Home Photo Printer
The all-new Lexmark P915 Home Photo Printer makes printing photos a snap. Able to generate six-colour 4" x 6" borderless photos in as little as 38 seconds - with or without a PC - the P915 uses Lexmark's new Evercolor archival ink and comes with on-board camera card readers, a PictBridge port, Imaging Studio software and a large 2.5-inch colour LCD display with on-screen print previews and a handy count-down timer.



THE RULES: You must use a digital camera to capture the subject. Work can be submitted via email (contest@ppublishing.ca). Accompanying your photo should be the make and model of the camera you used, the names of any software you used to modify the image and, if possible, the f/stop and shutter speed you used to take the photo.

Submit your photographs, along with the information from the form below, by February 21st, 2005. You can submit up to three photographs, all of which must be accompanied by a submission form. Entries must be submitted via email. Files should be no bigger than 500 KB and no smaller than 300 KB. One photo per email.

Contest Rules: Prizes must be claimed by March 21st, 2005. Winners must provide valid identification upon claiming prize. The prizes awarded are not transferable and cannot be redeemed for cash. To enter and to be eligible to win, persons must be residents of Canada, and not employees or be domiciled with an employee of Piccolo Publishing, its affiliate companies, or advertising or promotional agencies. The winners will be selected by HUB on February 21st, 2005 from among all eligible entries received on or before contest close date. Winners will be contacted by telephone or email. In the event that they cannot be contacted within the first week following the contest another entrant will be selected. All entries become the property of HUB and may be used in subsequent advertisements for the contest. All entries must be submitted by their artist and must be original work.

HUB's Photo Spree contest form. All submissions must contain this information. Send to contest@ppublishing.ca

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Name:.....

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E-Mail:

Phone Number:.....

Age:

Occupation/School:.....

Title of Entry:

Camera Used:

Software Used:.....

HUB @ CES 2005: Computing

While the Consumer Electronics Show is technically about consumer electronics (with that name, go figure), there's always something to talk about when it comes to the world of computing, especially with the decline of the Comdex computer trade show. It's not really a surprise, because the two worlds are slowly but steadily crossing over. As PCs start

to handle more and more of the multimedia functions previously done by home entertainment components (CD audio, DVD movie playback), home entertainment components are starting to integrate more computer technology (digital camera card slots on televisions, hard drives in personal video recorders).



While computer-specific announcements were in the minority during this show, there were still a few things worth noting.

U3: It's not a rock band

One of the more interesting announcements during the show was U3, a new joint venture between SanDisk and M-Systems, both big players in the flash memory area. As the capacity of USB memory keys continues to grow, the two companies had a brainstorm: why not use these high capacity memory keys not only to store your files, but to run your applications as well? The concept is simple. Each U3-branded memory key will feature

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<p>Intel Celeron 1.8GHz 400FSB 128K ASROCK P4145GV MB 256MB PC3200 DDR400 RAM 40GB 7200RPM Hard Drive 52X LG CD ROM Real 256 3D Graphic 64MB O/B 5.1 Channel AC97 Audio O/B 10/100Mbps Ethernet O/B Keyboard / Scroll Mouse / Speakers 17" 400W Tower Case w/ USB</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$269</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Best Budget Computer</p>	<p>Intel P4 3.0E GHz 800FSB 1MB HT FOXCONN 661FX4MR-ES MB 512MB PC3200 DDR400 RAM 80GB 7200RPM Hard Drive 52X LG CD ROM / Floppy Drive SIS 256 3D Graphics 64MB O/B 5.1 Channels AC97 Audio O/B 10/100Mbps Ethernet O/B Keyboard / Scroll Mouse / Speakers 17" 400W Tower Case w/ USB</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$469</p> <p style="text-align: center;">New Year Special!!</p>	<p>Intel P4 530 3.0 GHz LGA775 800FSB ASUS P5P800 I865PE MB 512MB PC3200 DDR400 (D.Ch.) 120GB S-ATA 8MB Hard Drive 52X32X52 LG CDRW / Floppy Drive NVIDIA GF FX5200 128MB Video (TV-Out) ADI AD1985 Soundmax 6 Channel Audio O/B 10/100/1000 Mbps Ethernet O/B Keyboard / Scroll Mouse / Speakers 17" 400W Tower Case w/ USB</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$699</p> <p style="text-align: center;">New LGA 775</p>	<p>AMD Athlon 64bit 3200+ 800FSB ASUS K8V-X MB 1024MB PC3200 DDR400 RAM 120GB SATA Hard Drive 52X32X52 LG CDRW / Floppy Drive ATI Radeon 9600XT 256MB Video (TV-Out) ADI AD1980 Soundmax 6 Channel Audio O/B 10/100/1000 Mbps Ethernet O/B Keyboard / Optical Mouse / Speakers 17" 450W Tower Case w/ USB</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$969</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Gamer's Computer</p>																																																
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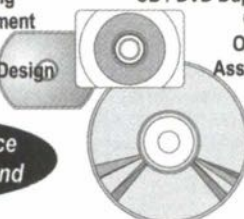
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COMING SOON - WATCH FOR LAUNCH DATE



an application launcher, and U3-certified applications can be downloaded straight to the key. In theory, that could be anything from a word processor to an MP3 player. Companies who have already partnered with U3 to provide U3-compatible applications are Corel, ICQ (AOL), McAfee, MedicaAlert and ZoneLabs (Check Point). When you plug your U3 key into any computer, the application launcher will fire up any of the applications onboard your key, and when you pull the key out of the computer's USB port, there should be no trace of your work or your data on the computer.

LightScribe – burn it on both sides!

If you're tired of wasting your inkjet cartridges printing out CD labels, have a look at LightScribe Direct Disc Labeling, a technology developed by Hewlett-Packard, but adopted by other companies like Toshiba. Drives equipped with the technology will be able to burn standard CDs or DVDs, but when you're done burning the data, you just flip the disc over and "burn" a label (both text and images) onto the other side of the disc. At present, the label side burns in only one colour – basic black – but that's expected to change with future versions of the product. Of course, you'll need special blank discs that have a LightScribe-compatible label side; the discs will have a price premium over regular blanks.

Toshiba introduced a slimline drive for use in notebook computers, and it's expected to ship sometime in the first quarter of 2005. Look for the technology to be bundled in other manufacturer's notebooks soon. (One can only assume this will include HP too, as the company developed the technology!)

Oh my God! They killed QWERTY!

The thought behind abKey's new keyboard layout is that QWERTY was originally designed to slow typists down so they wouldn't jam up the individual keys of a typewriter. Now that there's no reason to slow typists down, why not have a keyboard that makes more logical sense? The abKey model groups all of the vowels on one side of the keyboard, and the most common consonants on the other side, allowing fastest performance by dividing the work between both hands. The key, if you'll excuse the pun, is that the other letters are grouped mostly in alphabetical order, which will make it easier for

most users to learn where they are on the keyboard, fairly quickly. The finishing touch on the design is a centre hinge that allows the keyboard to be split up the middle, for more ergonomic positioning if desired.

Get the Vibe

Calgary-based Voodoo PC is well-known for its over-the-top gaming machines, but the company is now offering a Media Center PC known as the Vibe. Like other Voodoo machines, this one comes with a beautiful custom case and top-notch performance for gaming, even though it has Media Center functionality too. You even have the option to buy a customized Xbox to use as a Media Center Extender elsewhere in the house. Like other Voodoo machines, though, the use of the top-notch components makes it more pricey than your typical Media Center PC: it starts at \$3,325 and works its way up to \$7,000 or more if you top up the hardware configuration. Voodoo also showed off the Rage f:50 model, a completely fanless PC that is essentially one gigantic (but still attractive) heatsink.

By Sean Carruthers

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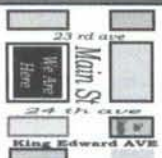
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HUB @ CES 2005: Networking

Whether it's handhelds, gaming consoles, media players or cameras, many of the newest products can connect to your home network, either by cable or using WiFi, and many of the products shown off at this year's show had networking built in.

D-Link is still going strong with its newest home networking products. Aimed at gamers, the DGL-4300 GamerLounge Wireless Router has gigabit networking ports onboard, and features traffic prioritization on the router to make sure that a computer elsewhere on your home network doesn't slow down your network gaming. There's also a wired version of the router. The company also updated its wireless media sharing devices with the MediaLounge DSM-320RD, which adds a DVD player and a 5-in-1 digital camera card reader. The MediaLounge DSM-5208R player has an 80GB hard drive instead, and the ability to play high definition content. The gaming routers are expected in March, and the MediaLounge products won't be available in Canada until at least April.

Monitor giant ViewSonic's Media Gateway is a four-port broadband sharing router that comes with two built-in USB ports for sharing printers, and a 120GB hard drive inside to store your media files (audio, photo and video). The Wireless Media Adapter hooks up to any TV or computer monitor. Once you have the Gateway in place, you can add multiple adapter units around the house, but you'll probably only be able run up to three of

them at full tilt at any one time before the wireless bandwidth starts to max out. The Wireless Media Kit is a package that has one Wireless Media Adapter and one Media Gateway.

The WMLV54G Wireless-G Media Link is the new Linksys wireless media streaming product, expected by mid-year. It



uses an 802.11g wireless signal to transmit premium content (Rhapsody, CinemaNow and more) to any television in the household, without the need for a Windows Media Centre PC and an Extender. As before, the player also streams audio, video and photos from your PC.

Linksys is also part of a new initiative with Hewlett-Packard called Secure Easy Setup, which is designed to take some of the headache out of setting up a wireless network. If you have two SES-enabled devices – say, a notebook and a router – users simply tap the SES button on the router, then go over to the notebook and tap the same button, and it will set up a secured connection between the two automatically, saving the headache of figuring out all of the wireless networking settings.

Archos' Pocket Media Assistant PMA430 is the newest in the company's portable media product line, featuring onboard WiFi and digital video recorder functionality when placed in the multimedia base unit. The player uses Linux as its bedrock, allowing you to custom configure it with Linux applications, and the WiFi component allows you to connect directly to the Internet (the Opera web browser is already included, as is an email client.) The player will cost about \$1000 (from US\$800).

LG Electronics' LRM-519 is a hard drive and DVD recorder, but it also adds Microsoft's Windows Media Extender capabilities. You simply hook a wireless networking adapter to the hard drive/DVD recorder via the USB 2.0 ports on the back of the unit, allowing you to pull your multimedia content – including MPEGs, WMV files, JPGs, MP3s, and WMA files – from other computers connected to your wireless network. The USB ports on the back will also accommodate external hard drives, memory card readers, direct camera connections, USB memory keys and more.

Those familiar with personal video recorders may be familiar with the term "timeshifting", but Sling Media would like you to get used to another term: "placeshifting". The company has introduced a product called the Slingbox Personal Broadcaster. The product features S-Video, composite video and coax cable TV inputs, as well as RCA audio input. The unit then connects to your home network via Ethernet, making your media content available anywhere within the house from connected PCs and notebooks. Even better, you can watch your content remotely too, connecting back to

your home entertainment over the Internet. In other words, it's a lot like Sony's LocationFreeTV, but since you use the computers or notebooks you already have, it's a more cost-effective solution. The Slingbox will ship mid-2005 and will cost \$250. Powerline networking has been around for a few years now, but Canada's own Corinex now offers products with speeds up to 200 Mbps over standard household wiring, more than enough to carry a video signal. The higher speed also suits head-to-head gaming and VoIP. The company's new product is the AV Powerline Ethernet Adapter.

By Sean Carruthers



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HUB @ CES 2005: Living on Video

Video continued to loom large over the proceedings at this year's Consumer Electronics Show, integrated as it was into most of the cool toys – massive televisions, DVD players and burners, and portable multi-media devices all rely on video, after all.

High definition was definitely one of the bigger trends at this year's show: screens are getting bigger, and there's even a high-definition DVD format

war brewing between HD-DVD and Blu-ray. Because the two formats won't be released in North America until the end of 2005 (or the beginning of 2006), customers who really want to take advantage of the world of high definition television will have to stick to the HD television signals coming over the air.

In the meantime, those who want to roll their own high-definition content should take a look at Sony's new HDR-FX1, a consumer-level high-def DV camcorder capable of recording in 1080i resolution. At a cost of US\$3,700, it's still got a prosumer price, but it will allow you to get started now instead of waiting for the pricing to drop sometime next year.

While high-definition was flying high, there were still plenty of new products that were a bit more down-to-earth.

Coming this Spring, Sony will also have the DCR-DVD7, a new DVD Handycam that re-orientates the camera body to look more like a digital still camera. While it looks a bit odd at first, Sony feels that consumers will find that the US\$700 camera has a more natural grip. Also available in the spring will be the DCR-DVD403, a US\$1,000 portable DVD camera that records in Dolby Digital 5.1 channel surround sound.

Panasonic has also brought a touch of the professional down to the consumer level with the introduction of three new consumer-priced 3CCD cameras: the US\$599 PV-GS65 has 10x optical zoom and 1.2 megapixel still capture, the US\$699 PV-GS150 bumps that resolution up to 2.3 megapixel, and the US\$999 PV-GS250 adds a manual focus ring and bumps the



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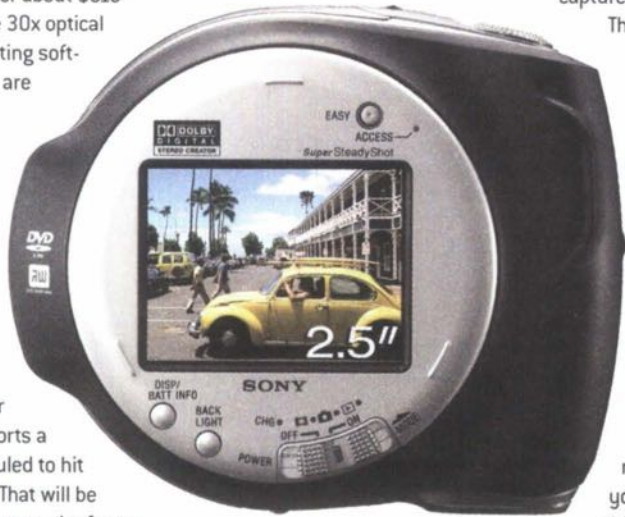
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still capture up to 3.1 megapixel. All three are expected on the market in March.

Panasonic also introduced three new compact camcorders with ultra-optical zoom capabilities. The PV-GS19 features a 24x optical zoom, and will cost about \$430. The PV-GS31 will bump that up to 26x optical zoom for about \$500 (from US\$349 and \$399). For about \$615 (from US\$499), the PV-GS35 will feature 30x optical zoom, USB 2.0 capability, and image editing software bundled with the camera. All three are due in March.

For those who don't want to decide between digital photography and digital video, Samsung has introduced the third generation of its DuoCam product, the SC-D6550. Like the last version of the DuoCam, the DV camera has a 10x optical zoom, and the still camera features 3x optical, but the difference is that this model comes with 5 megapixel still image capture capability and a far more compact design. This one even sports a more compact price; the camera, scheduled to hit the market in April, will cost only \$899. That will be followed in July by the SC-D557, a DVD camcorder featuring 12x optical zoom and 1.33 megapixel still image capture. Even cooler is Samsung's weather-resistant SC-X105L "Extreme Sports" camera. The lightweight camera records straight to flash memory; there's 512MB built in, and a MemoryStick slot will handle up to 1GB more. The

key feature here is the ability to plug in an external lens module that can be strapped onto your head or arm, capturing your suicidal plunge down the world's steepest ski hill. Expected in April, the camera will cost \$849. Sanyo had its own take on the solid-state compact camera with the introduction of the VPC-C4 model, which offers up to 4 megapixel still image capture and full motion MPEG-4 video capture.



The handheld model offers up to 5.8x optical zoom, comes with image stabilization, and uses SecureDigital to save all information. While the card will be extra, a 1GB SD card would hold up to an hour of video.

Another wearable video camera introduced at the show was Eyetop's new Camtop. The Camtop consists of a stowable 20GB recording unit, and a pair of glasses. The glasses come with a camera module embedded in the left temple and a video monitor in the right temple. The video you're shooting appears in heads-up fashion on the right lens, so you know at all times what you're actually capturing, while still being able to see the world around you. The hard

drive can also store your AVI and MP3 files. The Camtop is due by mid-year, and is expected to cost about \$1115 (from US\$900).

By Sean Carruthers

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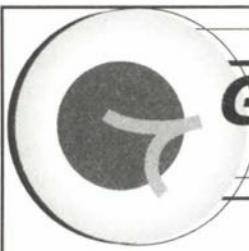
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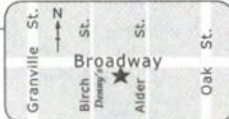


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Chewing the Core: Macworld San Francisco

There's a lot happening in Apple land these days. At the annual post-CES Macworld show in San Francisco, Apple CEO Steve Jobs used his keynote speech to unveil the company's latest hardware and software offerings for Q1 2005.

The biggest announcement by far is the Mac mini. This computer is reminiscent of the PowerMac G4 Cube that Apple released several years back, however the Mac mini is even smaller and twice as powerful as the Cube.

Essentially, this product is a monitor-less eMac. Base versions don't even ship with a mouse or a keyboard.

It's a clever idea for Windows users fed up with having to deal with constant popups and virus threats and who want to delve into the intuitive, secure and stable world of Mac OS X.

The buzzword on everyone's tongue these days is HD - High Definition television, and Macworld was no exception. All of Apple's video apps are now ready to handle this format, from the entry level video editing application, iMovie (included in iLife 05), to Final Cut Pro and Express.

Appleworks, Apple's answer to Microsoft's Office, has been renamed to iWork and given several enhancements. Will it be enough to keep Mac users from paying for Microsoft's Office X suite? Only time will tell ...

Introducing the iPod Shuffle

Just when everyone thought Apple's share in the portable music player market couldn't get any bigger, they unveil yet another new iPod. The iPod Shuffle is a flash-based MP3 player available in 512MB and 1GB sizes. Apple claims the

512MB model can hold 120 songs, and the 1GB model twice that amount if encoded with Apple's AAC codec at 128-Kbps.

The iPod Shuffle is about the size of most common USB flash drives. It doesn't have an LED or LCD display, which will make playlist designing your new hobby! Having no LCD display makes choosing your tunes on the go more or less a crapshoot. There is however a slider on the back of the unit that will shuffle your iTunes play list, giving you random play of whatever songs you have loaded into the unit.

The iPod Shuffle is targeted at people who don't need a ton of songs with them at any given time, such as the gym and jogging crowds who only need to load up enough songs for each gym visit.

Apple is claiming 12 hours of battery life per charge. Personally, I think it would have made more sense to make the unit dependent on consumer

batteries so users could drop and go while on the move. Also most of the iPod Shuffle's competition sports an FM tuner, which would have been a very useful feature for this model. However, the unit represents a nice starting point for price and features. Who can't justify the Mini, Click Wheel iPod or the iPod photo.

iTunes Online Music Store

Apple unveiled the Canadian version of the iTunes online music store (www.apple.com/ca/itunes/) with little fanfare on December 2, 2004, claiming to offer an online selection of more than 700,000 songs for download with plenty of Canadian artists.

The best news of all is that the Canadian iTunes store matches the American store's price of 99 cents per song.

By Jason Justin

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HUB@CES: Gaming

2005 was supposed to be the biggest year for the gaming contingent on the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) floor.

There was even talk of some manufacturers bidding adieu to the annual Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3), the video game industry's premiere trade show, as it's too hard to get noticed among the din and flashing lights that are the expo's trademark.

Suffice it to say that if this year is any indication, a systematic abandonment of E3 in favour of CES is unlikely. While it may be hard to get noticed on the E3 show floor, the only way to get noticed as a video game company at CES would likely be to have your game displayed on Samsung's flagship 102-inch plasma screen television. Unlikely.

That said there were at least a couple of consumer electronics devices putting their best game face on.

Phantom

Phantom reps showed their wares in the nVidia and — ironically — Microsoft booths and pre-show press evenings.

Using Windows XP Embedded, an invisible iteration of Windows, Infinium Labs is trying to figure out where to position its game machine. In fact, the company seems hesitant to even call it a "game machine" much less a game console. It is referred to instead as the Phantom Gaming Service or Phantom Game Receiver.

The company responsible has had its product referred to as "vapourware." As ever, only time will tell. The company for its part has said Phantom will be released in 2005, refusing to get in to specifics.

Phantom takes an on-demand approach to gaming and delivers PC games over broadband to the living room. Microsoft apparently doesn't see that as a threat to its Xbox business.

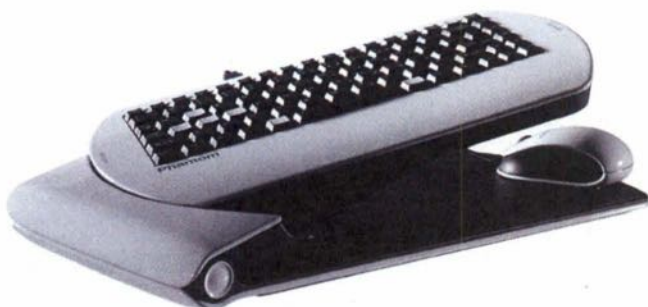
For US\$19.95 per month (\$24.50), subscribers get a basic package and essentially rent up to five games at a time. Predictably, new releases aren't included under this basic subscription. Instead it's the games that have been demoted at least one shelf on the perpetual shuffle toward the still far away bargain bin.

A spokesperson for Infinium Labs says the company is in talks with major publishers to have games available for download over its networks simultaneous to their hard copy appearance in stores. Before that in some cases, as it hopes to open the pipelines at midnight on the day of release. Price is to be determined but is hinted at between US\$199.99 and US\$299.99 (\$245 and \$365).

Phantom's core idea is to bring the lean-back, sitting on the couch approach to PC games that are more often played in lean-forward, hunched over a desk mode.

In short, it subscribes to the overall CES thought of bridging the gap between the computer area and the living room.

Game controls are untouched across the PC and Phantom iterations of games; the only core difference is in the delivery and where gamers play them.



The potential problem with bringing PC games into the living room comes in the form of ... the form. Namely, in the Phantom's huge overall footprint and now dated "futuristic" (not to mention blindingly white) look. Also, you have to find a place for the smaller than usual but still rather large keyboard and mouse platform.

Phantom at a glance

www.infiniumlabs.com AMD Sempron processor
256MB RAM 80GB HDD nVidia GeForce 5700
Subscription: approx. \$24.50/mo.

Gizmondo

Is it the latest handheld to try to take a run at Nintendo's monopoly of the space or a device more in-tune with what the general public want?

While Gizmondo public relations insists the handheld is a gaming device first, its array of internal gadgetry might suggest otherwise.

Running Windows CE.net and using an nVidia mobile graphics processor (see "Gizmondo at a glance," this page) the device is blessedly free of the menu slowdown that often plagues handheld devices that try to do too much.

The Gizmondo crams in GPS (global positioning system) functionality along with GPRS (general packet radio service, a cell phone technology) for text and multimedia messaging as well as online play. Also, users will be able to connect locally via Bluetooth for potentially true location-based gaming. In the flagship game Colors, gamers might defend their turf against rival gangs identified as local using GPS.



In addition, the device manages to stick a VGA resolution (640x480) camera into its back and promises downloadable rich media content, picture viewing, email and digital audio play while hinting at targeted multimedia advertisements billing the latest movie blockbusters.

In theory, the device takes the place of a wealth of consumer electronic devices. In practice, how well any of them perform will become clear once the device launches.

Company reps say the Gizmondo will have 12 games available at launch including Colors, Conflict: Vietnam, Richard Burns Rally, The Great Escape and others. Launch dates aren't as easy to come by, however — the company says "early 2005" for the North American roll-out.

European prices on the company's Web site list the device at £229 which converts to approximately \$526. North American pricing remains to be seen but the company gives an approximation of US\$499.

By Andrew Moore-Crispin

Gizmondo at a glance

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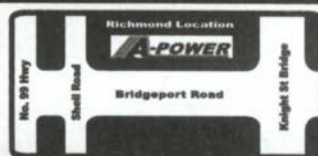
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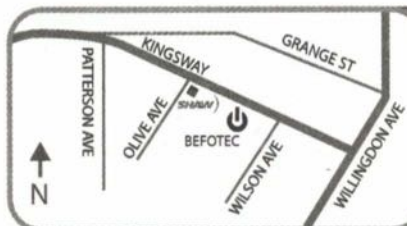
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about as likely as me coming up with a good analogy to explain just how unlikely I am to get one of these. Reread that if need be. Still, with 1920x1080 resolution and a screen size just a hair (or more accurately, an inch) below six feet, it can't hurt to dream.

Pyramat PMX Rocker

More than just a nifty play on words, the PMX Rocker is Pyramat's first attempt at branching out from the varyingly cool tri-folding, stereo speaker and subwoofer-enclosing gaming loungers / gym mats the company made its name creating.

A decadent white calf skin-clad Rocker was on display but the company says it will be available in a range of more easily justified fabric choices. Beneath the seat of this super comfy rocking love seat reside four four-inch midrange drivers, two tweeters and a spine melting subwoofer. It's easy on the eyes too without the cumbersome wires that have plagued previous loungers thanks to 2.4 GHz digital wireless audio.

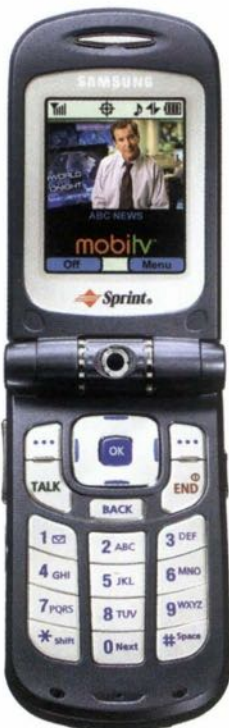
Marc Saltzman's picks

Samsung 102-inch plasma TV

If one product had the show buzzing the loudest it was the largest plasma television in the world. Prominently displayed smack dab in the middle of the Samsung booth was a whopping 102-inch TV. In other words, it was about the size of a freakin' garage door. While not in production just yet, Samsung claims it is the largest working plasma television. If and when this TV is available in about a year, it will cost an estimated US\$100,000.


Sony PlayStation Portable (PSP)

Sony Computer Entertainment America held a media event a day before the show to give some hands-on time with what the company calls the "Walkman of the 21st Century." After playing a few games on the device, I'm inclined to agree. Due out in Canada by late March, the PSP can play 3D games with PlayStation 2-quality graphics on a 4.3-inch widescreen display, even wirelessly against other users. It can also play music, movies and photos. Battery life is only about half that of the Nintendo DS.



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
Consider it live television for your cell phone. MobiTV lets you watch 22 stations while out and about. It's considered "sip" technology as you may only watch 10 or 15 minutes here and there while waiting for a bus or plane. Stateside, more than 20 phones are supported, users are paying a flat rate of \$10 US per month (not including the data minutes it eats up). Video is streamed in real-time at a reasonable 6 to 10 frames per second. Bell Mobility hinted they may sign a partnership with the service sometime this year. Here's hoping.



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Minding our manners

When our technology moves faster than our etiquette, polite behaviour can be hard to figure out



We've all been there: The middle of a hushed auditorium, the show's about to start and suddenly a tinny, digitized version of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony breaks the silence. Our annoyance grows along with the cell phone's volume, and we silently curse the inconsiderate oaf whose device is causing the disturbance. And then there's that odd dreaded time when we look down at our purse or pocket and blush to discover that the oaf is none other than us.

With half of all Canadians using mobile phones, our adoption of wireless devices is moving faster than we can adopt rules to dic-

tate their use in polite society. As such, rude wireless behaviour is a daily occurrence. Cellmanners.com, a Web site dedicated to handling questions of technology etiquette, ran a poll that asked readers to name their biggest pet peeves about cell phones. The top two were "ringers in quiet places" and "talking too loudly" followed by "showing off", "talking in restaurants" and "silly conversations."

Beyond these general categories, other anecdotes describing rude behaviour offered at sites like Cellmanners.com and Manners International are familiar to most of us — the intrusive ninety degree "cell elbow" for example, a hazard to all those in close proximity. Talking on the phone while talking to a sales clerk, initiating calls at the dinner table, taking calls (or checking a BlackBerry or PDA) during lunch meetings, talking while driving (or walking for that matter) and especially taking calls in quieter spaces like churches or libraries or at formal occasions like weddings or funerals — all of these cringe-worthy behaviours are currently regulated only by our individual sense of decorum, which tends to vary widely.

Of course the major reason why there are so many incidents of impoliteness is that beyond common courtesy, there are no hard and fast rules. Well, that's not exactly true. The Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association (CWTA) publishes a list of guidelines governing cell phone etiquette on its Web site (see sidebar), as do associations such as the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association, and even cell phone companies like the American AT&T Cingular (who declared the month of July as "wireless awareness month"). Of course the ultimate guideline is that of classic manners maven Emily Post. The 17th edition of "Emily Post's Etiquette: The Definitive Guide to Manners" simplifies the guidelines to "four cell phone never-ers" that warn users not to: leave the ringer on in quiet places, ignore those you're with, make repeated calls, or use offensive language. The book also lists several "take care zones" with rules to govern cell phone usage in each, including the street or bus (be quick and don't shout), the store (never) and the restaurant (make calls in the vestibule, never at the table).

The problem with a lot of these rules is that while they are based on common sense, they are often easily ignored unless there is a consequence. In the case of the theatre disruption, it is already common that an offender will be publicly embarrassed by complaints from those in close proximity — avoiding this embarrassment provides an incentive to turn it off.

Cellmanners.com blithely attempts to formalize this process by recommending that a "cell glare" — a carefully aimed look of disgust — be generally instituted as a way of denouncing impolite behaviour. Yet in spite of our annoyance, we shouldn't take it on ourselves to police public rudeness. Emily Post, while disapproving of the cell phone in theatre, advises those offended by the noise to ask the manager to handle the situation rather than confronting the offender directly.

Before the passage of time institutes stronger cell phone taboos, we may need to rely on official regulations to dictate wireless policies. Slowly these are coming into place. In Japan, for example, the Nagoya Municipal Management Subway has taken steps to make certain mobile phones inoperative on trains and train platforms. In other areas, rules call on passengers to switch off their mobile phones near the special seats for the aged and disabled. More familiar to Canadians are the signs at hospitals and other sites for sensitive equipment and the knowledge that there is a serious rationale behind these warnings — frequencies can interfere with sensitive medical equipment.

In public places like restaurants, perhaps individual establishments will slowly start to institute policies that govern the use of technology. A Wall Street Journal article last year reported on the trend for some restaurants, libraries and other businesses to resurrect the phone booth — only without the phone — which allows cell users to talk as loud as they want. Indeed, it may be that we need public venues and workplaces to set the example by establishing official rules, at least until enough time has passed for working rules to evolve.

By Sue Bowness

Wireless Etiquette

Guidelines by the Canadian Wireless Technology Association (CWTA)
www.cwta.ca

Wireless etiquette is simple: It's all about common sense and courtesy.

When others scoff, turn it off

In public places such as restaurants or churches, remember to turn your mobile device off before you enter to avoid disturbing others by making or receiving calls

If you must keep your cell phone or pager on, use the mute or vibrating mode to avoid disturbing others when you receive calls. This is especially important in places where personal noise is a no-no, like a movie theatre.

Don't be a clown, turn it down

Use your common sense to decide if you should go outside, to a lobby or to another room where you won't disturb others by making or taking calls.

In small or enclosed spaces like a bus or at a meeting, not everyone wants to hear your conversation, or perhaps your discussion is confidential. If you must make or take a call, keep it short and be as quiet as possible.

Not everyone cares, no need to share

Some places, including hospitals and airplanes, have strict rules about wireless device use. Always respect these rules, for your safety and for the safety of others.

HUB @ CES 2005: Digital Photography

With more than 4,500 exhibitors spread out over a million-and-a-half square feet of show floor space, it can be a daunting task to try and see everything at the annual Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

But a funny thing happens when you get a bunch of geeky journalists together who love electronics – they all start buzzing about a few “must see” gadgets. After all, we review these kinds of high-tech gizmos all year ‘round so we should know what’s hot and what’s not. Not surprisingly, many of these products go on to win “Best of Show” in their respective categories.

Digital photography is no exception. Hundreds of new products debuted at CES 2005, so here’s a look at some of the coolest products.

First WiFi camera

Now this is a clever idea. Imagine snapping pictures at your daughter’s birthday party and by the time you walk over to your computer to print off a few for your guests, the snapshots are already on the screen. Say what?

That’s the premise behind the first WiFi (802.11b)-enabled camera. The Kodak EasyShare-One lets users send their camera’s photos over the airwaves to a nearby PC, or email them to someone directly from the camera via Kodak’s online photo service – providing the user has a wireless network. This eliminates the often time-consuming process of connecting the camera to the computer (or popping a memory card into a printer or a PC), then transferring all the images over to a specific folder before archiving or emailing.

The 4-megapixel camera, which houses a large three-inch adjustable LCD screen at the back, can hold up to 1,500 images with its 256MB of internal memory.

There’s a small catch, however – users need to purchase the WiFi card separately for about US\$100. The EasyShare-One itself will cost about US\$599 when it’s available in June. No Canadian price or availability has been announced as of yet.

Kodak Canada has confirmed, however, the first WiFi-enabled Printer Dock will be available this June for about \$129. The EasyShare Printer Dock Plus is a portable 4x6 photo printing solution that can take an optional WiFi card (802.11b), therefore once a Kodak camera is docked (or another manufacturer’s camera is connected via PictBridge), pictures can be wirelessly sent to a PC within 30 metres or so over a wireless home network. Also, the Printer Dock Plus can act as a wireless printer for other WiFi-enabled devices such as desktop and laptop computers.



Instant Replay

Half the fun of participating in extreme sports – such as cycling, snowboarding, motorbike racing or skateboarding – is reliving those wild moments with friends after the fact.

Now you don’t just have to rely on your memories – the Samsung SC-X105 Sports Cam made a splash at the show not just because of its extremely compact and rubberized water-resistant body but because it also includes a hands-free camera lens module that can be attached to an armband or headband to capture digital video from your perspective. Cool.

The video cam itself is equally impressive with its 10x optical zoom and a 680K CCD lens. Digital stills can be captured at either 720x480 or 1,280x960 resolutions. Other features include a two-inch LCD screen, 0.9-second power on feature, an image stabilizer and 512MB of built-in memory to save the footage.

Samsung says the product should be available in the Great White North in April 2005 for about \$849.

Jack of all trades

While not a brand new product, the SV-AV50 digital multimedia camera was proudly showcased at the mammoth Panasonic booth (one of the largest at the Las Vegas Convention Center). The product won one of the 2005 Best of Innovations Awards in the annual competition hosted by the Consumer Electronics Association.

This tiny camera (measuring just 28mmx50mmx87mm) and weighing only 98 grams (without rechargeable battery) can perform a wide array of functions such as shoot MPEG-4 movies at 320x240 pixels, still images at 640x480 pixels and play MP3 or AAC music stored on SecureDigital (SD) memory cards. The device also has a built-in voice recorder.

The SV-AV10 (available now at Panasonic.ca for \$599.99), which has a 2-inch swivel LCD screen, won its 2005 award for significant energy savings as the product uses low-gravity circuit technology which yields reduced power consumption.



By Marc Saltzman

Digital Photography Tutorial 13

Learning to see as the camera "sees"

Part 1 Perspective control

One of the biggest challenges in photography is learning to see as the camera "sees." This may sound odd, because we tend to assume that what we see in the real world is locked to a fixed physical reality. But the fact is, our eyes and brains process information within a context of things we know.

For example, we know that buildings are rectilinear. Suppose you want to take a picture of some architectural gem. To get the entire structure in, you tilt the camera up and snap away. Later when you inspect your images, you are disappointed. They haven't captured what you thought you saw.

When we look up at a building, the image formed in our eyes might be distorted in some way. But rather than concluding that the building is a malleable structure that's in constant flux, we know that it is rigid and maintains a constant form, so we ignore part of the information being received by our eyes. What the brain knows overrides what the eye records.

Cameras, on the other hand, can only follow the laws of optics. The geometry of a surface will be recorded accurately, so if you tilt the camera at an odd angle the parallel lines and right angles will be distorted. When you snap the shutter, these distortions are captured in full fidelity. For example, the sides of a building will converge, or the front face will be distorted like a trapezoid. Only if the sensor is exactly parallel to a building's front will that surface be recorded without rectilinear distortion.

Large format cameras have tilt and shift mecha-

nisms that allow you to tilt the lens up to take in more of a tall building, but still keep the film parallel to the plane of the building front. Some 35mm camera makers have developed perspective control lenses that achieve a similar end.

In the digital age, we have our own way of correcting perspective, as most image editors have tools to allow you to make converging lines parallel or transform trapezoidal shapes back to the right angled shapes they are in the real world. In Photoshop CS there is a check box for perspective in the crop tool menu bar. If you activate it, you can move the sides and corners of the bounding box independently so you can match the lines to an area known to be rectilinear. When you crop the image, it is redrawn to match that geometry. Jasc Paint Shop Pro 8 has a specific perspective correction tool on the tool bar that works similarly. In Photoshop Elements 3 or earlier versions of Photoshop, perspective control is accessed using the image transform function. (You'll then need to adjust the height of the building to re-establish a proper perspective.)

This tool is very handy for correcting unintended perspective distortions, but often distortion works in your favour, and trying to correct it will only reduce the visual impact of your photo. For example, I have some shots of the office buildings in downtown Toronto, taken with an ultrawide lens. The buildings recede dramatically to an imaginary vanishing point, accentuating the tallness of the structures.

By David Tanaka

Before



After



Salvation for badly taken pictures

Bad Pics Fixed Quick: How to Fix Lousy Digital Pictures Using Adobe Photoshop Elements 3
By Michael Miller

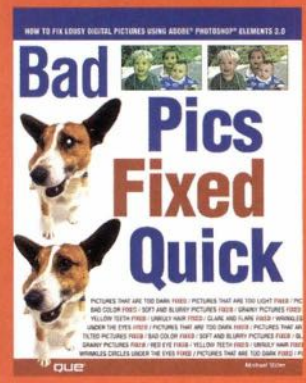
Published by Que ISBN 0-7897-3205-2

Paperback, 228 pages Price: \$35.99

Many photo guides tell you how to take good pictures, but what if you've taken a bad one and want to salvage the shot? This is where *Bad Pics Fixed Quick* starts. It goes through a number of common picture-taking errors and tells you how to use Photoshop Elements 3 to correct them.

The book provides fixes for many common exposure and composition problems – making dark photos lighter, and cropping to make the subject more prominent, for example. But it also introduces you to some of the more sophisticated tools in Elements 3, such as masks and layers.

It also moves into the somewhat complex area of retouching – where the fixes aren't so much to bad photos but, rather to unflattering elements within a good photo. This includes way to whiten teeth and eyes, smooth skin and eliminate blemishes.



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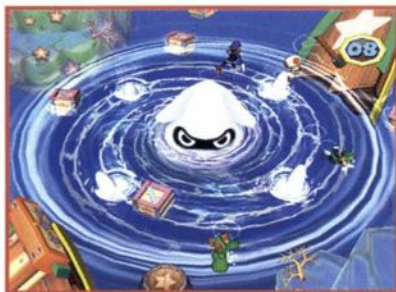
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The sixth episode in Nintendo's all-ages Mario Party franchise — a series of Nintendo-themed board games in videogame format — provides players with enhancements similar to those seen in the last four sequels, namely new mini-games, game boards, and play modes. In other words, there is little in the way of innovation. Players familiar with other games in the series will require no instruction to play Mario Party 6. The game's primary mode, Party, sees up to four play-



ers travel across a virtual game board trying to collect the most stars. Each board has its own unique characteristics. The Towering Treetop board features swings, zip lines, slides, and a special space where players can pay off Boo to steal coins and stars from other players. Faire Square incorporates luck by way of a slot machine space and variable star prices. For the first time, all of the boards are subject to shifts of day

and night that can change a variety of game elements, from star locations to board paths. At the end of each turn (and sometimes in the middle of turns) players engage in one of about 80 different mini-games. The mini-games in this edition are new, but most feel like rehashes of challenges we've seen in previous Mario Party games. Some require players to cooperate, others are every man for himself. Some are strictly games of chance, while others require certain skills, providing an advantage to players who have better memories, experience with platform games, familiarity with the controller, or quick reflexes. Realizing that players were basically getting the same game for the sixth time in a row, Hudson tried to mix things up a bit this time by including a microphone and a few mic mini-games. However, the only mic mode worth playing is a quiz show game in which players take turns in mini-games that require simple answers spoken into the microphone. Unfortunately, the voice recognition software seems a bit glitchy, making the microphone games sometimes feel as though they are more trouble than they're worth.

By Chad Sapieha

INFO BOX

★ ★ ★	Good	-Plenty of fun new mini-games -Clever new boards	Bad	-No meaningful innovation -Microphone games can be frustrating	ESRB E 10+ TEEN
	Final thought: Just more of the same, which, I suppose, should be expected in a Mario Party game.				

Resident Evil 4

Publisher: Capcom Developer: Capcom Platform: GameCube



Forget all the things that may have annoyed you about past Resident Evil games. With RE4, Capcom has abandoned the awkward remote-control movement, restrictive inventory, scarce ammo, and limited saving.

The story centers around Leon Kennedy, who arrives at a rustic European village with the task of saving the President's kidnapped daughter, Ashley. The situation quickly deteriorates as the villagers start attacking him with single-minded, psychotic hostility. These villagers are not the slow, shuffling zombies of past games, however. They're intelligent. They can run and dodge, throw projectiles, climb ladders and cooperate with each other.

For example, early in the game, Leon was in danger of being overwhelmed by a pitchfork and axe-wielding mob in the village square. I decided the best strategy would be to climb up into a tower and pick them off one by one through the windows. The villagers simply started lobbing lit torches through the windows to flush me out. The pacing is brilliant. Full-out adrenaline-pumping shoot-outs are balanced by moments of eerie calm where you're hanging on every shuffle and thump. RE4 has evolved beyond "zombie jumping out of a closet" camp into something that subtle and genuinely unsettling, achieving a balance that is near-perfect. Puzzles are challenging but not too obtuse, boss battles are fierce but not unfair, and the challenge is intense but not insurmountable.

By Erin Bell

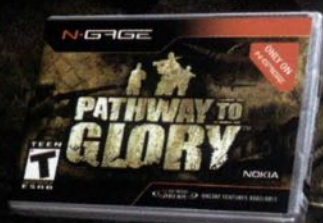


INFO BOX

★ ★ ★	Good	-Overhaul fixes many past issues -villains genuinely scary	Bad	-A few "find key to unlock door" puzzles do exist, but not enough to get tedious	ESRB M 17+
	Final thought: Capcom has lifted the series out of survival horror cliché and created a masterpiece.				

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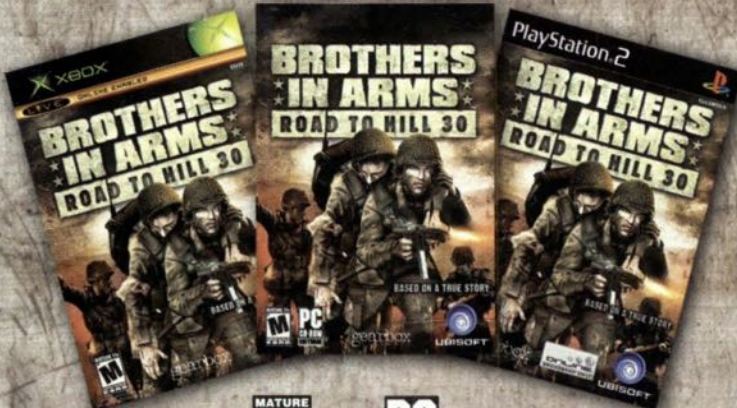
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