



Small in size,  
big on smart

Say hello to Curve, the smart GPS  
tracker that keeps you in touch  
with your favourite things.

 **curve** | The smart  
GPS tracker

**Available to buy on Amazon now**

Battery life and features dependent on tracking mode. For land based tracking only. Connectivity subscription required and Terms apply. Subject to Vodafone network coverage and GPS signal. See FAQs for more info. Terms apply, network and GPS required. Terms at [www.vodafone.co.uk/terms-and-conditions](http://www.vodafone.co.uk/terms-and-conditions)

# TOP TVs FOR 2021

# Stuff

GADGETS / GAMES / GEAR

## SIMPLIFY YOUR SMART HOME

How to put together the perfect connected pad

**+ GET SPEEDIER BROADBAND**



### GALAXY S21 ULTRA

Samsung's all-powerful shooter tested

### ALSO!

Anime earphones  
Compact TV soundbars  
Relaxation and wellness tech  
& 162 more gadgets rated



£4.99 March 2021 www.stuff.tv



Get Google going

Catch that courier

Ignite your internet



Let there be light



Ditch the door keys



Keep a closer eye

Be an anti-vac sucker

Set Siri tasks

# 6 months half price

## Unlimited data SIM



**£10** a month<sup>†</sup>

---

**Unlimited**  
calls and texts



Visit us online or call us on 0800 033 8006



Price correct at time of print. <sup>†</sup>Advertised monthly cost of £10 payable in first 6 months, increasing to full monthly price of £20 from month 7, with these Monthly Charges increasing by 4.5% each April. Offer available on our 24 month Unlimited data SIM-Only plan. Price includes £5 monthly discount for paying by a recurring method, such as Direct Debit. Unlimited UK data use. Compatible with our 5G mobile network as it rolls out in your area. Compatible device required. See [three.co.uk/5G](https://three.co.uk/5G)

# WELCOME



'Consumer insight' is a terrible way to open an editor's letter but bear with me. Consumer insight shows that, when it comes to the smart home, cost versus the value you're going to get from a gadget is the deciding factor in whether to buy it. We're also told that people are bewildered by the choice, and because everything seems so complicated they give up.

We feel you. So this month we've unravelled the smart home maze: which platforms exist, which products are worth your money, and how to provide a sound broadband basis so it all works.

But before immersing yourself in the 'serious' part of the mag, hit up the Hot Stuff section. From the CES gadget spectacular (usually in Las Vegas) where we've selected our 'Most Wanted' picks, to the NAMM music tech show (usually in Anaheim) and Samsung Galaxy Unpacked (usually somewhere), all three took place on a thing called 'the internet' this year, and there are masses of shiny new things to get clammy about.

Elsewhere, we run the rule over some amazing wireless speakers from Q Acoustics and Audio Pro, a vibrating pebble promising to reduce stress, two murderous video games likely to increase it, super soundbars for smaller budgets, plus a connected treadmill for anyone who made a fortune from GameStop shares. Enjoy.

James Day, Editor-in-Chief / @James\_A\_Day



**SUBSCRIBE NOW  
AND GET STUFF  
DELIVERED!**

Discovered the joys of staying in? Turn to p28 for this month's subscription offer and get *Stuff* to come to you. This mag is also available in digital form – go to [shop.kelsey.co.uk/stuff](http://shop.kelsey.co.uk/stuff), Ready or Pocketmags, or download the *Stuff* iOS app.

## Advertising

**Head of Commercial**  
Neil Tillott  
(01959 543719, x7003)  
neil.tillott@kelsey.co.uk  
**Account Manager**  
Nick Davis  
(01959 543611, x7004)  
nick.davis@kelsey.co.uk

## Production

**Ad Operations Manager**  
Martin Williams  
martin.williams@kelsey.co.uk  
**Ad Production Manager**  
Andy Welch  
(01233 220245) stuff@tandemmedia.co.uk

## Management

**Chief Executive**  
Steve Wright  
**Chief Operating Officer**  
Phil Weeden  
**Managing Director**  
Kevin McCormick  
**Publisher**  
Liz Reid  
**Head of Digital**  
Steve Jones  
**Retail Director**  
Steve Brown  
**Subscription**  
**Marketing Director**  
Gill Lambert  
**Subscription**  
**Marketing Manager**  
Rochelle Gyer-Smith  
**Print Production**  
**Manager**  
Georgina Harris

- Volume 25 issue 3
- ISSN: 1364-963
- On sale 18 Feb 2021

**Distribution in Great Britain**  
Marketforce (UK) Ltd, 3rd Floor,  
161 Marsh Wall, London E14 9AP  
Tel: 020 3787 9001  
**Distribution in Northern Ireland  
and the Republic of Ireland**  
Newsprint  
Tel: +353 23 886 3850  
**Printing**  
William Gibbons & Sons Ltd

Kelsey Media 2021 © All rights reserved. Kelsey Media is a trading name of Kelsey Publishing Ltd. Reproduction in whole or in part is forbidden except with permission in writing from the publishers. Note to contributors: articles submitted for consideration by the editor must be the original work of the author and not previously published. Where photographs are included, which are not the property of the contributor, permission to reproduce them must have been obtained from the owner of the copyright. The Editor cannot guarantee a personal response to all letters and emails received. The views expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Publisher. Kelsey Publishing Ltd accepts no liability for products and services offered by third parties.

Kelsey Media takes your personal data very seriously. For more information on our privacy policy, please visit [www.kelsey.co.uk/privacy-policy/](http://www.kelsey.co.uk/privacy-policy/). If at any point you have any queries regarding Kelsey's data policy you can email our Data Protection Officer at [dpo@kelsey.co.uk](mailto:dpo@kelsey.co.uk)

[www.stuff.tv](http://www.stuff.tv) [facebook.com/joinstuff](https://www.facebook.com/joinstuff) [twitter.com/stufftv](https://twitter.com/stufftv) [instagram.com/stuffmag](https://www.instagram.com/stuffmag)

# S CONTENTS 03.21



**WIN!**  
p27



MAKING STUFF UP

**Editor-in-Chief**  
James Day  
**Head of News**  
Matt Tate  
**Head of Stuff Digital**  
Natalya Paul

**Contributors**

Craig Grannell,  
Tom Wiggins,  
Sam Kieldsen,  
Chris Rowlands,  
Andrew Williams,  
Basil Kronfli,  
Leon Poultney,  
Kieran Alger,  
Chris Haslam,  
Simon Lucas,  
Jack Parsons,  
Alan Wen,  
Richard Purvis,  
Ross Presly

**Contact us**

[stuff.ed@kelsey.co.uk](mailto:stuff.ed@kelsey.co.uk)

UK subscription and back issue  
orderline: 01959 543747

Overseas subscription orderline:  
0044 (0)1959 543747

Toll-free USA subscription  
orderline: 1-888-777-0275

UK customer service team:  
01959 543747

Customer service email address:  
[subs@kelsey.co.uk](mailto:subs@kelsey.co.uk)

Customer service and  
subscription postal address:  
Stuff Customer Service Team,  
Kelsey Publishing Ltd,  
The Granary, Downs Court,  
Yalding Hill, Yalding, Maidstone,  
Kent ME18 6AL

## HOT STUFF

- 06 **The Hot Five**  
**LG G1**  
This TV uses OLED Evo tech for the most amazing picture ever!
- Samsung QN900A**  
This TV uses Neo QLED tech for the most amazing picture ever!
- Lenovo Yoga AIO 7**  
An all-in-one desktop PC that can see your bald patch
- Sony Alpha 1**  
An all-in-one camera that can see a chaffinch blink
- Samsung Galaxy Buds Pro**  
Wait, do chaffinches blink? Do birds even have eyelids?
- 14 **Vital stats Razer Blade 15**  
Oh, they have a third eyelid!
- 16 **Stream**  
It's called a nictitating membrane
- 18 **Icon Sony SRS-RA5000**  
It's transparent and horizontal
- 20 **Games**  
Eurgh!
- 22 **Best of NAMM 2021**
- 24 **Wheels MBUX Hyperscreen**
- 26 **Stuff meets... Jack Saunders**  
Polar bears also have them

## TESTS

- 29 **First test**  
**Samsung Galaxy S21 Ultra 5G**  
It's big, it's brown\*, it's worth a thousand pounds – and it takes amazing photos (\*also available in non-chocolate/poo finishes)
- 59 **Tested**  
**Audio Pro Drumfire**  
A whole stack of hi-fi oomph
- 60 **Tested**  
**Leica SL2-S**  
At four grand, is this a likely Leica?
- 64 **Tested**  
**Logitech Brio**  
Let people pore over your pores
- 66 **Versus**  
**Compact soundbars**  
Give your telly some welly
- 72 **Tested**  
**Q Acoustics Q Active 200**  
They come in peace, mostly
- 75 **Tested**  
**Sensate 2**  
Aaaaaaaaaaaaand relax...
- 76 **Long-term test**  
**Peloton Tread**  
Basically an indoor pavement
- 78 **Games**  
*Hitman 3, The Medium*

## FEATURES

- 36 **Upvoted**  
**Wellness & relaxation**  
We can tell from the way you're reading this sentence that you're all tense and agitated... maybe one of these gadgets will help?
- 38 **Mini meme**  
**Games with level editors**  
Make it app as you go along
- 40 **Cover feature**  
**Smart home tech**  
Worried that if you start buying connected devices they'll lock you out of the house and burn all your clothes? Allow *Stuff* to show you the basics...
- 62 **Beta yourself**  
**Zoom**  
Because you're not going to be back in that meeting room for a while yet
- 70 **Instant upgrades**  
**Google Pixel 5**  
How to make app icons look like a cat's eyes (almost)
- 98 **Random access memories**  
**Adidas Micropacer (1984)**  
Yep, step-tracking wearables are older than Wayne Rooney

THE LEGENDARY STUFF TOP TENS P82



FUJIFILM

X | GFX

# MASTERS OF CREATIVITY

Try the range of FUJIFILM X Series cameras and lenses with free 48-hour kit loans to unleash your creativity



"X-S10 makes a lot of sense for a lot of people"

-Photography Blog



"If you own an APS-C DSLR and want to switch to a smaller, lighter mirrorless system, quite simply this is the camera for you."

-Amateur Photographer



"The X-S10 is an easy camera to recommend for photographers of all kinds"

-DP Review

FUJIFILM-LOAN.COM

H

O

T

S

T



**It's better to stream**

There's an improved Magic Remote with new hot keys to get you straight into Netflix, Prime Video and Disney+, plus buttons to summon Alexa or Google Assistant.

U

F

F

ALL THE  
BIGGEST  
STORIES FROM  
PLANET TECH



### OS I'm changing

LG's webOS has been ahead of the pack for years. Version 6.0 gets a new home screen with personalised recommendations at the touch of a button.

### HOT FIVE #1

## RESIDENT EVO THRILLAGE LG G1

In ancient times (like, a decade ago) you had two choices when it came to a flatscreen TV: LCD or plasma. Things are much more complicated now, with OLED, QNED Mini LED and NanoCell tellys in LG's 2021 range; but the pick of the bunch is the G1 series, which uses OLED Evo tech – a new type of luminous panel that LG reckons will make the picture clearer, brighter, punchier and more realistic than ever.

A new tripod-style Gallery Stand sets things off with a bit more flexibility when it comes to where you actually put it, while LG's new A9 Gen 4 AI processor promises to do a load of nifty picture-polishing business – and uses machine learning to improve upscaling and analyse individual scenes so they look more 3D. It has audio benefits too, with AI-driven virtual 5.1.2 surround sound up-mixing to get the best out of the TV's built-in speakers, and Auto Volume Levelling keeping things at a consistent level when you switch between sources.

As you'd expect from a flagship telly, the G1 series goes big with 55in, 65in and 77in sizes – no doubt with prices to match – so maybe it's a good thing you don't go out and have fun any more.

**As hot as... an incinerator full of 2020 TVs**  
[Etbc / lg.com](https://www.4mat.com/etbc/lg.com)

### Game here for love

Need a perfect partner for your new Xbox Series X or PS5? All LG's 2021 OLEDs have a 1ms response time and four HDMI ports that support the latest specifications.



### Life is a solar coaster

Samsung is making a commitment to greener hardware. All 2021 TVs include a remote control with a solar panel that can recharge the battery even from indoor light.

HOT  
FIVE  
#2

## BETTER THE DEVIL YOU NEO

Samsung QN900A  
Neo QLED 8K

The *Matrix* franchise gets a new film this year (apparently), but now there's another Neo in town. And while Samsung insists microLED is the future of TV, it's not done with QLED yet.

'Neo QLED' is the name Samsung has picked for its miniLED sets (not to be confused with microLED, a whole new tech with even smaller diodes), which replace the traditional TV backlight with a more precise and sophisticated solution. Powered by Quantum Matrix tech (yes, really), Neo QLED is claimed to eliminate blooming effects for cleaner images plus the promise of vibrant colour with wider dynamic range. The new Neo Quantum Processor uses deep learning for improved upscaling, delivering crisp pictures even with lower-res streams, plus there's a speaker system that analyses what's on screen for 3D positional output.

Coming in 4K variants as well as this 8K beast, there are plenty of reasons to want one, but Samsung can only show you the door – you're the one who has to walk through it.

As hot as... **Agent Smith's temper**  
[4tbc](https://www.4tbc.com) / [samsung.com](https://www.samsung.com)

### The frame of the game

Gaming power is amped up with the ability to use super-wide 21:9 and 32:9 aspect ratios, while an onscreen Game Bar puts settings for gamers front and centre.



**Kick out the gyms**

New features include Samsung Health: with an attached camera, the built-in app serves up interactive workouts and provides feedback on your form.



**EVEN MORE SCREEN TIME**



**PANASONIC JZ2000**

Panasonic's new 4K OLED is powered by a new HXC Pro chip that uses AI to optimise picture and sound quality based on what kind of content you're watching.



**TCL 8K 6-SERIES ROKU (R648)**

No, you still don't need an 8K telly, but it's notable that budget-friendly champion TCL is updating its top-value 6-Series with 8K resolution support for 2021.



**SONY BRAVIA CORE**

Sony claims its new streaming service (yes, another one) can deliver streamed UHD movies at near-lossless 4K Blu-ray quality at up to 80Mbps. Mind, you'll need stellar broadband to pull that off (see p52).



**PHILIPS 9000 SERIES**

Philips' first miniLED TVs are the 9639 and 9506. The former gets an integrated B&W soundbar; both have the fifth-gen P5 chip and support all the major HDR standards.



HOT  
FIVE  
#3

## DOWNWARD BLOG

Lenovo Yoga AIO 7

We vaguely scoffed at (but also quite liked) the Sero, Samsung's crazy vertical TV for millennials that landed last year – but Lenovo's idea of using a similar concept on a desktop PC makes a massive amount of sense whether you're a Tik Tok fanatic, have an aversion to scrolling through blogs, or find yourself regularly navigating very, very long spreadsheets.

The all-in-one Yoga AIO 7 doesn't scrimp on specs either. The vertical/horizontal rotating 4K display is obviously the showpiece, and can also be tilted back by up to 20%; but it's joined by JBL stereo speakers, a top-spec AMD Ryzen 7 4800H processor and Nvidia GeForce RTX 2060 graphics, which feels like a brutal enough combination to handle gaming and creative willy-waving.

Whether Lenovo's idea of incorporating 'human billboard' spin tricks into computer screens catches on remains to be seen, and at present the Yoga AIO 7 is only going to be available in select regions – even the US won't be one of them – but we like the rhyming sensation of owning an orientation workstation, if nothing else.

As hot as... **a vertical sunbed**  
£tbc / lenovo.com

## Everlasting dove

Sony's Z-series battery has a claimed capacity of 530 stills per charge. If even that's not enough you can cram an additional cell into the optional VG-C4EM grip.

HOT  
FIVE  
#4

## HOLDING OUT FOR A HERON

Sony Alpha 1

On page 60 of this month's magazine we review what we believe to be an eye-wateringly expensive mirrorless camera from Leica. Well hold my beer, says Sony, because this is the Alpha 1, its new flagship snapper, and it's yours for six and a half grand.

With a 50MP full-frame sensor and the ability to record 8K video, if there is to be any eye-watering, this is the camera to capture those tears in even greater detail. There's a huge supply of processing power on tap too, as the Alpha 1 can shoot stills at full 50.1MP resolution at speeds of up to 30fps, which is significantly quicker than most of its rivals. For video shooters, this is Sony's first 8K-capable mirrorless camera, and it also records 4K at 120fps for 5x slow-motion playback.

As you'd expect from a no-compromise model at a no-compromise price, there are loads of other features packed in, including real-time autofocus for tracking the eyes of birds. So if you like nothing better than chasing after tits and boobies, this is the camera for you – and no, that sort of humour is not below us.

As hot as... **boobies**  
£6500 (body only) / sony.co.uk

H O T S T U F F

Thrush  
with eyeliner

The Alpha 1 houses a 9.44million-dot OLEDEVF offering the highest ever resolution in a mirrorless camera, with 0.90x magnification and a 41° field of view.



It's crow  
so quiet

A silent electronic shutter stops you from disturbing anything nibbling at your nuts, aided by a new Active Mode for handheld movie work with 5-axis image stabilisation.

### The purple's choice

As with Apple's AirPods Pro, 360° audio is supported, here via Dolby Head Tracking; but it needs the One UI 3.1 update, which as it stands is only available on the Galaxy S21 range.

### I see dead purple

You can expect five hours of battery life with ANC permanently on, plus an additional 13 hours afforded by the charging case. Acceptable, rather than epic.

HOT  
FIVE  
#5

## POWER TO THE PURPLE

### Samsung Galaxy Buds Pro

Hear now, prolific music listeners: there's yet another pair of premium true wireless earbuds competing for your dollar. As part of its latest Galaxy Unpacked event, Samsung announced the Galaxy Buds Pro, its most advanced in-ears to date.

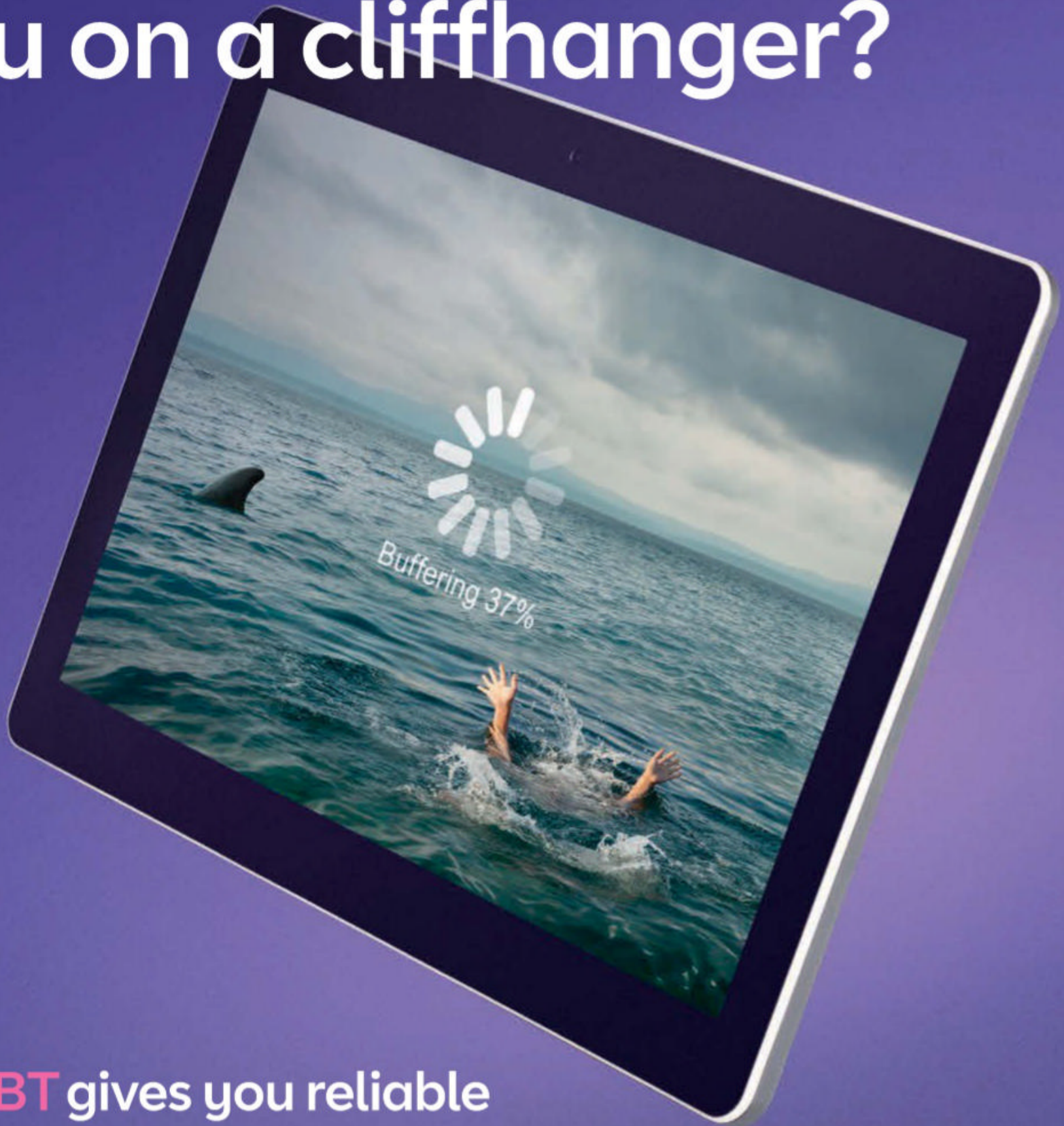
The Buds Pro no longer look exactly like jelly beans, but do adopt the same metallic design as the old Galaxy Buds Live, while a supposed better seal in your ear should help with the noise-cancellation. An IPX7 rating makes them workout-ready, but it's what's inside that's really interesting.

The pairing of an 11mm woofer with a 6.5mm tweeter balances, Samsung says,

deeper bass with crisp treble, while the three microphones and voice pickup unit should mean you're not drowned out by dog barks and screaming kids – you know, the usual working-from-home conditions. And Samsung says the Galaxy Buds Pro have the most advanced ANC of any true wireless earbuds.

Noise-cancelling and ambient modes can be fine-tuned, and like Sony's XM4 headphones, they automatically detect when you're talking to adjust the ANC and pause audio accordingly. Best Buds yet? **Ashot as... the rage of AirPods Pro owners** £219 / [samsung.com](https://www.samsung.com)

# Why binge on a series, if your broadband leaves you on a cliffhanger?



**Only BT** gives you reliable  
wi-fi in every room or £100  
money-back guarantee  
with Complete Wi-Fi.

**Why choose anyone else?**



**BEYOND  
LIMITS**

# BLADE FUNNER

## Razer Blade 15 (2021)

from £1900 / razer.com



Like colours on your keyboard? This customisable RGB job has 16.8 million of them.

**Razer's compact gaming machine doesn't look very different, but it's all kicking off under the hood...**

● **Graphics content warning**

The latest Blade is one of the many flagship gaming laptops that will now ship with one of Nvidia's GeForce RTX 30 Series GPUs, a version of the stonkingly powerful chips that desktop gamers have been enjoying for a while now. This means improved efficiency, zippier performance and easily enough power to handle ray-tracing in games like *Cyberpunk 2077*. It's a pretty significant step up for on-the-go

gaming, and even more impressive when you're getting that kind of graphical output from a laptop that could pass for something you'd whip out for note-taking.

● **Let's ask the panel**

If you want the most portable Blade you'll be going for the one with a 15in display, but there's also a 17in option. As for configuring that panel, well, you have options. The headline is what Razer is calling the world's first 1080p display with a 360Hz refresh rate, which affords you a 2ms response time. For fast-paced games that demand quick reactions, this is quite exciting. But the Advanced

model also offers a 1440p/240Hz option, or a more casual 4K OLED with a 60Hz refresh rate, while the 1440p QHD configuration also has G-Sync tech for variable refresh rates. Like we said, options.

● **It's a lot to process**

Of course, none of the whizzbang screen stuff will matter much if the Blade isn't powerful enough to run the chuffing games...but there's no need to worry about that, with the Blade 15 Advanced packing a 10th-gen Intel Core i7 with eight cores and up to 32GB of DDR4 RAM, which can be upgraded to 64GB. Whatever happened to just playing *Lemmings*?

**RTX 30 SERIES GRAPHICS MEAN MORE ZIP AND EASILY ENOUGH POWER FOR RAY-TRACING**



## CES: BEST NEW GAMERS

### ● Acer Nitro 5

The 2021 Nitro 5 comes in 15in and 17in variants, and you can pay as little as \$750 for the base model or treble that if you spec it up to a Ryzen 5000 series CPU and Nvidia RTX 3080 graphics.  
**from \$750 / acer.com**

### ● Asus ROG Flow X13

A *Stuff* CES Most Wanted pick, this sleek 13-incher looks more business than Battlefield, but it's definitely here for a good time. We're especially keen on the optional eGPU add-on.  
**from \$3000 / asus.com**

### ● Lenovo Legion 7

Lo! Lenovo's latest lovely Legion laptop also sports a Ryzen 5000 and up to an RTX 3080 GPU... but we're more interested in its 16in 1440p display, which has a tall-ish 16:10 aspect ratio.  
**from \$1670 / lenovo.com**

More video doorbells  
p40



## Give me just a little door chime RING VIDEO DOORBELL WIRED

It's never been cheaper to put up a camera-toting doorbell and start peering out at your neighbours, thanks to Ring's new ding-dong thang. This mini option keeps all the familiar features of its pricier siblings, including two-way communication, 1080p video recording and motion alerts to your smartphone. You'll need doorbell wiring to hook it up and a paid Ring Protect Plan subscription to get the most out of it, including the advanced motion-detection features, but you're pretty much getting the full package here for much less cash. It looks like an easy entry point for anyone just dabbling in smart home tech en route to the ultimate connected fortress (eventually, maybe).

**£49 / ring.com**



## That Polk isn't dummy any more POLK REACT

As Tom Jones once sang, it's not unusual to find a soundbar with Alexa on board these days – but Polk reckons its new React is more advanced than any other. What does it have to back up such outlandish claims? Well, it's got four far-field mics and supports Alexa's Communication features, so you can use it to make calls and announcements to Echo devices, while Alexa Multi-Room Music means you can pair other equally skilled speakers to form a musical network throughout your gaff. It works with Dolby Digital and DTS 5.1 to make things sound as lifelike as possible; and while there's no Atmos support, you can add SR2 wireless surround speakers (£159/pair) and a React Sub (£179).

**£249 / polkaudio.com**



## Batman's butler used to be proper hard and *Escape to Victory* star Pelé was a footballer in real life – the things you learn from TV!



### Big Sky

Disney+ isn't totally kid-centric any more. Star, a new hub full of shows aimed at grownups, comes to the platform on 23 February, and crime drama *Big Sky* is part of its launch line-up. Named after the glorious open vistas of its Montana setting, it stars Ryan Phillippe as a private eye unwinding the disappearance of a dozen young women.

**S1 / Disney+ Star, 23 Feb**



### Your Honor

Impossible choices abound in British writer Peter Moffat's second major US series (the first being the superb *The Night Of*). Bryan Cranston plays a judge who betrays his sense of justice to protect his son, whose involvement in a hit-and-run accident creates a web of deception and lies that threatens further bloodshed.

**S1 / Sky/Now, 2 Mar**



### Pennyworth

Batman's butler is back – and he's buff! Alfred Pennyworth's origin story as a former SAS soldier turned dapper private security contractor in '50s London brings a fresh perspective to the DC Comics universe. Jack Bannon returns for this second season, battling the fascist Raven Union as they attempt to grab power.

**S2 / StarzPlay, 28 Feb**



### I Care a Lot

Legal guardian Marla Grayson (Rosamund Pike in formidable form) makes a killing from swindling the wealthy elderly people she's supposed to be looking out for... but her latest ward proves a tougher mark than usual thanks to some unlikely underworld connections. Screen legend Dianne Wiest also stars in this black comedy.

**Film / Amazon Prime Video, 19 Feb**



### Pelé

Who is Edson Arantes do Nascimento? Well, he's Pelé, obviously, the only footballer to have won three World Cups... but who is he really? Unlike the late Maradona, Pelé has always been reticent when it comes to his personal life; this feature-length documentary aims to shine some light on the game's brightest star.

**Film / Netflix, 23 Feb**



### Bloods

Sky's latest original sitcom casts Samson Kayo and Jane Horrocks as a mismatched pair of paramedics, following their misadventures as they drive an ambulance around London. With the NHS currently in the spotlight, *Bloods* feels like a fitting and timely comic tribute to the courage and humour of emergency workers.

**S1 / Sky/Now, 10 Mar**

### For All Mankind **S2 / Apple TV+, 19 Feb**

Apple's sci-fi drama flips history on its head by exploring a parallel universe where the Soviet Union was the first nation to put people on the moon, reinvigorating America's emotional and financial investment in the space race. Fast-forwarding a decade to the early 1980s, the second season sees the Cold War threaten to warm up as American astronauts and Soviet cosmonauts vie for control of lunar resources. And the stakes couldn't be higher: a dust-up on the moon could lead to nuclear conflict.

DON'T MISS THIS



S T R E A M



THE SEVEN  
DRIVERS CREATE  
A FOUNTAIN OF  
ROOM-FILLING  
SOUND

# SONY SRS-RA5000

£500 / [sony.co.uk](https://sony.co.uk)

**Can't help but want to whack those pads.**

We understand the impulse, but sadly you're buying a high-end speaker here, not a drum kit. It's fair to say Sony's 360 Reality Audio has hardly conquered the world; but now the company is making hardware to pair with the tech, maybe that's about to change. Both the pictured SRS-RA5000 and the smaller SRS-RA3000 can deliver 360° audio, but unsurprisingly it's the more expensive model we're itching to get our ears around.

**How does it work, then?**

If you wanted to thoroughly cover your lounge in yoghurt, you could do worse than sticking a Muller Light fountain in the middle of the room and turning it up to 11. This wireless speaker takes the same approach to sound, but makes a lot less mess. The RA5000 has seven drivers in total: three of them fire audio upwards and three face outwards, with a 2.75in woofer to handle the rumbles. Combined with Sony's new Immersive Audio Enhancement algorithm, it creates a fountain of room-filling sound even for stereo tracks that aren't in the 360 Reality Audio format.

**Will my audio yoghurt sound good wherever I put this thing?**

It should do. The SRS-RA5000 is Hi-Res-certified and can be calibrated to your room for the best spatial audio. Sony's 360 Reality Audio now supports video streaming too, the idea being that you can recreate the feeling of being at a live gig – handy when attending a real one is off the cards. Connectivity is a win too: you've got both Wi-Fi and Bluetooth on board and it supports Spotify Connect and Chromecast, with Alexa and Google Assistant arguing over the voice control.





### Bake like the wind LG QP5 ECLAIR

LG's tiny QP5 Eclair soundbar doesn't contain cream or chocolate (shame), but despite measuring less than 12in long and 2in tall it has five drivers in a 3.1.2 setup, with a compact wireless subwoofer dealing with the low end. What sets it apart from other diminutive soundbars is that two drivers fire upwards, so there's support for Dolby Atmos and DTS:X height trickery, while another two positioned at 45° angles widen the soundstage. With 320W and a sub to play with, the Eclair has the potential to wake the neighbours, or just to give your telly the helping hand it needs to compete in a noisy home. There's no price or release date yet, but don't expect it to arrive until much later this year.

[Etc/lg.com](http://Etc/lg.com)



### Convertible convertible LEGO PORSCHE 911 TURBO & TARGA

From the Fiat 500 to the ECTO-1, Lego's brick vehicle collection has range. But with its Porsche 911 Turbo & 911 Targa kit, the company is doing something a bit different. As the name suggests, it allows you to piece together two takes on the iconic car, depending on whether you prefer the fixed-roof Turbo or getting rained on in a Targa. In either case, the result is a striking take on the original car, with its classic curves and angled headlamps. There's a beautifully recreated interior complete with detailed dashboard and tilting seats – in tan, obviously – and even a functional steering wheel for when you take your 350mm, 1458-piece pride and joy for a test drive across the living-room floor.

[£120/lego.com](http://£120/lego.com)



## NEWS FEED

### SAFETY RAZER

Dubbed 'the world's smartest mask', Razer's Project Hazel concept is a waterproof and scratch-resistant surgical N95 respirator that can apparently filter at least 95% of airborne particles, and uses UV light to kill bacteria and viruses while it charges. And naturally, this being a Razer, it has RGB lighting.

### CURL ME BACK

The obsession with shapeshifting tech is growing stronger with every CES... and after the successful launch of LG's rollable TVs, a pocket-friendly version is wildly enticing. The teaser video showed a phone with a display that extends to create a tablet-sized device, and the seamless transition between the two forms is sort of hypnotic.

### BOT STUFF

Samsung's Bot Handy concept robot claims to do pretty much everything but wipe your backside – which is a shame considering its borderline inappropriate name. But if you like the idea of a physical AI butler picking up the dirty laundry or pouring you a large WKD Blue, this bot really is handy. Let's hope they make the damned thing.

### IT'S TWITCHCRAFT

Washing up, carrying heavy shopping, swordfighting to the death with your arch nemesis: three scenarios where tapping your Apple Watch becomes difficult. With the Mudra Band, you don't need to: actions are triggered by electrodes that read the neural signals from your brain to your fingers when you move them. No, really.



## FIRST PLAY MONSTER HUNTER RISE Switch

While the *Monster Hunter* series has been enjoying worldwide success on PC and console (and even at the cinema), Capcom hasn't forgotten the series' roots as a portable experience, and so *Monster Hunter Rise* brings the action to the Switch. Any suggestion that this is a downsized spinoff, however, is firmly smashed to bits after just a few hunts.

Setting off in the new Shrine Ruins, first to slay the bird-like Great Izuchi and then the even more fearsome water dragon Mizutsune, it's clear Capcom has

built a beautiful game from the ground up using its excellent RE Engine, which manages to maintain smooth performance even when you're hunting with a party of four online.

Seasoned hunters will be familiar with the 14 weapon types, but even if you're already a master of the Long Sword or Hunting Horn there are new skills and tools that change the rhythm and tactics of a hunt. Most come courtesy of the new Wirebug, an insect whose silk transforms you into a wire-fu hero. You can use the silk to

grapple across great distances or run up cliffs, and even get it to pull you to a quick recovery when knocked down by a monster.

Craziest of all, if you weaken a monster enough you can use silk reins to ride it around, either to launch it into a wall in order to knock it down, or to make it fight another monster roaming in the wild.

Even as the new console generation is with us, you can see why Nintendo isn't breaking a sweat when its own little machine has such a potentially gargantuan hit on its hands.



## FIRST LOOK BACK FROM THE UNDEAD

**BACK 4 BLOOD**

PC, PS4, PS5, XB1, XSX

While almost every *Call of Duty* title has a Zombies mode, it's been over a decade since we last got a *Left 4 Dead* game. After moving on to the asymmetrical multiplayer *Evolve* (which sadly didn't evolve much) and so-so experiments in VR, Turtle

Rock Studios is back to its roots with a spiritual successor to its zombie survival shooter.

*Back 4 Blood* has you in a team of four 'cleaners' fighting their way through the zombie apocalypse. Not exactly everymen, the characters revealed so far are veterans with their own distinct personalities and perks, including the military-trained

Walker, who seems very much the team leader.

The formula of surviving against a zombie horde of growing intensity is intact, though one modern twist is the use of deck-building: each player needs to select cards that add modifiers to the game, such as more health, damage or stamina. You're also at the mercy of

the AI Game Director who issues corruption cards that introduce nasty surprises such as fog, extra zombie spawns, or much tougher enemies including a huge undead ogre.

Early impressions from a PC alpha have been good; and with the developer back on familiar zombie-infested ground, what can go wrong?

## BEST OF THE SPIRIT OF SEGA

**TAXI CHAOS**

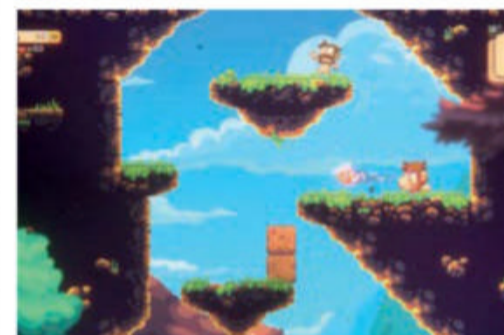
PS4, XB1, Switch

This spiritual successor to *Crazy Taxi* has you getting behind the wheel of a yellow cab to drive around New York, picking up passengers and getting them to their destinations by any means necessary. It's out on 23 February, and Sega is even handling publishing in Japan.

**BOMB RUSH CYBERFUNK**

PC

A follow-up to cult classic *Jet Set Radio* has been a long time coming, but *Bomb Rush Cyberfunk* is ready to roll into action this year. OK, there's no actual skating in this, but expect cel-shaded graphics, graffiti, showdowns with cops and a funky soundtrack to remain at its core.

**ALEX KIDD IN MIRACLE WORLD DX**

PC, PS4, XB1, Switch

Before Sonic dashed onto the scene, Sega had Alex Kidd as its mascot. This *DX* reboot gives the classic platformer a cartoonish makeover, while adding new levels and improved boss fights. Nostalgic fans can even play the original Master System version just the way they remember it.

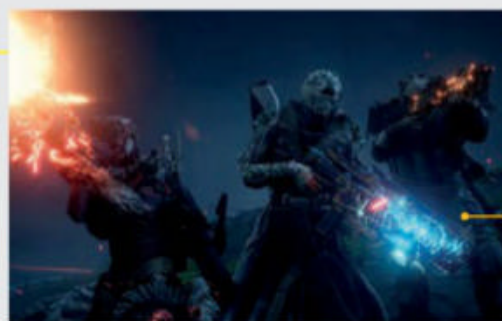
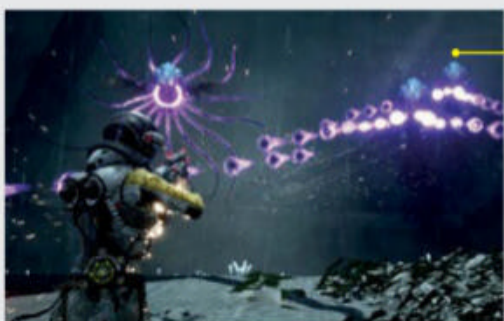
## INCOMING

MARCH

- RETURNAL
- KENA: BRIDGE OF SPIRITS
- PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME REMAKE

APRIL

- OUTRIDERS
- NEW POKEMON SNAP
- GUILTY GEAR STRIVE
- HUMANKIND

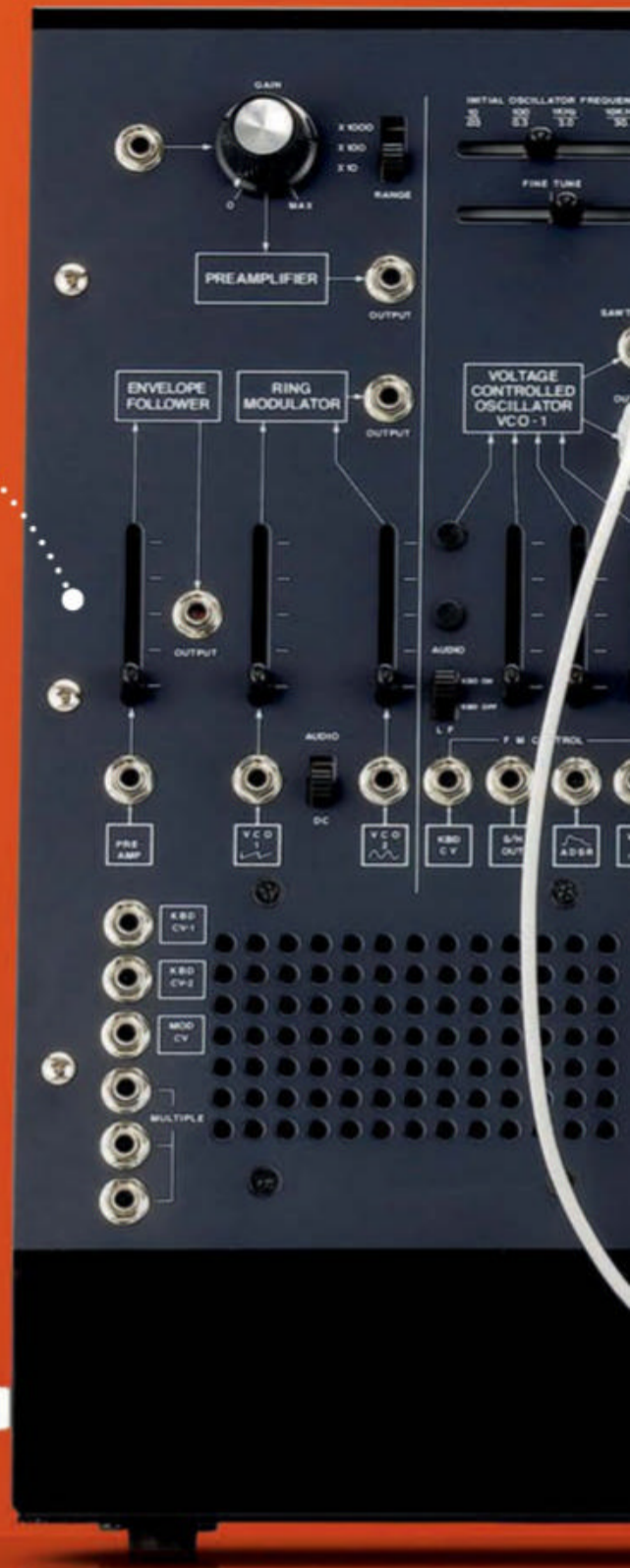


### Stuck in the module with you

The smaller 2600 keeps all the features of last year's full-size reissue, and comes in its own anti-shock suitcase.

# NAMM 2021

Yes, we know, there wasn't a NAMM show this year, because of a bug or something. But music tech makers launched loads of saucy new kit anyway...



## CHUG CHUG TWANG!



### Zoom G6

You don't see many guitar multi-FX units with touchscreens, perhaps because such delicate tech isn't really compatible with spilled pints, dropped microphones and the boots of absent-minded sound engineers. So a gig-drought is probably the perfect time for Zoom to be launching its new flagship, with a 4.3in colour LCD that lets you drag virtual pedals around with your finger. It also has amp modelling, a looper and an expression pedal. Just don't drop it on your phone.

£369 / [zoomcorp.com](http://zoomcorp.com)



### Vox Avena-1

Guitars with built-in amps have been around for decades, on and off. Usually off, to be honest, because that's how they tend to sound best. But the world of portable amplification has made some major strides in recent years, so it's just possible that this latest attempt from Vox – based on the shape of its Apache model from 1964 – won't sound like Hank Marvin farting down a cardboard tube. It has four effects and, God help us, a drum machine.

£tbc / [vox.com](http://vox.com)



### Walrus Audio ACS1

A digital 'amp in a box' for silent recording and practice with high-quality modelling of classic amplifiers and built-in speaker impulse responses? What a great idea... that Strymon had when it launched the Iridium back in 2019. Ah, but Walrus had upped the stakes by offering two independent channels, so you can record through a Marshall and a Fender at the same time, and by letting you store three onboard presets. Oh, and also by making this thing sound incredible.

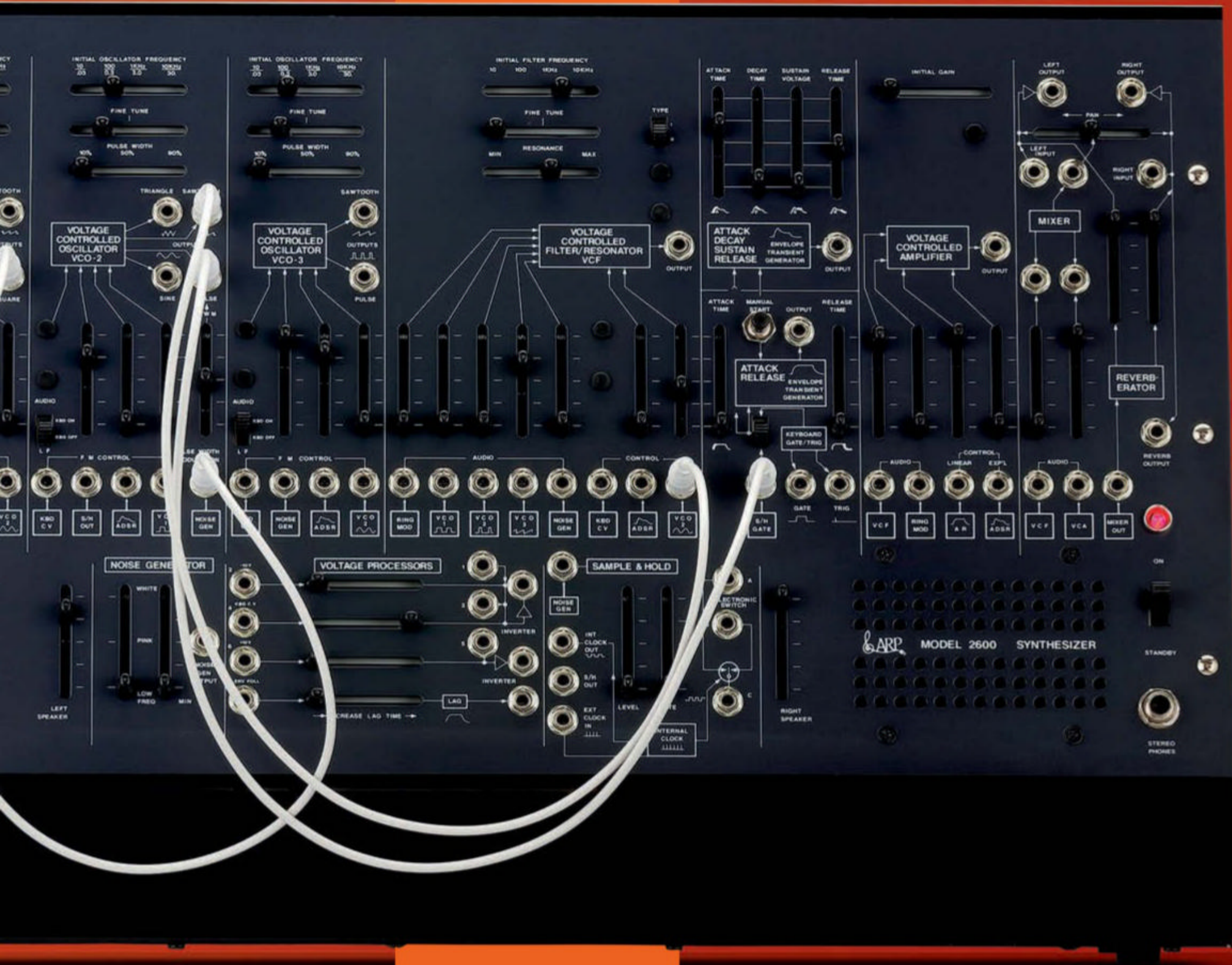
£365 / [walrusaudio.com](http://walrusaudio.com)



### Red Panda Bitmap 2

Guitarists spend half their time in restless pursuit of tonal purity, agonising over why one 1959 Les Paul sounds 0.0001% better than another... and the other half mangling everything up with increasingly extreme effects. Well, they don't get much more mangly than Red Panda's latest bitcrusher, which will make any guitar – yes, even a 1959 Les Paul – sound like an arcade cabinet from the early '80s that's just about to overheat and explode.

\$299 / [redpandalab.com](http://redpandalab.com)



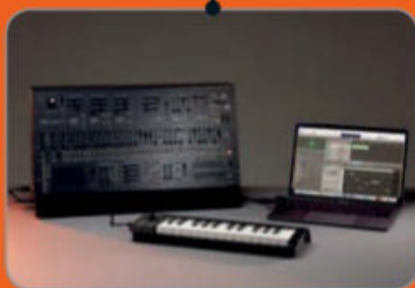
## BEEP BOOP SPLATCH!



## Kurzweil K2700

Kurzweil is working on a new workstation that will feed the cat, read the kids a bedtime story and drive you to the supermarket when you run out of Pom-Bears. Until then you'll just have to make do with the K2700, which does pretty much everything apart from that. It has a fully weighted 88-note keyboard with 256-voice polyphony, a built-in USB audio interface and 4.5GB of factory sounds on board. It might feed the cat if you ask it really, really nicely.

[Etbc / kurzweil.com](http://Etbc/kurzweil.com)



## Korg ARP 2600 M

On these pages a year ago we hailed the launch of the Korg ARP 2600 FS, a remake of one of the most famous analogue synths of the '70s. "Amazing!" gushed the entire knob-twiddling world, "but we won't actually get one because it's over three grand and the size of an adult hippo." Well now there's a new version – and the 'M' stands for "Mmm, that's a bit more like it", because this one's been shrunk to 60% of its original size and is about half the price of the FS model.

[£1699 / korg.co.uk](http://£1699/korg.co.uk)



## Roland Verselab MV-1

Look at all the pretty colours on this new one-box recording studio from Roland! It's got red, blue, purple, orange, everything! And once you've finished gazing at the 4x4 pad matrix and step sequencer, you might want to have a look at its other features – such as an XLR mic input, 3000 onboard sounds and a suite of mastering effects, for covering the whole song-creation process in one portable unit. Got all that? Right, now let's look at the pretty colours again. Oooh!

[£599 / roland.com](http://£599/roland.com)



## IK Uno Synth Pro

You can always rely on IK to come up with something clever and chic, no matter how ghastly the state of the world might be. This year it's a very modern-looking analogue synth with three oscillators, two filters, an arpeggiator and 64-step sequencer, and 12 effects including true analogue overdrive. There's also a titchy 'Desktop' version for €400, which lacks proper keys but has all the same stuff on the inside. C'mon, first Trump going and now this? Things are looking up!

[€650 / ikmultimedia.com](http://€650/ikmultimedia.com)



Mercedes-Benz MBUX Hyperscreen

# GRAND MASTER DASH



The first car to get the MBUX Hyperscreen will be Merc's electric EQS model, which could be on sale by this summer.

Etba / mercedes-benz.co.uk

NEWS DASHBOARD

**Has someone at Mercedes been rummaging through the parts bin of the USS Enterprise?**

We all know *Star Trek* predicted VR, Google Glass and 3D printing, so it comes as no surprise that car makers are now getting all Trekkie with their interiors. The curved MBUX Hyperscreen spans a whopping 141cm and consists of three displays housed beneath a single glass lens.

**But what does it do that my car's infotainment system doesn't?**

It packs eight CPU cores and 24GB of RAM for a start, making it way more powerful than most laptops. The surfeit of memory is required to run some pretty advanced AI, which relies on a multi-function interior camera and light sensor for information. For example, the camera can tell who's behind the wheel and will automatically make recommendations based on that driver's habits.

**What, so it'll start nagging me for hogging the middle lane?**

Not quite. It's mostly designed to know what temperature you like the cabin, or set the DAB radio to your preferred station. Amazingly, the system can also remember the GPS positions of harsh speed bumps and will lift the suspension when it reaches them.

**Sounds like lots of fun for the driver, but what about the poor front passenger?**

Well, that wraparound screen is clearly too wide for one person. The passenger side of the display can be set up for different users – it has support for up to seven profiles – and if the local laws allow, they can enjoy all sorts of connected content and entertainment. And if the front passenger seat is empty, the screen automatically switches to a decorative display. Because floating silver arrows are cool.



**NIO KID IN TOWN**

Chinese brand Nio has lifted the lid on its extremely potent ET7 electric saloon. With 644bhp and 850Nm of torque, it's effectively more powerful than a Lamborghini Huracan, while its advanced interior tech and autonomous driving functions might give Musk a migraine.



**TEAM TITANS GO!**

Hyundai has hinted that it's teaming up with Apple to reignite the Apple Car idea, formerly dubbed Project Titan. An initial statement from Hyundai referred to a partnership with the Cupertino giant, but it soon back-pedalled and went all vague on us, despite its share price rocketing. Hmm...



**CUP-A-SUPRA**

The awesome Toyota GR Supra can now be specified with a 2-litre turbocharged engine, as opposed to the chunky 3-litre option currently on the table. It's 100kg lighter than its big brother, so still manages an impressive 0-62mph time of just 5.2secs.



### Salad of easy riser GARDYN

One of the few good things to have come out of this pandemic is a renaissance in all things green – it seems millennials now aspire to live like Tom and Barbara in *The Good Life*. Imagine their excitement, then, when the indoor smart gardening device, Gardyn, adds a refreshing break from all the screens. It's a vertical planter (150cm tall) and doesn't even require soil, nor sunlight, instead using 'yCubes' containing all the necessary ingredients for healthy veg. The device connects to an app that uses AI to detect if your salad needs more water or light... so if you've run out of naff art to put on your walls, why not decorate it with living lettuce instead?

from \$899 / [mygardyn.com](http://mygardyn.com)



### Done up like a slipper NIKE GO FLYEASE

We've never wanted trainers to look like slippers, but sometimes we wish they behaved a bit more like them. Enter the Nike Go FlyEase, a 'hands-free concept shoe' in the words of its maker. It eliminates the need for laces by employing a bi-stable hinge so each shoe can be slipped on and off using nothing but those slabs of meat we call feet. The design allows the trainers to be open and closed in a snap, ensuring they remain secure when worn but retain enough flex for hands-free removal. Nike is touting them as "accessible and empowering", but we reckon they'll appeal to the kind of lace-dodging deviants who cram their feet into sneakers before rushing out of the door.

[etbc/nike.com](http://etbc/nike.com)



## ? WTF IS MI AIR CHARGE TECHNOLOGY?

### Xiaomi clutching at thin air, are they?

In a way, yes. Unlike traditional wireless charging, which requires a charging stand or pad, Mi Air Charge is truly wireless. It utilises a remote 'charging pile' that detects the location of your device and beams energy through the air. According to Xiaomi's best and brightest, the pile has "five phase-interference antennas built in, which can accurately detect the location of a smartphone". And then? "A phase control array, composed of 144 antennas, transmits millimetre-wide waves directly to the phone through beamforming." There's a lot of jargon there, but essentially it'll charge devices within a few metres. No cables, no pads, just automatic wireless charging taking care of itself.

### What gadgets will it work with?

Well, clearly the device being charged will need to be fitted with the relevant tech to convert those millimetre waves back into electrical energy. We're assured Mi Air Charge will be compatible with a wide range of phones, and Xiaomi claims the tech will eventually work with smartwatches, speakers, desk lamps and other products in the connected home. It'll even charge multiple gadgets simultaneously, so it could feasibly keep an entire smart home ticking over while you do something productive, like dust your Phil Collins record collection.

### So can I feel it coming in the Air tonight?

Not quite. As always, there's a catch with these things – and while Xiaomi has been more than happy to wax lyrical about its latest technological revolution, the company has been less forthcoming with a launch date. So you won't find it on the Xiaomi Mi 11 for instance. Right now, we don't know when – or indeed if – Mi Air Charge will be rolled out to consumers. It's likely there's still a bit of fine-tuning to be done, but Xiaomi's proclamation that "today, we enter a true wireless charging era" implies the company is confident it'll become a reality soon enough.

## STUFF MEETS

# Jack Saunders

## BBC RADIO 1'S NEW MUSIC GURU ON LAUNCHING A MEDIA EMPIRE FROM HIS BEDROOM



### I like thinking outside the box.

No one wants to be in the situation

we're in but we've got to make the most of it, and I've tried to do that. I started Quarantine Karaoke on Instagram, and we got some huge artists (Glass Animals, Este Haim) to come on, so I ended up taking it to Twitch. That was when I really started to think about tech and what I could use to make my house a professional setting.

### I really invested in gadgets.

The Shure SM7B is the best microphone going. I got myself a little TC Helicon GoXLR mixer, which allows me to run audio, video and separate channels like a proper studio mixing desk. I also got a dual-monitor PC setup and lights behind the monitors. I've even got my own green screen, so I've basically turned my living room into a TV studio.

### I have to be creative when looking for new music.

Streaming platforms are nice, but they're not always quick enough with their turnover of new music. I find a lot of the stuff I play through talking to people in the industry, but being a Radio 1 presenter means you have to be open-minded. There are certain things that blow up on Tik Tok and become viral sensations overnight, for example Curtis Waters' *Stunnin'*, a brilliant pop song that deserved radio play.

### My job is very different to what John Peel did.

I suppose John would have been sent records that he'd

have listened to on the way to the studio and just decided to play them there and then. The industry was probably a lot freer and a lot more fluid, whereas now there's a lot more structure. Then again, it's never been easier for people to get their music in your ears, rather than sending a CD in the post and crossing their fingers. Who had the harder gig? That's not for me to say!

### Headphones are very important to me.

If I'm listening to music for work I use my Beyerdynamic DT 990s – with velour cushioning, of course. They're studio-quality and let me appreciate all the details. If I'm out and about, it's always Bose QC35 IIs. I swear by those things. They've lasted me for so long, and I'd never go back to buds.

### I started streaming to make my videogame obsession productive.

I play games all the time and needed a way of justifying it to my girlfriend. My Twitch stuff is a separate entity to my radio work, and it can be difficult to translate to people that you can watch someone play games and be entertained, but that's definitely shifted during this period. I've been out there grinding pretty hard every Friday and Sunday. I've started a *Call of Duty: Warzone* tournament with my mates that we're building into something bigger. We've had Sigala, Frank Carter, Slowthai, Connor from the

Vamps... I really like the idea of bringing gaming and bands together with a bit of competition.

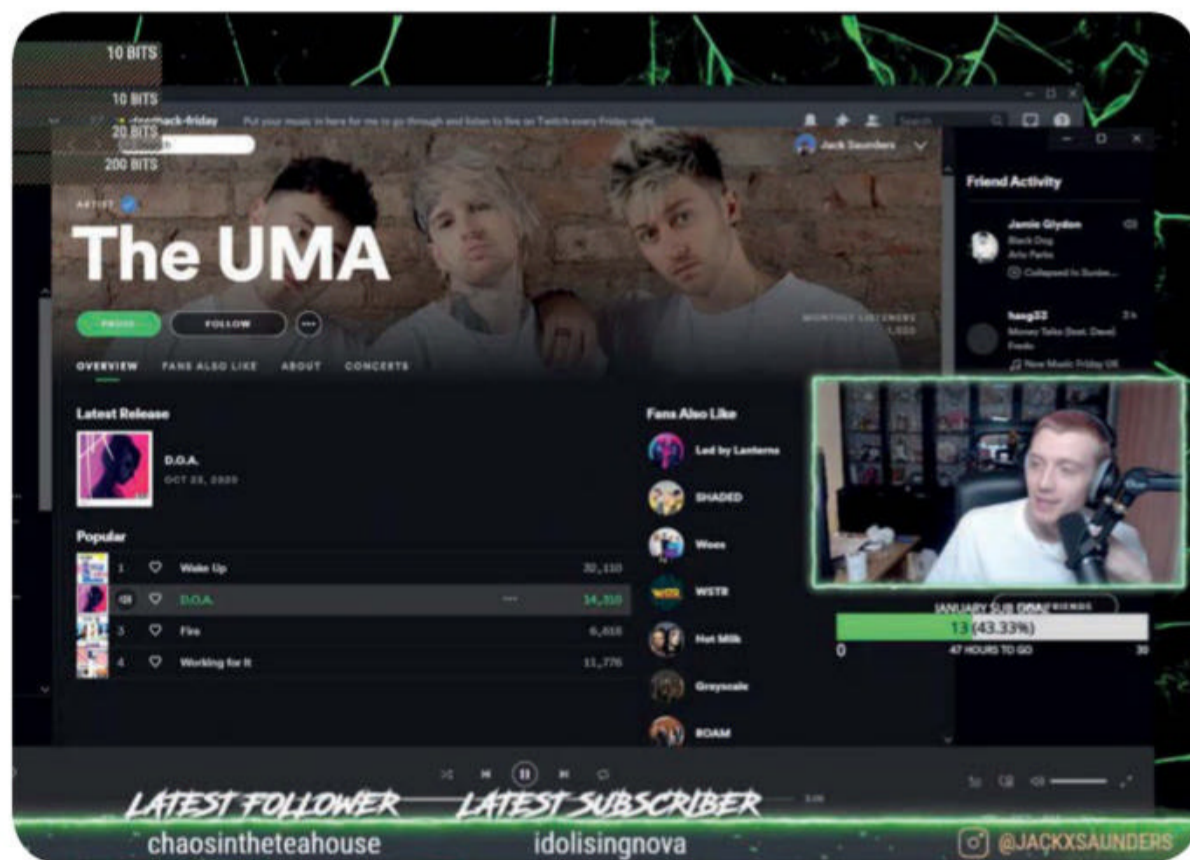
### Music and gaming go hand in hand, and never more so than now.

The interesting thing with *Warzone* is when you're riding around and they're playing tracks that Activision have licences for. There have been so many iconic game soundtracks, but there are more ideas to be thrown about in that area.

### I'm looking forward to seeing what gaming brings in 2021.

The last thing I tried to play was *Cyberpunk 2077* and it flunked on me hard, even after the update, so I'm leaving that one for a bit. I'm a big *Far Cry* guy so I can't wait for *Far Cry 6*, and I'll be getting stuck into *Hitman 3*. I might have to get on *Resident Evil Village* as well. I'm terrible with horror but I'll have to do that for the stream. Not for myself!

“I STARTED STREAMING BECAUSE I PLAY GAMES A LOT AND NEEDED A WAY OF JUSTIFYING IT TO MY GIRLFRIEND”



W I N



TOTAL PRIZE VALUE £1065



# WIN! AN ESSENTIAL STORAGE BUNDLE FROM WD\_BLACK

If you're a hardcore gamer, you'll know the burden of managing your game library – especially if you insist on owning every single *Final Fantasy* title... including the spinoffs... and the remakes. And with 4K play becoming the norm, investing in external storage for your collection has become a must. That's where the WD\_BLACK range comes in – and we've got a bundle of it worth over £1000 to give away.

Looking like Darth Vader's hand luggage and made up of a sleek gaming dock with 2TB of storage (the D50 Game Dock NVMe SSD, RRP £580), a PCIe® Gen3 add-in card (the AN1500 NVMe Add-in-Card, £229), a supercharged SSD with next-gen PCIe Gen4 technology (the SN850 NVMe SSD, £129) and a superfast portable game drive (the P50 SSD, £127), it'll let you stop worrying and keep gaming.

See right for how to win the lot – and check out [shop.westerndigital.com/en-gb/c/wd-black](http://shop.westerndigital.com/en-gb/c/wd-black) for more info on WD\_BLACK's performance storage.

## HOW TO ENTER

Fancy setting yourself up with the sort of storage suited to The Empire? Go to [stuff.tv/win](http://stuff.tv/win) and answer this question:

**IN FINAL FANTASY VII REMAKE, WHAT'S THE NAME OF THE ECO-TERRORIST ORGANISATION?**

- A... Extinction Rebellion
- B... The Judean People's Front
- C... Avalanche

**HURRY!**  
COMPETITION  
CLOSES  
25 MARCH  
2021

**Terms & conditions:** **1** Open to UK residents aged 18 or over. **2** Entries close 11.59pm, 25 Mar 2021. **3** Prizes are as stated. **4** Prizes are non-transferable. **5** Only one entry per person. **Full Ts & Cs:** [kelsey.co.uk/competition-terms-conditions/](http://kelsey.co.uk/competition-terms-conditions/) **Promoter:** Kelsey Publishing Ltd, The Granary, Downs Court, Yalding Hill, Yalding, Maidstone, Kent ME18 6AL.

# SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTION OFFER



Receive your first 3 issues for £5  
Continue to save 38%\* off the cover price  
Have each issue delivered directly to your door  
Never miss an issue of the world's greatest gadget mag

**SUBSCRIBE TODAY!**  
**ONLINE** [shop.kelsey.co.uk/STU0321](https://shop.kelsey.co.uk/STU0321)  
**CALL US** 01959 543747

Please quote STU0321

Hours: Mon-Fri 8am-6pm [calls charged at your standard network rate]

Offer ends 31 March 2021



## DIGITAL ONLY?

Pay just £37.99 for a 13-issue digital subscription!

Visit [shop.kelsey.co.uk/stuff](https://shop.kelsey.co.uk/stuff)

**Terms and conditions:** Offer available for UK direct debit customers only. You will pay £5 for your first 3 issues then continue to pay £19.99 every 6 months. For overseas rates please visit [shop.kelsey.co.uk/stuff](https://shop.kelsey.co.uk/stuff). Offer closes 31 March 2021. \*Full UK subscription rate for 13 issues is £64.87, USA & EU £78, ROW £85. Here at Kelsey Publishing we take your privacy seriously and will only use your personal information to administer your account and to provide the products and services you have requested from us. We will only contact you about our special offers via the preferences you have indicated, and you can update these at any time by emailing us at [subs@kelsey.co.uk](mailto:subs@kelsey.co.uk) or by calling us on 01959 543747.

# TOP TVs FOR 2021

# Stuff

GADGETS / GAMES / GEAR

## SIMPLIFY YOUR SMART HOME

How to put together the perfect connected pad

**+ GET SPEEDIER BROADBAND**



### GALAXY S21 ULTRA

Samsung's all-powerful shooter tested

### ALSO!

Anime earphones  
Compact TV soundbars  
Relaxation and wellness tech  
& 162 more gadgets rated



£4.99 March 2021 www.stuff.tv



Get Google going

Catch that courier

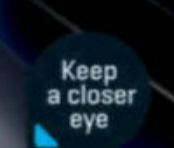
Ignite your internet



Let there be light



Ditch the door keys



Keep a closer eye

Be an anti-vac sucker

Set Siri tasks

Just **£1.66** an issue!

Plus enjoy **FREE** delivery

# TRY 3 ISSUES OF STUFF FOR JUST £5!

SUBSCRIBE TO STUFF AND RECEIVE YOUR FIRST 3 ISSUES FOR JUST £5! YOUR SUBSCRIPTION WILL THEN CONTINUE AT A RATE OF £19.99 EVERY 6 MONTHS, SAVING 38%\*.

# NOT JUST A SMART LOCK

# IT'S A BOLD SMART LOCK



## bold

With the Bold Smart Lock you take back control of your home. Simply walk up to the door and the magic happens. No need for backup keys as we completely redesigned the cylinder. Without a keyhole. That alone makes the Bold one of the safest smart locks out there.

**But there's more.** Locked yourself out? *No problem.* Phone has no power? *No problem.* Need to grant access to your house while you sip on a G&T on a Mediterranean beach? *No. Problem.*

[WWW.BOLDSMARTLOCK.COM](http://WWW.BOLDSMARTLOCK.COM)

---

Bold is easy to install yourself on every Euro Cylinder door lock. Check which size fits your door on our website.

Also available at our selected retailers



# The choc of the new

Available in five colours including this sweet-looking but *Profanisaurus*-sounding 'phantom brown', Samsung's new flagship phone is one bold design statement



from £1149 / stuff.tv/S21Ultra

**I**f the Samsung Galaxy S21 Ultra 5G were a burger, it would come with all the trimmings: cheese, bacon, the finest organic greens, flecks of gold leaf for effect, and the sweetest gherkins anywhere on the globe.

But while some can't stand pickles, there's nothing to dislike

about the extras loaded onto this particular whopper.

You get two zoom cameras, one of them with a frankly unbelievable-sounding 10x optical zoom, and an Exynos 2100 chipset that's a claimed 20% faster than its predecessor. The OLED screen has a variable refresh rate of up to 120Hz; and starting at £1149, it's still wildly

expensive but costs less than last year's S20 Ultra.

In some ways, Samsung's S21 line-up doesn't actually look as good as last year's. You'll pay almost £800 for a plastic S21, and the S21+ even has to go without curved glass.

So are smartphones, like life in general, getting worse by the year? The Galaxy S21 Ultra 5G

doesn't think so. It has one of the best curved screens in the world, and cameras that'll let you see what your neighbours are up to during lockdown.

There's only one real omission: a charger. But with Apple now no different, perhaps the Ultra has earned its chance to give the iPhone 12 Pro Max a run for its slightly excessive money.





**1 Kit got chunky**

At 227g this phone is hefty – and you will notice. Not everyone will fall for the camera housing either, which juts out like a piece of Brutalist architecture. But there is a heck of a lot going on behind that aluminium stage – as you'll find out in the panel opposite.

**2 Galaxy ripples**

Yes, Samsung has made a phone that doesn't look boring. This is its big-boy toy for adults, using top-quality curved Gorilla Glass Victus and gloss-painted aluminium, and there's another hidden feature: an S-Pen stylus nabbed from its Note models.

**3 Pearly wurly**

The 6.8in OLED is an ultra-sharp 1440p screen with fantastic colour depth, killer contrast and 1500-nit brightness to shrug off sunny days. And this 120Hz display is adaptive, so it chooses how often the image refreshes on the fly to save battery.

**4 Double techer**

In Europe we get an Exynos 2100 processor. The lucky folks in the US and China get a Snapdragon 888, which has more graphical grunt. Oh well – our S21 Ultra 5G still runs like a dream, with masses of RAM and storage. *Fortnite* even runs in 90fps mode.

**5 Workish delight**

Our initial worry was battery life, but the 5000mAh cell lasts a solid day unless you go really hard at 120Hz. Samsung's chip seems more efficient than the last one, but the Oppo Find X2 Pro, iPhone 12 Pro Max and Huawei P40 Pro still last longer.

**24 hours with the Galaxy S21 Ultra 5G**

- Good
- Meh
- Evil



# WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

# AVAXHOME-

the biggest Internet portal,  
providing you various content:  
brand new books, trending movies,  
fresh magazines, hot games,  
recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price

Cheap constant access to piping hot media

Protect your downloadings from Big brother

Safer, than torrent-trackers

18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages

Brand new content

One site



# AVXLIVE . ICU

AvaxHome - Your End Place

We have everything for all of your needs. Just open <https://avxlive.icu>



### Techspecs

**Display** 6.8in 3200x1440 120Hz AMOLED  
**Processor** Exynos 2100 **RAM** 12/16GB  
**Storage** 128/256/512GB **OS** Android 11  
**Cameras** 108MP+12MP+10MP+10MP rear, 40MP front **Battery** 5000mAh  
**Dimensions** 165x76x8.9mm, 227g

### Toughie crisp

From dreamy landscapes to sensuous shopping trolleys, this camera array is ridiculously capable



#### Crunchie

Samsung's 108MP main sensor spits out clean and contrasty 12MP images that amp up the colour. The main change here is HDR bringing out shadowy detail without blowing the highlights.



#### Fudge

This thing almost never takes a dull-looking photo, but you do get some areas of softness. Well, this is still a phone sensor, and one with teeny-tiny sensor pixels and only OK native dynamic range.



#### Smart eyes

You get a 10MP 3x zoom and a 10MP 10x zoom. That's optical, not the 'fake' hybrid zoom of the standard S21. At 15x zoom we were bowled over by the complex patterns captured in a subject's iris.



#### Spreado

The ultrawide camera wipes the floor with the iPhone 12 Pro Max. It might just be the best ultrawide on any phone right now. It's great for macro shots too – and so is the main camera.

3

- 8K video at 24fps is stable, smooth and usable, but 4K at 60fps is better.
- Single Take mode shoots fun stills and video while you move about. Draft fun.
- Using a battery-testing app, Stamina is 5% better than the Note 20 Ultra.
- Samsung is way behind OnePlus and Oppo on charging times...
- ...unless you spend £40 on an adapter to get the full 45W charge rate.

14hrs 15hrs 20hrs 22hrs 24hrs



Samsung has stripped back some parts of the S21 range, but the Ultra gets away with just one cut: the charger. Yes, we also get a Samsung CPU, not the Snapdragon we'd prefer, but it's easier on the battery anyway. There's one killer reason to buy this model, though: the most versatile phone camera for stills that we've ever used. @wwwdotandrew

### STUFF SAYS ★★★★★

Earns its 'Ultra' name owing to an incredible camera array capturing moments other phones will miss

# The alternatives: 3 more big-screen blowers

Like the S21 Ultra, these phones take the flagship experience to the extreme



BEST FOR  
PHOTO  
TRICKS



BEST FOR  
SAVING  
DOSH



BEST FOR  
STYLE &  
SPECS

## Apple iPhone 12 Pro Max

from £1099 / [apple.com](http://apple.com)

### What's the story?

For the most part, the iPhone 12 Pro Max matches the iPhone 12 Pro: A14 Bionic chip, 6GB of RAM, 5G. Where it differs is in its outsize dimensions, larger OLED display and superior camera system that should show Apple's ProRAW photo format in the best light.

### Is it any good?

There's no doubt the iPhone 12 Pro Max is a quality iPhone – on paper, the best Apple's ever made. On that basis, it might be the iPhone you want... but you have to decide whether it's the iPhone you need. That will hinge on your level of comfort with a device this size and your desire for its deeply impressive camera system. Anyway, as an upgrade from an iPhone XS Max or older, it'll have you grinning all day.

### KEY SPECS

**Display** 6.7in 2778x1284 OLED  
**Processor** A14 Bionic **RAM** 6GB  
**Cameras** 12+12+12MP rear, 12MP front  
**Battery** 3687mAh  
**Dimensions** 161x78x7.4mm, 228g

Stuff says ★★★★★

The only choice if you want to fully Max your iPhone experience

## OnePlus 8 Pro

£799 / [oneplus.com](http://oneplus.com)

### What's the story?

The 8 Pro may not be the hottest deal OnePlus has ever put out, but with 5G on board, a top display and decent spec sheet, it's an attractively priced flagship that should still seem pretty fresh in three years' time. Provided you aren't desperate for great zoom, you get a solid camera upgrade over the standard 8 plus wireless charging and water-resistance.

### Is it any good?

OnePlus has got itself over an awkward hump. Yes, you're paying more than you might be used to for the brand, but the 120Hz 1440p display and 5G give it more longevity. Still, as OnePlus's prices rise, we have to be more critical about the bad bits: rivals last longer between charges and are better at taking photos of pets, which these days is more important than being able to make phone calls.

### KEY SPECS

**Display** 6.78in 3168x1440 OLED  
**Processor** Snapdragon 865 **RAM** 12GB  
**Cameras** 48+48+8MP rear, 16MP front  
**Battery** 4510mAh  
**Dimensions** 165x74x8.5mm, 199g

Stuff says ★★★★★☆

The cameras are merely decent, but this is a sensible big-screen 5G buy

## Oppo Find X2 Pro

from £900 / [oppo.com](http://oppo.com)

### What's the story?

This is the fanciest phone Oppo has ever made. It's brilliant and bold, wrapped in ceramic or vegan leather, and now costs around £250 less than the Samsung S21 Ultra. With a 120Hz display, a clever camera system and features like 65W fast charging, it absolutely belongs in the same discussion as the top-end Androids and Apples of this world.

### Is it any good?

This Oppo is as good as any flagship phone out there. It looks great, feels incredibly slick thanks to the 1440p 120Hz screen and has a camera that lets you shoot close-ups of dogs without stalking them. Oppo is a household name in India and China; it remains a bit 'cult' here, but this is undoubtedly one of the best Android options around – even if the software needs tightening in a few areas.

### KEY SPECS

**Display** 6.7in 3168x1440 AMOLED  
**Processor** Snapdragon 865 **RAM** 12GB  
**Cameras** 48+13+48MP rear, 32MP front  
**Battery** 4260mAh  
**Dimensions** 165x74x9.5mm, 200g

Stuff says ★★★★★

Still one of the best Android phones there is – and now much cheaper



EV of the Year  
Honda e

**Listening** to the name of your new car being called out at an awards show is something any car manufacturer would enjoy.

But at Honda,  
we don't just listen  
to enjoyable things.  
We listen to scary things.  
Ideas. Big bold ones,  
that come out of nowhere  
and keep us up at night,  
because they push boundaries.

It's ideas like these that made the  
new Honda e, a small electric city car.

And all our mainstream cars,  
from 2022, hybrid or electric.

Hear more at [honda.co.uk/honda-e](https://honda.co.uk/honda-e)



LAIID-BACK LISTENERS



**The wall warbler**  
Zwitscherbox

Stick the motion-sensitive Zwitscherbox on your wall and you'll hear two minutes of blissful Black Forest birdsong whenever you go past. Sure, it's not quite the same as a long walk in the woods, but it might just stop you going cuckoo, and it comes in a diverse choice of colours.

from €49 / [zwitscherbox.com](http://zwitscherbox.com)



**The nocturnal nuzzler**  
Soundasleep Speaker Pillow

Pillow noise will be nothing new if you snooze beside a snorer; but if you want a softer soundtrack to your dreams, rest your head on this. Hidden beneath the quilted microfibre is a Bluetooth speaker: play an audiobook or a soothing playlist, or use the app for more advanced options.

£40 / [soundasleeppillow.co.uk](http://soundasleeppillow.co.uk)



**The burring boulder**  
Kikkerland Sound Pebble

The right amount of ambient noise can aid relaxation and soothe your subconscious.

This sound-emitting pebble is way more melodious than a real rock, playing six natural sounds on a loop for constant calm.

Think falling rain, ocean waves or the comforting crackle of a campfire.

€28 / [kikkerlandeu.com](http://kikkerlandeu.com)

SOOTHING SNIFFERS



**The fragrant filterer**  
Moodo Air

Address aromatic catastrophes with this mix-and-match diffuser and air purifier: pick a pack of recyclable pods, pop them in the top then tweak the blend. You can use the partner app to adjust the potency, or add the Air to your smart home setup and have Alexa mix fragrance cocktails for you.

\$165 / [moodo.co](http://moodo.co)



Home doesn't have to feel like prison (well, unless you're in prison) – **Chris Rowlands** finds gadgets to combat lockdown cabin fever



**The nastiness neutraliser**  
Blue Pure 411

Pollutants don't make for a peaceful pad.

Hit the button on the Pure 411 and its three-layer system will filter the air in a 15m<sup>2</sup> room every 12 minutes, tackling all manner of floating evils from household odours to pet hair. The fabric pre-filter is available in a range of colours to match your chillout zone.

£135 / [blueair.com](http://blueair.com)

WEARABLE WONDERS



**The holistic head hugger**  
Muse S

A headband that tracks brain activity in real time, this meditation assistant encourages focus by means of background sound, steering your brain away from distractions with rushing rain and rewarding calm with soothing ambience. It'll also monitor your heart rate, breath, posture and sleep.

£330 / [choosemuse.com](http://choosemuse.com)



**The tension-tasting ticker**  
Fitbit Sense

The Sense is designed to manage stress, monitor your body's long-term trends and find calm in all the chaos. It harbours a host of health-tracking tools, including one-tap breathing exercises and an app that logs electrodermal activity to illustrate the effects a few quiet moments can have.

£300 / [fitbit.com](http://fitbit.com)



**The cute canal cuddlers**  
Flare Audio Calmer

Enhance your ear canals with these clever inserts. Rather than blocking noise out, the Calmer uses a soft silicone waveguide to change how vibrations travel through the ear, subtly improving the quality of the sound you hear by filtering out the harsh frequencies known to cause stress.

£20 / [flareaudio.com](http://flareaudio.com)

## HOW TO DECIDE

### 1 Identify your trigger

Start by assessing what sets off your stress. Perhaps it's noisy neighbours, a stench in the air or anxiety brought on by work – or maybe you just need to switch off from the real world.



### 2 Tech might not help

If too much technology and an addiction to your smartphone is causing you to prang out, another gadget might not be the answer, especially if it means an extra screen or app.

**STILL NOT  
RELAXED  
ENOUGH?**  
Sensate review  
p75

### **The blissful breather** **Air Things House Kit**

This triple shot of pollution-taming intelligence includes two separate sensors and a hub to monitor everything from temperature and humidity to VOCs (volatile organic compounds) and even the risk of mould. You can dissect the data any time and from anywhere, while comprehensively connected smarts mean it'll integrate with Alexa, Google Assistant and IFTTT, so you can get the place cleaned up before you even arrive home.

£269 / [airthings.com](https://airthings.com)

### **3 Take a deep breath**

Breathing exercises are probably the easiest way to balance mind, body and soul. Soothing sounds, good-quality audio and meditation tools can really help here.



### **4 Air your grievances**

If it's air quality causing issues, the Homes Act requires landlords to consider whether tenants' indoor air is safe. This includes various gases plus mould and excess cold or heat.



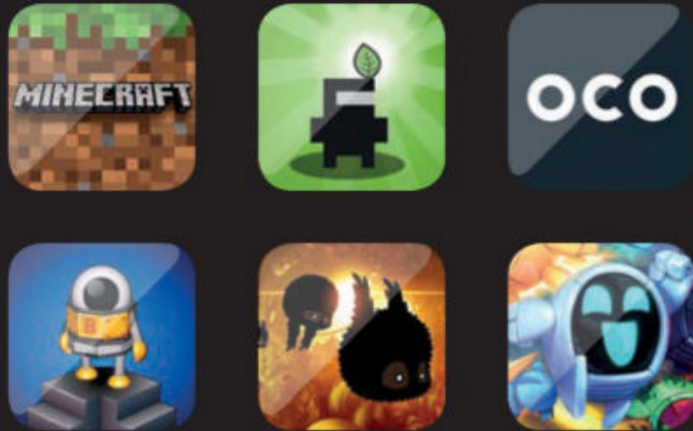


● **Minecraft**

We'd be remiss if we didn't kick off this round-up with Mojang's iconic sandbox effort. Immerse yourself in its creative mode and you can build anything you can think of – as long as it can be crafted out of blocks. Depending on your bent, you can opt to collaborate in multiplayer or get your jollies by kicking seven shades out of hostile mobs. Just don't play too long or you'll get square eyes.

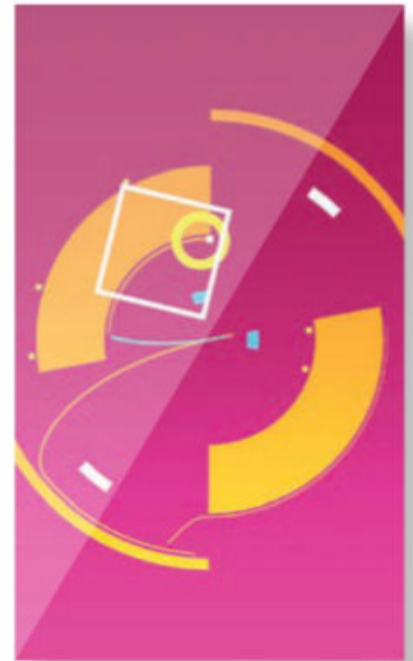
£6.49 / Android • £6.99 / iOS

# Mini meme



# TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL(S)

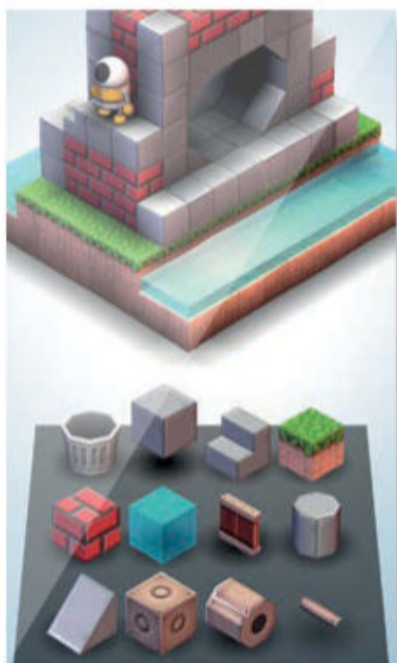
Want a bit more 'you' in your mobile games, beyond picking an avatar with green hair? You can use level editors to bend these six titles to your will...



● **OCO**

This one-thumb platformer pits you against rotating levels, where you must find the most efficient path to scooping up the gold blocks. The mix of minimalist visuals and electronic music affords *OCO* a futuristic edge, and its level editor is suitably sleek: you add platforms and objects by tapping spaces on a circular grid. When you're happy with your work, share it so others can give it a spin.

£free / Android, iOS



● **Mekomama**

Whoops, a tiny cycloptic robot has crashed on a mini-diorama. The only means of escape is by figuring out how to reach the exit – and then 49 more. This is achieved by rotating the scene and manipulating structures. The editor then lets you craft your own scenes, which – despite simple mechanics – can become highly involved. Creator Martin Magni's *Fancade* takes such blocky creativity even further.

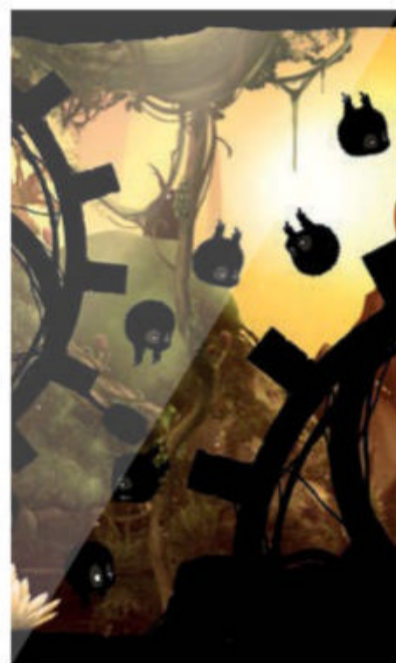
£free / Android, iOS



● **Pico Hero**

An evil type has kidnapped all of Pico's animal friends... and he's none too pleased about it. What follows is an overhead arcade effort, with Pico traversing blocky terrain and automatically shooting at foes when they're nearby. This all lends itself nicely to making your own level cards, plopping down bits of land, water, buildings, and the all-important pickups Pico can grab to get extra-killy.

£free / Android, iOS



● **Badland**

Even after eight years, this single-thumb survival game remains eye-popping and grin-inducing. You help a flapping critter traverse a terrifying forest full of deadly contraptions (even the 'power-ups' lurking in the undergrowth are often problems to contend with); and you can make its job even harder with a full-featured level editor that the game's creators reportedly used themselves.

£free / Android • 79p / iOS



● **Levelhead**

Think couriers are unreliable? Things are worse in the future, where packages arrive at light-speed but atomise their surroundings. The solution is to ship things most of the way there and have a robot deal with the final leg. Your task is to train that robot via side-scrolling platform antics; level design is baked into the plot and the editor is a joy to use. Unlike some couriers, this one delivers.

£5.99 / Android • £6.99 / iOS

RAZER™  
ORNATA<sup>V2</sup>



## THE HYBRID ADVANTAGE

Returning with Razer Hybrid Mecha-Membrane Technology, the **Razer Ornata V2** merges the benefits of membrane keys and mechanical switches for the best of both worlds. Powered by Razer Chroma RGB for customizable style and upgraded with a multi-function digital wheel and media keys for even more control.

- Razer Hybrid Mecha-Membrane Technology for clicky keystrokes with a soft, cushioned touch
- Multi-function Digital Wheel and Media Keys for convenient control
- Powered by Razer Chroma RGB for customizable lighting and greater game immersion

[razer.com](https://www.razer.com)

Copyright © 2020 Razer Inc. All rights reserved. Actual product may differ from pictures. Information correct at time of printing.



# LET'S PLAY, HOUSE

Feeling a bit overwhelmed by the unnecessarily complicated 'smart home'? Let *Stuff* simplify things with our up-to-date guide to the best products, platforms and broadband advice for joining the dots of your connected abode

[ Words Jack Parsons, James Day ]

## Arlo Essential Video Doorbell Wire-Free

£179 / arlo.com



**Video doorbells are like embarrassing bladder**

**conditions: we'll probably all have one eventually.**

Operating over your home's Wi-Fi, they call your smartphone when someone rings the bell so you can see them on screen and have a two-way conversation, even if you're not in; and they send alerts when they detect movement.

The appeal is obvious, in terms of both security (hey, there's someone dodgy in the garden!) and convenience (hey, a courier's here but I can't get to the door because of

my embarrassing bladder condition!). So, with the promise of hassle-free installation plus high-def video with HDR and night vision, this Arlo Essential might live up to its name.

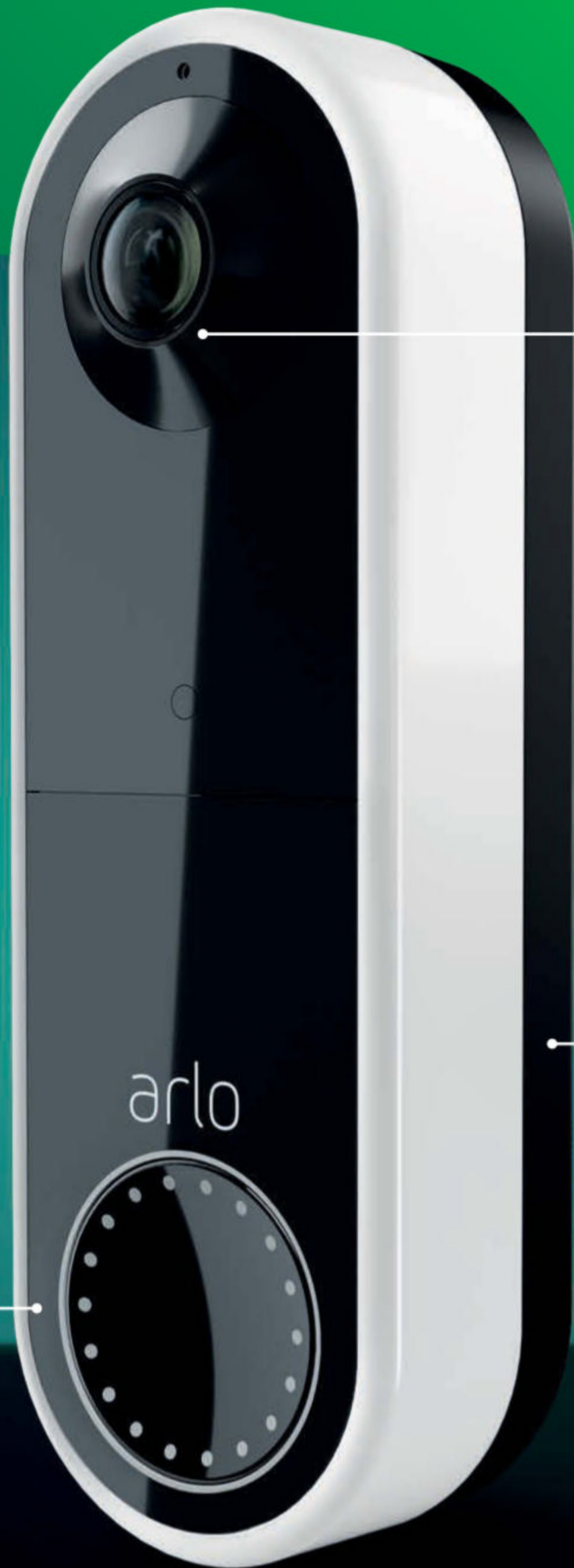
### TALL OR NOTHING

This is a handsome and weatherproof rival to Ring and Nest, but stands out with a 180° diagonal field of view so it won't miss lanky people or parcels plonked on the doorstep. It scores highly for ease of installation and use, and the advantages over an old-fashioned ding-a-ling are clear, even if the image quality isn't always: in theory the resolution

is better than HD, but faces are nowhere near as sharp as that.

The real question is about value. Once your free trial runs out, Arlo Smart costs £2.49 a month – on a par with Amazon's Ring Protect Plan (£2.50/m) and half of Google's Nest Aware service (£5/m). The three vary in terms of features, but Arlo's is just about essential to make the device worth owning: without it, you lose the all-important activity zones for motion detection. But if you can spare 30 quid a year, this might just be where the reign of your dirty old bell ends.

**STUFF SAYS** Like having an eagle-eyed bouncer at your front door 24/7 – as long as you keep subscribing ★★★★★



**No fox given**

A ring of white LEDs around the button makes it clear where people have to press. There's also a siren, activated from the 'motion alert' notification panel, for scaring off intruders and randy foxes.

**Nobody move**

We see no reason to change the default maximum resolution of 1536x1536; and while the smartphone alerts can be a touch laggy at times, at least the motion detection definitely works.

**No great shock**

As long as you're replacing a standard mains-wired doorbell, the DIY bit is easy (and all detailed in the Arlo app). Attach the two wires, connect to your Wi-Fi and you're pretty much there.

**Button up**

Most of the time you'll interact with the Echo using your voice, but it has physical buttons on top as well: two to adjust the volume, one to get Alexa's attention and another to mute the mics.

**Clean up**

The latest Echo is made from 100% recycled fabric and aluminium components plus 50% recycled plastic. It also has a new low-power mode, which saves your electricity bill as well as the planet.

**Smarten up**

Amazon's AZ1 Neural Edge processor means voice commands are handled on-device rather than in the cloud. This makes speech recognition up to twice as fast as before.

# SPEAK UP!

The latest smart speakers have all had a style upgrade, while adding new functionality to command your high-tech habitat

## Amazon Echo (4th Gen)

£70 / [amazon.co.uk](https://amazon.co.uk)

**A** mazon has swapped the old 'Pringles tube' trim for a new spherical style. This means the latest Echo looks like a sci-fi crystal ball – especially as it now illuminates from underneath, giving it a vaguely ethereal feel when you ask Alexa a question.

But the real magic is inside: the Echo now comes with a Zigbee smart hub. This means you can hook up smart devices such as Philips Hue lightbulbs without having to install a separate bridge, which makes using the speaker with smart

home tech even easier than it was already – ideal if you just want a simple plug-and-play setup.

You're also able to take greater control of your devices with Amazon's companion app. The new Routines automation feature lets you schedule different actions, such as your office lights turning off when it's time to stop working. Handy. This builds on top of the 100,000 third-party Skills that you can download to really power up what Alexa can do.

### THERE GOES THE SPHERE

Despite what its orb-like appearance suggests, the

Echo's speakers aren't omnidirectional – but that's not really an issue if you plan to put it in the corner of a room anyway. Treble trouble does mean audiophiles who demand hi-fi quality might prefer the Echo Studio or Sonos One; but in terms of sound per pound, the 3in woofer and dual tweeters with Dolby Audio are hard to beat. Its balls-out bass also banishes the biggest weakness of the old cylindrical design.

With added smarts and superior sound, this Echo easily outperforms its pricetag and ensures that Alexa remains our go-to robo-assistant.

**STUFF SAYS** The latest upgrade to Amazon's standard Echo has given it better sound and better smarts ★★★★★

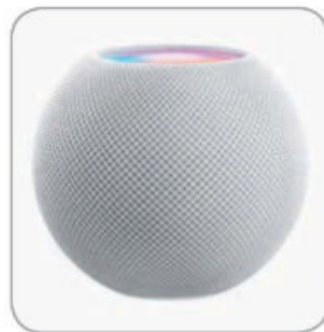
GOOGLE  
NEST AUDIO  
£90 / [store.google.com](https://store.google.com)

The Google Home's iconic coffee-cup design is gone, replaced by a minimalist fabric wraparound to effortlessly blend in with your decor. The 75mm woofer and 19mm tweeter offer a fuller sound than the old speaker, though we'd still only recommend it for casual listening, while built-in Chromecast means you can use it to voice-control your TV as long as it's compatible.

**Stuff says** ★★★★★☆



### ALTERNATIVELY...



#### Apple HomePod Mini

Yep, Apple's budget smart speaker also has a bulbous design. Siri's smarts have been upgraded too, but still aren't as fully featured as those of Alexa or Google Assistant. But the HomePod Mini does manage to squeeze a mighty rich sound into such a small unit; and if you're fully embedded in the Apple ecosystem, it's a fun screen-free extension. **£99 / [apple.com](https://apple.com)**



#### JBL Link Portable

Take your smart home beyond your four walls: one of the few truly wireless smart speakers, the Link Portable doesn't just support Wi-Fi and Bluetooth – it also has an eight-hour battery. That's more than enough time to listen to music and chat with Google Assistant in your garden. And it's fully waterproof, so you can enjoy it come rain or shine. **£130 / [uk.jbl.com](https://uk.jbl.com)**



#### Facebook Portal+

With video-calling the new normal, Facebook's Portal range offers a quick and easy way to connect with friends and family. It offers FaceTime-beating functionality, with a wide-angle lens that can fit a whole household in the frame, plus Alexa. This very pricey model comes with a rotating HD screen and booming 4in woofer. **£269 / [portal.facebook.com](https://portal.facebook.com)**



#### Sonos One

If you care what your smart speaker actually sounds like, this is the One for you. It offers audio with plenty of depth and vibrancy, and you can wirelessly link two together for stereo sound or use it to voice-control your multiroom speaker setup. Plus it has Alexa and Google Assistant built in, so will play well with whichever you prefer. **£199 / [sonos.com](https://sonos.com)**

# OK GOOGLE!

Feather your Nest with these goodies to harness the search giant's data-crunching genius around the house

## NOW ADD THESE...



### Wyze Cam v3

Successor to the hugely popular Wyze Cam v2, this one has the same 1080p resolution and two-way audio but gets a refreshed design with extreme weather protection in case you stick it outside, and twice as many infrared LEDs to improve its night vision. A materials shortage means demand is outstripping supply, so keep an eye out for stock. **\$24 / wyze.com**



### Chromecast with Google TV

While you can still 'cast' apps from your phone with the new Chromecast, you can also choose what to watch from the new Google TV interface. This displays everything on Netflix, iPlayer and more in one place. There's also a remote, while the Google Assistant button lets you dim the lights without getting off the sofa. **£60 / store.google.com**



### LIFX Clean

This smart bulb offers mood lighting that's peak pandemic. With a few words to your voice assistant, you can have it blast your room with HEV (high energy visible) light, which kills nasties such as E.Coli. So without lifting a finger you can disinfect every surface and object. Currently only in the US, it's awaiting approval over here. **\$70 / lifx.com**



### Nest Thermostat E

Combining minimalist style and AI, the Nest Learning Thermostat has long set the bar for smart heating. But it's expensive. While the E is only £20 cheaper, you save a lot more by not needing expert installation. Some features are missing, but you can tweak the temperature from your phone and it will still auto-adjust depending on whether anyone's in. **£199 / store.google.com**

## Samsung Family Hub

from £2699 / [samsung.com](http://samsung.com)

**W**hen you're cooking, you need appliances that serve a practical purpose. Naff novelties are banished to the back of the cupboard.

So it was no surprise that Samsung got a frosty reception when it first slapped a 21.5in tablet on a fridge-freezer, and one that continues to be a tad glitchy for its hefty price (better hold onto those warranty details). But Samsung continues to tinker with the Family Hub offering... and it's giving us food for thought.

This killer chiller comes enhanced with AI, so it

was able to tell us not only what food we had, but how much we had left and when it was due to expire. It helped us manage meal prep too – from a one-off dish to a week's worth of grub. It even considered our dietary needs (we're a fussy bunch) and how many guests were coming to dinner (er, none, obviously). And on the occasions we were out of ingredients, it sent us a shopping list.

### WHISPER TO ICE CREAM

Not convinced? In April, Family Hub is getting the coolest system update yet. For one thing, you'll no longer have to rely only

on Samsung's vanilla virtual assistant Bixby. You'll be able to ask "OK Google, what's inside the fridge?" instead.

This is part of a wider effort to integrate Family Hub with more smart devices. So as well as controlling a thousand SmartThings-compatible devices from the fridge's touchscreen, you'll be able to check your Nest thermostat, cameras and video doorbell too. The AI will also turn off gadgets if you're not using them.

Bringing the best of both ecosystems together could turn the connected kitchen into the heart of your smart home.

**STUFF SAYS** The most ridiculous fridge around is getting smarter all the time – it's what your yoghurt deserves ★★★★★☆

### GOOGLE NEST HUB MAX

Controlling your home is just the start of what you can do with this 10in smart screen. You can also display your favourite Google Photos around the house, watch Netflix in HD or listen to YouTube Music in stereo. But the really clever tech here is the camera. It can identify faces, so only you can see your personal messages and notifications; and it detects motion, so can watch out for burglars. **£219 / store.google.com**



**Bacon plans for Nigel**

Why would you want to cover this sleek silver finish with novelty magnets and kids' drawings? Instead, the giant HD touchscreen lets you display photos, explore your family's schedule and more.



**Eyes on the pies**

Three cameras let you see inside without opening the door, on either the fridge's display or your phone. Perfect for when we were at the shops and unsure if we needed more milk.

**Cheese, cheese, cheese let me get what I want**

This 'American-style' version of Samsung's fridge-freezer can hold a mighty 597 litres of food; twin coolers keep it fresh for twice as long.



**Dust like starting over**

The iRobot i3+ automatically recharges itself when juice is running low – and as soon as it's ready to roll again, it'll return to the place where it left off to finish your scheduled clean.



**Dust one night**

Unlike other iRobot droids, the i3+ uses sensors rather than a camera to navigate. So you can set it to clean up when the lights are out, confident that it won't slurp up your hamster.



**Dust like heaven**

"Alexa, tell Roomba to start vacuuming" is one of those phrases that'll come back to haunt us once the androids rise up, but for now the voice command is the pinnacle of smart home luxury.

# ALEXA!

Prime picks for the queen of the Amazon to boss around and make your life easier – from bedroom floor to kitchen hob

## iRobot Roomba i3+

£700 / [irobot.co.uk](http://irobot.co.uk)

**R**obot vacuum cleaners are one of those gadgets that will never stop feeling futuristic. And iRobot makes some of the best of them.

The Roomba i3+ costs a lot more than your average Henry, but it has premium features that were up to now only available in the even pricier Roomba i7+ and S9+ models.

This includes Clean Base Automatic Dirt Disposal, which meant our droid not only cleaned after us, but after itself too. It emptied weeks' worth of dirt and debris into the Clean Base (which

doubles as the charging station) unaided, saving us from frequent visits to the bin. And if that wasn't enough, it even captured waste in AllergenLock bags that block 99% of pollen and mould from getting up your nose.

### HOME SWEEP HOME

Like the Terminator of tidying up, the i3+ systematically sweeps your home. It uses sensors to feel its way around while avoiding furniture that it might get stuck under – and while using three different brushes to loosen and lift and dirt from every crevice, even having

a good old scrape at the skirting boards.

As well as taking orders from Alexa, the i3+ can team up with iRobot's Braava Jet M6 to vacuum then mop in a coordinated effort. And like all good servants, it'll learn your habits and offer up schedules to suit you. It'll even suggest an extra clean when your area's pollen count is high or during your pet's shedding season.

The only thing is, for another hundred quid you could pick up a Dyson 360 Heurist... so perhaps it comes down to your preferred smart home platform.

**STUFF SAYS** The closest rival to Dyson's robo-vac offers smart features that its rival can't always match ★★★★★☆

## RING VIDEO DOORBELL 3

A strong alternative to the Arlo on p40 at the exact same price, Ring's latest Video Doorbell lets you see, hear and speak to visitors in 1080p HD. And as Ring is owned by Amazon, it's no surprise it gets on with Alexa: your Echo can chime when you have guests, you can see camera footage on your Echo Show or Fire TV, and you can set lights to come on when the Ring detects movement at night.

£179 / [ring.com](http://ring.com)



## NOW ADD THESE...



### Philips Hue White and Colour Ambiance Starter Kit

The brightest star in smart lighting remains Hue. The bulbs are expensive, but offer the richest range of tweaking tools... and now you can control them via Bluetooth. To use them with other smart home tech you'll need a Zigbee bridge, but the Starter Kit includes one – or you could use the new Echo on p42. **£120 / [philips-hue.com](http://philips-hue.com)**



### Amazon Fire TV Cube

Reinventing the remote control, this second-gen set-top box makes home entertainment hands-free. So Alexa can turn your telly on and off, control the volume and go to specific shows – whether they're on regular TV or streaming. An ultra-powerful chip means Alexa is quick to flick channels and ensures the Cube can handle 4K HDR content. **£110 / [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)**



### Anova Culinary Precision Cooker

Sealing food in a bag, dropping it in hot water and hoping for the best is no way to guarantee a good meal. But precisely controlling the time and temperature with this improved version of Anova's smart *sous vide* stick, on the other hand, definitely is – especially when you can bark orders at your virtual sous-chef. **£199 / [anovaculinary.com](http://anovaculinary.com)**



### TP-Link Kasa Smart Wi-Fi Plug Slim

You could buy a connected kettle that boils a brew with a tap of an app... or you could save your money and use the Kasa smart plug to upgrade your existing appliances instead. As well as being low-cost and compact, it's very quick to respond to Alexa voice commands. So you won't have to wait long for that cuppa. **£12 / [tp-link.com](http://tp-link.com)**

# HEY SIRI!

If you want an iHome, Apple's array of smart appliances is big on privacy protection and small in number... but growing fast

## NOW ADD THESE...



### August Wi-Fi Smart Lock

Perhaps the biggest compliment we can pay August's Wi-Fi Lock is that it doesn't look like a lock. Sleek and secure, it could have been made by Apple. You can remotely bolt the door, grant virtual guest keys and find out who's coming and going... or ask Siri to do it. And it works over Wi-Fi with no bridge required.

£250 / [august.com](http://august.com)



### Netatmo Weather Station

Look, we're all spending a lot more time at home right now. So who needs a weather forecast that extends beyond the front garden? This twin-sensor setup tracks air quality, temperature, humidity and barometric pressure indoors and out. And it'll alert you when it's going to rain, just in time for you to bring the washing in.

£150 / [netatmo.com](http://netatmo.com)



### Abode Smart Security Kit

This DIY alarm system is the ultimate burglar-beater. The kit includes a motion detector, door and window sensors and a 93dB siren to scare off prowlers... plus a keyfob that lets you remotely turn it on and off. The system works with loads of other HomeKit, Zigbee and Z-Wave gadgets for tailor-made home security.

£276 / [goabode.co.uk](http://goabode.co.uk)



### Elgato Eve Motion

Elgato is on a mission. Its Eve range is hugely extending Siri's limited smart home reach: this weatherproof, wireless movement sensor can be used to trigger Homekit-compatible lights, security cameras and more. Best of all, the motion detector's sensitivity can be adjusted so pets and children don't always set it off.

£45 / [evehome.com](http://evehome.com)

## Apple TV 4K

from £179 / [apple.com](http://apple.com)

**T**he Apple TV 4K... really? You might be sceptical seeing this four-year-old set-top box in a roundup of cutting-edge gadgets. But the answer is yes... emphatically so.

Apple has splurged on a range of new services recently – so as well as having a one-stop shop for all your favourite apps from iPlayer to YouTube, and the benefits of AirPlay and screen-sharing from Apple devices, you can now watch Apple TV+ too. Its original programmes may be a bit of a mixed bag, but they're always cinema-quality with 4K

HDR visuals and Dolby Atmos sound.

Then there's Apple Arcade, for a new way to play games online, while Fitness+ offers guided home workouts. Though these services cost extra, they're all great reasons to embrace this smart entertainment hub.

### GET RIGHT WITH POD

Apple has also continued to improve the Apple TV 4K experience in every way. It connects with the new HomePod Mini and the original HomePod so you can enjoy stereo or Dolby Atmos surround sound. And as well as being able to control your

garage door with a tap of the Apple TV remote, you can view a feed from your video doorbell on your telly screen.

That's not to say this device isn't starting to show some signs of age. Its processor seems a little sluggish now, while new port standards like HDMI 2.1 mean it's fallen out of sync with the next generation of TVs.

But the chances are, unless you're an avid cinephile or gamer obsessed with picture quality, you've only just upgraded to 4K anyway... meaning most of us are in line with Apple's old but forward-thinking design.

**STUFF SAYS** If you're a real movie addict, the Apple TV 4K could be the (pricey) answer to your dreams ★★★★★☆

### NANOLEAF A19 SMART BULB

Nanoleaf's new Essentials range offers fully featured smart lighting at half the usual price. The A19 Smart Bulb can beam brilliant white and a kaleidoscope of colours – but it's Circadian Lighting tech can also complement the natural light, helping you sleep better. Like the HomePod Mini, it also uses the Thread mesh network to extend your control around the house and speed up connectivity.

£18 / [nanoleaf.me](http://nanoleaf.me)



**The Siri of everything**

With just a tap of the Siri Remote, you can summon the digital genie to do your bidding. Just ask Siri for a film, show, genre, actor or song you love and Apple's assistant will find it.

**Siri love songs**

Whether it's party time or quiet time, Apple TV 4K's got you covered. It lets you control every speaker you own from one place or silently send TV audio to your AirPods instead.

**Tales of the Siri**

Remember when people bought films? If you've loads stored in your iTunes library, this is the best way to watch them. Apple will even upgrade them all to 4K HDR free of charge, where available.



**Light touch**

As well as auto-adjusting and app control, the lamp has subtle slide controls on the top that let you tweak the brightness and colour temperature of its three warm and three cool LEDs.

**Light relief**

If you really want to set the mood, the head can be twisted all the way round to point back down the stem – clicking into place magnetically – so a cosy glow shines out of the holes.

**Lighten your wallet**

Dyson's energy-efficient design means the Morph should last 60 years. Just as well when the floor-standing version costs £650 – surely be the most expensive lamp you'll ever buy.

# & THE REST

Go beyond the 'big three' and you'll discover a whole host of smart tech players ready to meet your needs at any price point

## Dyson Lightcycle Morph

£500 / [dyson.co.uk](http://dyson.co.uk)

**O**ur favourite lamp? Luxo Jr the Pixar mascot, obviously. But as far as non-anthropomorphic ones go, the Lightcycle Morph takes some beating. It can track natural daylight to adjust its brightness and colour temperature accordingly. As well as using less power, this reduces the amount of blue light you're exposed to, so you wake up and wind down more gradually.

Or do you just want to stay focused for longer? There's a study mode that intensifies the blue light in order to get your brain

buzzing. Alternatively, relax mode emits an orange glow to keep the chill vibes going all day; this also works nicely for a touch of movie-night ambience.

As well as letting you redirect its radiance, the lamp's arm can rotate 360°. So you can use it for everything from aiding your make-up application to dramatically spotlighting a bit of artwork.

### LEADER OF THE VAC

The Morph is just the latest in a line of products that can all be controlled by the Dyson Link app. This also includes the 360 Heurist robo-vac plus a

range of air purifiers and humidifiers. The app lets you schedule when they come on and – rather unusually – monitor their performance with detailed charts. While these make it easy to spot faults fast, we can't help but think this feature was made with engineer James Dyson in mind and not really anyone else.

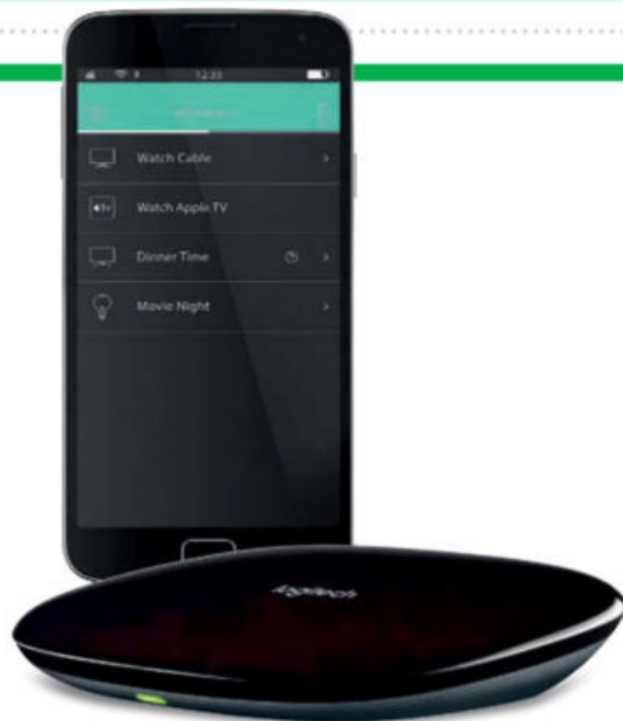
Adopting the Apple approach to smart home tech, Dyson's devices don't mix well with others and only connect over Bluetooth rather than Wi-Fi. But you can still voice-command them with Alexa and automate them with Siri Shortcuts.

**STUFF SAYS** This is a connected gadget that only enjoys mixing with its own kind, but we still love lamp ★★★★★☆

## LOGITECH HARMONY HUB

Logitech's universal remotes have been clevering up homes for years; now the Harmony Hub puts all that power in your phone. The hub itself communicates with all your infrared, Wi-Fi and Bluetooth gizmos, allowing you to control the lot via an app. You can also combine controls, so with just one tap you could lower the blinds, dim the lights and fire up the telly for movie night.

£100 / [logitech.com](http://logitech.com)



## SMART HOME, SAFE HOME



### Yale Indoor Wi-Fi Camera – Pan & Tilt

Like a sentry watching over your home while you're away, this camera sends an alert if it senses anything suspicious. You can also view live footage and move it around to get a better view of the cat licking its bumhole. Yale is of course a big name in security, and its devices work well with Z-Wave and Zigbee systems.

£60 / [yalehome.co.uk](http://yalehome.co.uk)



### Bold Smart Lock

Until we've fully tested this smart door lock we're happy recommending Brisant's brilliant Ultion Smart; but with two-factor authentication and end-to-end encryption, an Android and iOS app that isn't fussy about smart home platforms, and an SKG three-star award giving it the heaviest possible burglary rating, there's plenty to like here.

£279 / [bold.nl/en](http://bold.nl/en)



### V-Home by Vodafone Safety Starter Kit

A bit like a 'best of' gift set, Vodafone's home security bundle comprises kit from Samsung, SmartThings and Zipato. You get an HD camera with night vision, a sensor for detecting intruders and fire-risk temperature changes, a siren, and a hub so they talk nicely to each other... as well as to Alexa and Google Assistant.

£99 / [vodafone.com](http://vodafone.com)



### TCP Smart

Nothing to do with mild antiseptic and everything to do with sensible smart home upgrades, TCP's cheap and cheerful indoor security camera and video doorbell both have 720p resolution and night vision. There's a supporting cast of motion sensors, Wi-Fi plugs and lightbulbs too, none of which need a hub. It all works with Siri, Google Assistant and Alexa.

from £13 / [tcpmart.eu](http://tcpmart.eu)

# BROADBAND

Any smart home needs decent internet speeds... and your ISP might be able to help you out with an upgrade

## OTHER PROVIDERS...



### Virgin Media Hub 4

Most Virgin customers get a Hub 3, but if your area's good for 1Gbps broadband you can upgrade to a Hub 4 that will handle the extra speeds. OK, it's still not Wi-Fi 6, but it does pack 11 antennas and intelligent features for sharing bandwidth between devices, including boosting the signal to those furthest from the router.

**Gig1 from £62/m / virginmedia.com**



### Plusnet Hub One

'Honest broadband from Yorkshire' comes with a pretty basic bundled router and doesn't offer the same super-fast fibre speeds as stalemates BT and EE; but for value and customer service, Plusnet is seen as a bit of a parents' favourite for good reason. To its credit, the hub has dual-band Wi-Fi and a USB port for charging devices.

**Unlimited Fibre Extra from £28/m / plus.net**



### Zen Fritz!Box 7530

Zen might not be the biggest UK provider; but it's won countless customer service awards and offers packages with up to 900Mbps, so it's well worth considering. With the Fritz!Box 7530 it also has the greatest router name going. It's dual-band, with VPN functionality, and works with mesh networks.

**Ultrafast from £39/m / zen.co.uk**



### EE Smart Hub

EE's router essentially matches the specs of BT's Smart Hub 2, and that includes intelligent connections to cope with a pad full of smart home kit. Speeds of up to 900Mbps are on offer, as is an optional additional mesh network, while EE will also send out a backup 5G router if there's a fibre fault in your area.

**Full Fibre Max 900 from £60/m / ee.co.uk**

## BT Smart Hub 2

Full Fibre 900 from £60/m / bt.com

**I**t feels like a monopoly. BT subsidiary Openreach maintains the majority of Britain's fibre network, BT is also the UK's biggest broadband provider, and it owns Plusnet and EE.

Only Virgin Media has a dedicated rival fibre network – so even if you're with TalkTalk, Sky or another provider, the likelihood is you're still living in the shadow of London's phallic tower.

Most BT fibre customers get a bundled Smart Hub router; but if your postcode has 145Mbps+ speeds you can sign up for BT Halo and receive one of these,

the Smart Hub 2. And we've been using it for a few months.

### BANDS ON THE RUN

Compared to most ISPs' bundled routers, the sleek and slim Smart Hub 2 is fairly modern and can be coupled with BT's Complete Wi-Fi mesh system. It's 2.4GHz and 5GHz dual-band, has seven antennas, and adds DECT functionality so it works with BT cordless phones without needing yet another hub. Nice, but not exactly pub bragging rights.

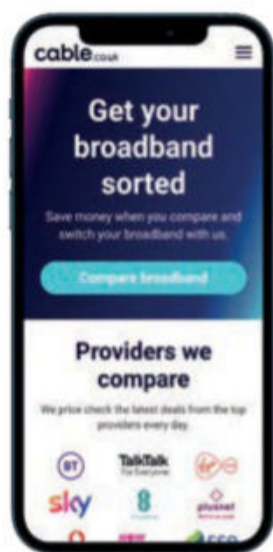
The proof is in the performance, and the Smart Hub 2 improves

on its predecessor by maintaining stronger Wi-Fi signal strengths and being happily capable of juggling numerous connected devices. The only problem is, there's no WPA3 encryption or Wi-Fi 6 support (see p54) to futureproof you... and those beefier specs are useful when splitting bandwidth across multiple devices as they mean less slowdown from your gadgets – a key smart home battleground.

That said, BT has a pretty good record among providers for being ahead of the curve with its kit, so we might see both features on the Smart Hub 3.

**STUFF SAYS** A stylish and slim home hub, but lacks the Wi-Fi 6 speeds that would help justify the BT Halo outlay ★★★★★☆

## CAN THIS THING GO ANY FASTER?



Britain's broadband speeds lag behind the likes of Liechtenstein and Slovakia. In fact, at around 22Mbps we rank a lowly 34th for internet quality... and 18th for affordability.

We're still fairly reliant on old copper telephone wires from homes to the BT street cabinets where fibre tends to kick in – and even then it's not always next-gen Full Fibre (with its claimed speeds of up to 900Mbps).

There's another twist too. Not everyone with

access to super-fast broadband has signed up... so providers become reluctant to invest in faster tech, and the lack of demand also leaves a public funding gap as the government doesn't invest either.

For short-term gains, try placing your router away from walls, water and other electrical kit. Use wired Ethernet connections, and consider upgrading your router (p54) or investing in a mesh network (p56).

**Big gigs**

The Smart Hub 2 has Gigabit Ethernet ports for wired connections with up to four devices, a single USB socket and a modem that works with ADSL2+ VDSL2 and G.fast services.

**Blip flips**

As well as filtering out interference that can affect Wi-Fi performance, the hub will quietly and autonomously make changes, and reboot or establish fresh connections if it spots a problem.

**Street treats**

A promise that your bill won't go up when your contract ends and a Mini Hub connected to EE's network if your road's broadband goes down are among BT's extra offerings.





**You share it well**

You might not have considered the processor in your router before, but the RAXE500 features a 1.8GHz quad-core chip that aims to serve up to 60 devices reliably at once.

**Do ya think I'm 6E?**

While Wi-Fi 5 can handle 3.5Gbps and Wi-Fi 6 9.6Gbps, Wi-Fi 6E can fire speeds of up to 10.8Gbps at your devices, which is exciting news for early adopters eyeing up 8K streaming.

**Veiling**

Nighthawk routers come bundled with a Netgear Armor cybersecurity plan to cover an unlimited number of connected devices from being hacked, including smart home kit like thermostats.

# WI-FI 6

If you think your bundled broadband router is holding your connected gear back, welcome to the internet's zippy new age

## Netgear Nighthawk RAXE500

\$600 / [netgear.com](https://netgear.com)

**I**f you've already bought a new high-end router in the past year, congratulations on scoring serious nerd points – and there's a decent chance it already supports Wi-Fi 6 (see panel below). While the new standard works its way down to freebie routers dished out by broadband providers, investing in something like Netgear's Nighthawk RAXE500 is the ultimate way in.

But pay attention, because this router doesn't just support Wi-Fi 6, but Wi-Fi 6E. This means you're still on the same 6GHz spectrum, only the

'E' signifies even more bandwidth for a very select number of new devices. Think of it like a VIP section for the very latest gadgets only.

### REVENGE OF THE 6

Looking a little like Darth Vader's docked landing craft (we suspect at least partially on purpose), the RAXE500 is all about capacity – with around three times the bandwidth most of us are used to at present. You'll get four swim lanes of 6GHz, four of 5GHz and four of 2.4GHz, giving your smart home devices a more even spread.

If you're lucky enough to be able to stretch some

wired connections to the RAXE500 you'll also get to utilise the multi-gig Ethernet ports, which Netgear says should be 2.5x faster than a typical Gigabit Ethernet port. Oof, we can smell the gamer testosterone from here.

Other one-up claims for having the fastest router in the west include next-gen WPA3 security, which among other things should protect you against brute-force attacks... although we're talking assaults of a cryptographic nature by cyberhackers here, as opposed to anything heading your way in *Doom Eternal*.

### ALTERNATIVELY...



#### Asus RT-AX88U

It's a bit 'out there' in the alien spacecraft design stakes, but then the RT-AX88U is a bit of an 'out there' router. A suite of advanced features are included, such as setting up a private network for gaming only and Trend Micro protection against naughty attacks. It's ready for your smart home too: link it to Alexa and control it with voice commands.

[£300 / asus.com](https://asus.com)



#### Linksys MR9600

Marginally more subtle in design than some on this list, the MR9600 can support over 40 devices and includes Linksys Intelligent Mesh Technology that aims to eliminate Wi-Fi dead zones. The app includes a guest access option for palming off visitors onto a partitioned Wi-Fi network, keeping them away from your connected toaster.

[£285 / linksys.com](https://linksys.com)



#### TP-Link AX11000

This one's for gamers, as you can probably tell. The AX11000 is all about speed and includes those all-important multi-gig Ethernet ports for the fastest connection currently possible. As well as having complete control over gaming bandwidth, you can check real-time latency figures, and it comes with a lifetime anti-malware subscription.

[£400 / tp-link.com](https://tp-link.com)



#### D-Link AX1500

A Wi-Fi 6 upgrade for under £100, the AX1500 is a step up for your broadband setup... but it's bare-bones when it comes to add-ons. There are no multi-gig ports and no malware defences – yet for a fairly futureproofed router boost that won't break the bank, and could form the basis for a bigger mesh network, it's still a bit of a bargain.

[£95 / dlink.com](https://dlink.com)

### WTF IS WI-FI 6?



The new Wi-Fi standard is capable of theoretical speeds of 9.6Gbps. We're way off broadband going that fast, but Wi-Fi 6 capitalises on the far less congested 6GHz band for supremely speedy surfing, and also on extra-efficient splitting of bandwidth between devices, meaning smart home tech on the same network will work seamlessly.

Known as 802.11ax to proper IT geeks, Wi-Fi 6 also schedules check-ins between a router and

devices, saving energy on gadgets requiring constant connectivity. Wi-Fi 6 devices also support the WPA3 security protocol, so they'll be safer to use.

To get the full benefit you will need certified gadgets, but all Wi-Fi standards are backwards-compatible so your existing tech will still connect. Just because you take your old Yaris on the Autobahn, doesn't mean it'll suddenly do 200mph, but you will be able to go a bit faster than usual.

# BOOSTERS

Getting blanked by your broadband in the far reaches of the living room? Might be time for some mesh network nodes...

## ALTERNATIVELY...



### TP-Link Deco X20 AX1800

Not to be confused with a network of cookie jars, the cylindrical Deco system is Wi-Fi 6-ready, WPA3-protected and compatible with Alexa. Each node is good for 200m<sup>2</sup> of coverage and TP-Link, the mad bugger, reckon it's been tested to connect over 150 devices without affecting performance. **from £107 / tp-link.com**



### Asus ZenWifi

Each ZenWifi node will cover a massive 2750ft<sup>2</sup> and, unlike a lot of the offerings here, is available in white or black. Wi-Fi 6 and WPA3 are both on board, and a lifetime subscription to Trend Micro's cybersecurity tools is included. That's plenty of poke for the price – and the overall design doesn't scream 'IT manager' either. **from £220 / asus.com**



### Google Nest Wifi

Not to be outdone for sheer lunacy, Google reckons one Nest Wifi point can handle 200 connected devices and is fast enough to stream multiple 4K videos at once. In a nice touch, each node doubles as a smart speaker and is good for 120m<sup>2</sup>. As it's Google, setup is simple; you don't get Wi-Fi 6 but you do get WPA3. **from £129 / store.google.com**



### Netgear WiFi 6 Orbi

Scoring four stars in last month's issue, the Orbi system is multi-gig-ready and can also handle hundreds of devices. It comes with top-level cybersecurity, though that's only free for the first year. Castle-owners will be pleased to know it'll cover 4000ft<sup>2</sup>, and it works with Alexa and Google Assistant. **from £700 / netgear.co.uk**

## Linksys AXE8400

from \$450 / linksys.com

**L**inksys was hot off the blocks in 2017, launching one of the first true home Wi-Fi mesh networks.

In truth, we found the original Velop system to be pretty buggy and the nodes suffered from numerous dropouts. But superfast broadband wasn't built in a day... and now Linksys has something new.

The AXE8400 system retains the brand's usual straight-up tower-like design, only now it packs in Wi-Fi 6E technology for blazingly fast speeds and superspreading of the good sort: bandwidth. In fact, Linksys says it can manage the demands of more than 65 devices. The catch is that it's very expensive indeed – about a grand for a three-node

pack – but then, each node is supposed to be good for 3000ft<sup>2</sup> of coverage, and the system has another special trick up its sleeve...

### RING MY BEL

Back in 2013, Belkin bought the Linksys brand from Cisco Systems. How exciting! But it's relevant now because lurking inside the AXE8400 are motion sensors that work in tandem with Wemo smart plugs and Belkin smart speakers, creating an expanded home security system to alert you to intruders when you're not there.

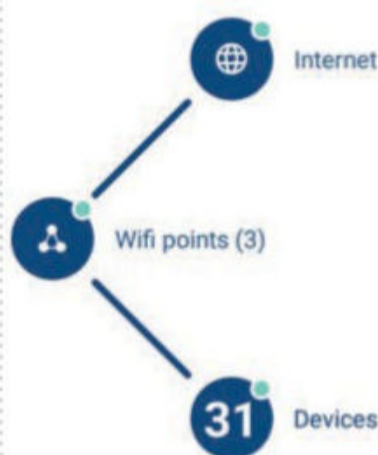
It's worth noting that the AXE8400 is also backwards-compatible with previous versions of the Velop series – so even though they won't be Wi-Fi 6E certified,

or feature the motion detection tech, that won't stop the spare nodes from coming in handy to kill dead spots.

Linksys says the system will work with all UK broadband providers and tag on nicely to hubs supplied by the likes of BT, Virgin Media and Sky; but you definitely need to ask yourself if you really need yet more nondescript boxes cluttering up the place – even if makers are increasingly doing their best to make mesh nodes a bit more pleasing on the eye.

Just to be clear, we're talking about cutting-edge connectivity that really is completely unnecessary for a lot of people right now; but as a taste of things to come it's pretty exciting... if you really, really like Wi-Fi, that is.

## HOW TO MESH THINGS UP



Mesh networks are designed to eliminate Wi-Fi black spots by placing a network of range-extending nodes around the home, giving your signal a more even spread and greater stability. If your router is already reaching parts other broadband routers can't, you're fine as you are, no real need to read on, see ya.

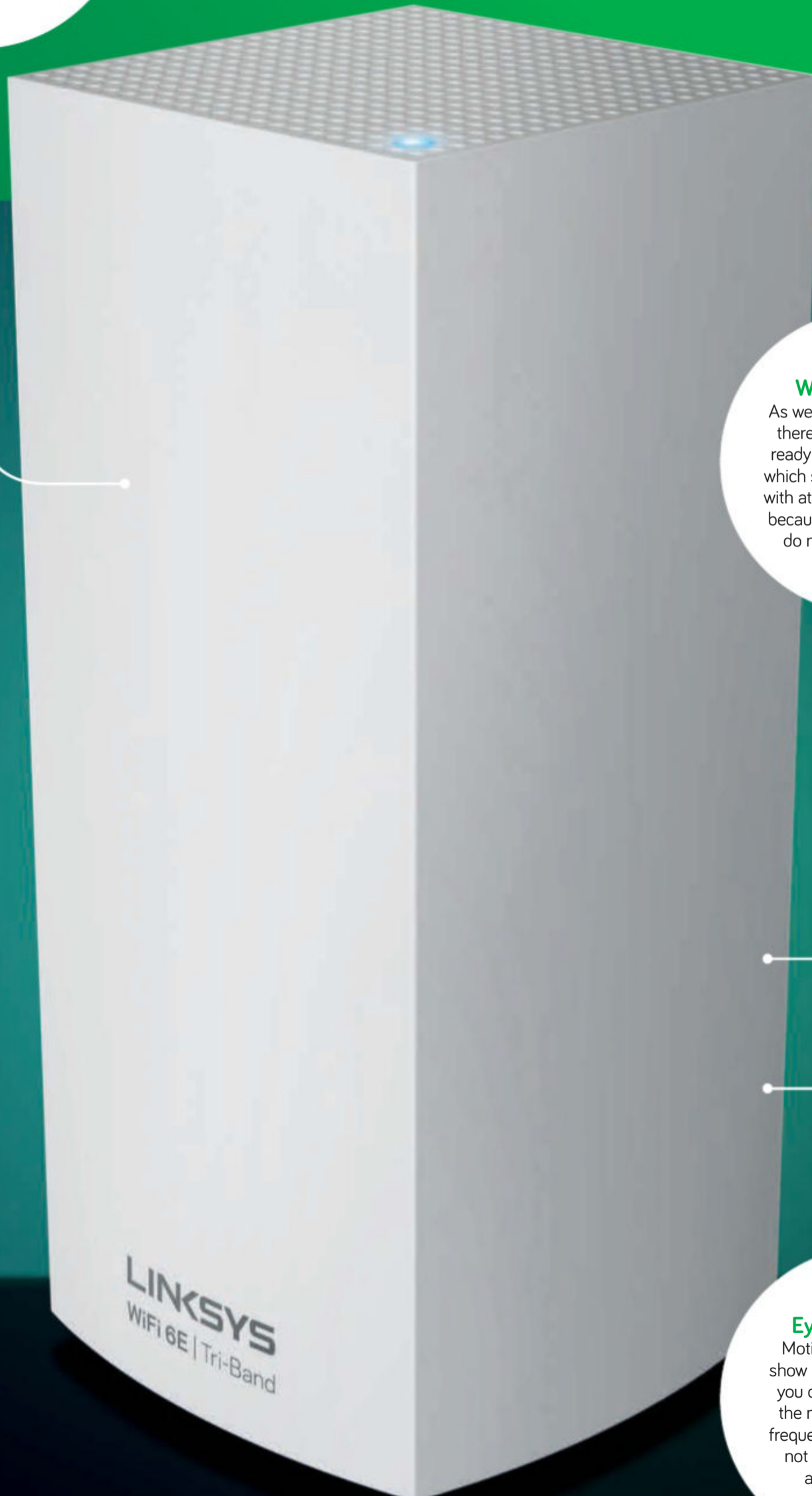
Some providers like BT and Virgin offer their own mesh network add-ons with select packages that

work specifically with their home hubs; other router makers incorporate mesh smarts into their modems to tempt you into staying with the same brand if you expand your network.

In truth, it doesn't really matter which network you opt for as most will work with your provider. They're not exactly cheap, but could come in cheaper than a kneejerk reaction to upgrade your broadband package: faster speeds won't mean goodbye to Wi-Fi dead zones.

**You can hurry love**

Qualcomm's Networking Pro 1210 Platform helps the AXE8400 cope with demands on the 2.4Ghz, 5Ghz and 6Ghz spectrums at, it's claimed, twice the speed of the competition.

**WAN more night**

As well as four Gigabit ports, there's a 5Gbps WAN port ready for the multi-gig era... which sadly has nothing to do with attending music festivals, because we're not allowed to do nice things any more.

**Eye missed again**

Motion alert notifications show up on the Linksys app; you can control things like the motion sensitivity and frequency of alerts, so you're not bothered every time a pigeon flies past.



**CHAT TO US**  
/joinstuff



**LIKE US**  
@stuffmag



**SEE US**  
/stuffmagazine



**RETWEET US**  
@stuffTV

# Stuff

Everywhere you are

Read it, like it, share it



# Baby got stack

Large, loud and lots of fun, Audio Pro's 300-Watt Drumfire speaker duo is a multiroom lion among the hyenas

£650 / [stuff.tv/Drumfire](http://stuff.tv/Drumfire)

■ The Audio Pro Drumfire is a disastrous proposition in a national lockdown, because to get anywhere close to its 300W limit you really need the neighbours to be out, or better still residing in the next postcode. You can even stereo-pair two, although we're too frightened.

■ Looking like a luxury guitar amp stack, it's actually two devices in one, wrapped in faux leather with hand-stitched threads, topped off by an aluminium control panel and accents. It's beautifully conceived and a sophisticated statement piece when placed in a corner.

■ The lower half is home to an 8in long-throw 200W subwoofer with phase and crossover controls. The top half is a class-D amplifier with two 1in textile-domed tweeters and two more long-throw woofers, this time 4.5 inches each. That's a lot of woof.

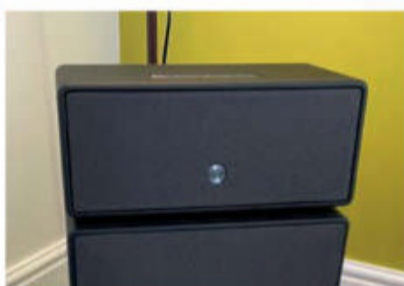
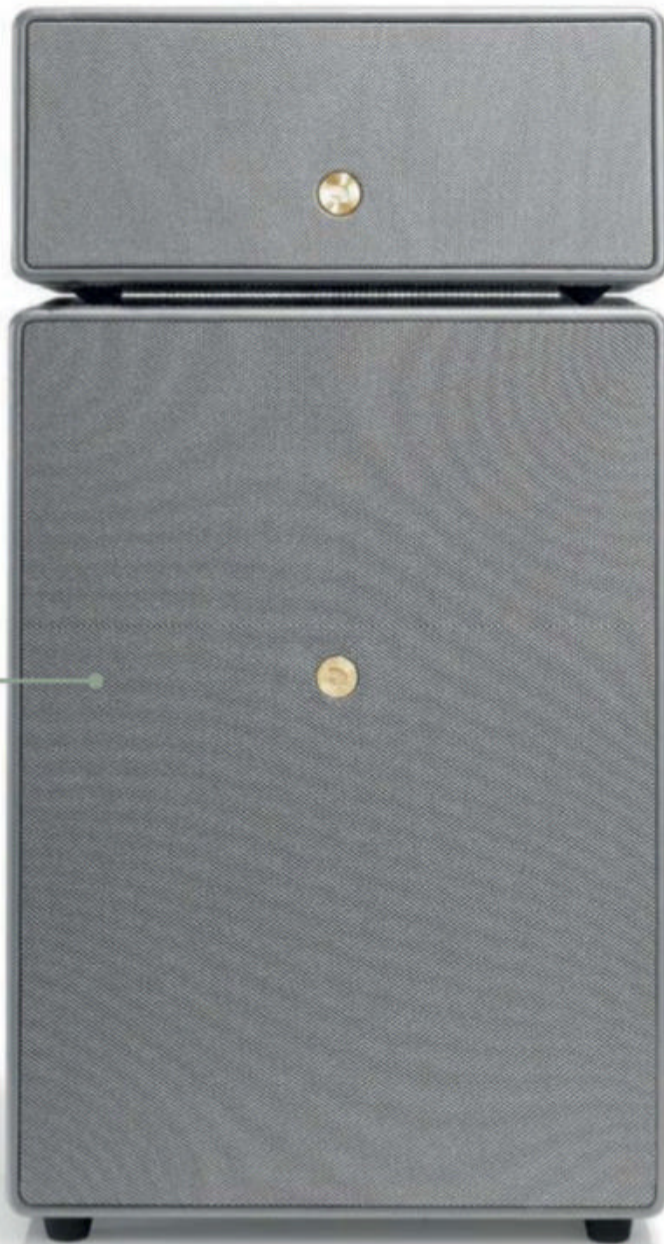
■ It's hugely versatile in terms of connectivity, but there are a couple of caveats. With Bluetooth 4 and Apple AirPlay you can only enable multiroom via the Audio Pro app, and so can't mix and match with other speaker brands.

■ All is forgiven once you fire it up and run it in, because hand on heart this is the loudest, most belly-rumbling but also sophisticated and subtle speaker stack we've clapped ears on outside of a gig venue. Combine two and you'd create a truly colossal PA system.

## Tech specs

**Audio** 300W, 2x 1in tweeters, 2x 4.5in woofers, 1x 8in sub  
**Connectivity** Bluetooth 4, Wi-Fi, Apple Airplay, RCA, 3.5mm aux, Ethernet  
**Dimensions** 650x520x190mm, 16.6kg

**Baby got FLAC**  
 When it comes to file formats, the Drumfire isn't fussy. It can support MP3, WMA, AAC, FLAC and Apple Lossless tracks.



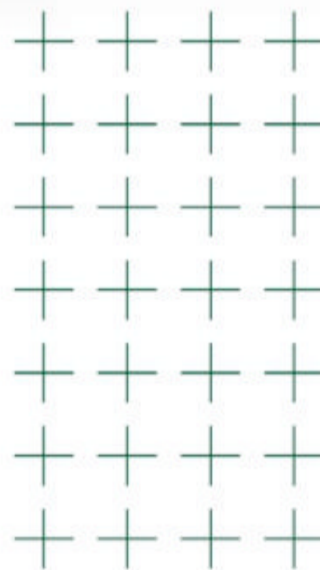
### Uptown top spanking

That top unit is a solid speaker in its own right. It's called the D-1 and costs £350. It does feel a bit flat on its own – but that's just as well, because buying it without the subwoofer would be like buying cannoli without the filling.



### I've seen the sources

Bluetooth, AirPlay, Works with Alexa, Spotify Connect, major streaming services, NAS drives, turntables, CD players, DJ controllers, Wi-Fi presets: the Drumfire can cope with it all... but forget Chromecast built-in.



**STUFF SAYS** One of the most absurd and grin-inducing wireless speakers ever ★★★★★

**A sonic titan that's hugely impressive as well as just huge**  
*James Day*



Despite some multiroom awkwardness, this might just be the best wireless speaker we've heard for under £800. Naim's second-gen Mu-so (450W) and Mu-so Qb (300W) are certainly vying to be king of the Pride Lands, but neither can be paired for stereo – and while that idea fills us with trepidation, it's a feather in Audio Pro's cap. For now, though, we'll err on the side of neighbourly empathy.

# What's not to Leic?

At nearly £4K the SL2-S is not a cheap camera... but since the nights out have tailed off, perhaps it's the perfect companion to bubble with

£3975 (body only) / [stuff.tv/SL2S](http://stuff.tv/SL2S)

It feels like a welcome bonus on a Huawei phone, but nobody buys a 'proper' Leica camera without very careful consideration. Being engineered to the highest standards is a given, but you also get the impression that each one has been crafted with the luxury of giving little or no thought to the cost.

The SL2-S is being pitched as an alternative to the SL2, the key difference being a new 24MP full-frame BSI-CMOS sensor instead of the SL2's mammoth 47MP one... and with it comes a slightly less scary price.

Whether you're looking for an entry into L-mount lenses or just don't want to deal with colossal files, the SL2-S is a tempting proposition – and with the latest firmware updates it gives the SL2 a run for its £5300 of money on video and light sensitivity.

So, bringing a new meaning to 'neighbourhood watch', we spent a week swinging it around on our daily lockdown walks.



[Words: Natalya Paul]

### Leica rolling stone

Made in Germany, this is an angular, imposing solid block of metal that's seriously chunky and weighty at almost 1kg (1). It's actually a pinch heavier than the larger-sensored SL2, has an IP54 waterproof rating, and feels more like a pro DSLR as opposed to a full-frame mirrorless.

### This is what it feels Leic

The lovely textured grip would make it possible to hold this camera one-handed if it weren't for the heavy lenses, and that same mesh-like texture (2) runs across the entire body. There are three buttons devoid of markings, which is a little intimidating but good for stylish minimalism.

### I Leic the way you move

With no mode dial on top, you press a rear one inwards to switch between modes. There's a joystick (3), which is a stretch for small hands but a huge asset. Throw in a 3.5mm mic socket, HDMI port, USB-C charging port and two SD card slots, and that's a well-connected bit of kit.



**Life Leic**

Leica promises around 510 stills from a full charge. We reckon that's accurate, and it'll take about two hours to charge from flat to full.

**Looks Leic we made it**

The menu system is great for speedy switching between stills and video. The LCD touchscreen (4) is big, bright and easy to operate, but disappointingly fixed to the camera. You'll find a top plate too, which displays useful settings and is visible at all viewing angles.

**Can eye have it Leic that?**

The OLED electronic viewfinder is a treat and its inviting rubber eye-cup (5) is a friendly contrast to the rest of the body. With 0.78x magnification and 5.76MP resolution, it's one of the best EVFs we've ever used and forms a rocking duo with that 24MP backside-illuminated sensor.

**Tech specs**

**Sensor** 24MP full-frame BSI-CMOS **ISO** 50-100,000 **Video** 4K @ 60fps **Displays** 3.2in 2100k-dot LED rear, 1.28in LCD top **Connectivity** Wi-Fi, Bluetooth 4, HDMI, USB-C **Dimensions** 146x107x83mm, 931g

**Rock you Leica hurricane**

On the lockdown circuit with Leica's SL2-S... and the results are very impressive indeed

**Make it snappy**

This is a camera built for speed. You can capture up to 25 DNG frames per second with its electronic shutter and backside-illuminated sensor, a first for Leica that also makes for improved low-light performance.

**Make it better**

General shooting is a joy at all times of day, with truly natural colours, excellent detail...and that exceptional viewfinder. Dynamic range impresses too, but getting to grips with the blank dials can be a frustratingly steep learning curve.

**Make it stop**

Focusing can be tricky, and isn't as effective as Fujifilm's phase-detection AF. It locks onto subjects quickly, but struggles if they're moving. You can drop to 6fps for continuous focus with a tripod, but it's not so versatile.

**Make a scene**

A true all-rounder, this Leica's video specs are impressive. Capture 4K 10-bit at 60pfs and you can keep on rolling until you've filled both SD cards, since there's no recording limit. It supports V-Log and HLG.



In many ways the Leica SL2-S betters the SL2, and its more modest resolution can sometimes be an advantage – so unless you need incredible levels of close-up detail, opt for this model and save yourself £1325. Cheaper rivals offer just as much image-wise, and with more flexibility... but never mind the width, feel the quality. @natalyapaul

**STUFF SAYS ★★★★★**

A stunningly built camera that shoots glorious stills and video, but with a few foibles that we just can't look past



# BETA YOURSELF

## ZOOM



With people cooped up for months on end, Zoom has become a video chat sensation... **Craig Grannell** shows how to get the most from conversing with friends and colleagues on a screen

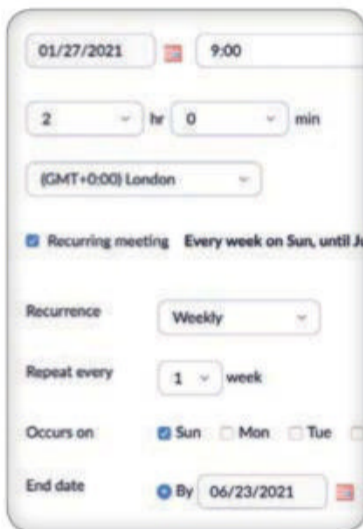
### THE BASICS

#### Kit up and sit up

Zoom works with built-in mics and speakers, but that doesn't always give you good results. If you use a PC and sit far from it, invest in a headset. Even with a mobile device, a headset can be a good way to screen out ambient noise. Also, position your device on a stand to avoid cramp and the camera pointing up your nose.

#### Be silent, not deadly

On all platforms, Zoom offers settings to define key defaults when you enter a meeting. Our advice: set it so you always begin meetings with video and audio disabled. That way you're in control of your entrance, rather than rocking up at the precise moment your kid yells something rude or you sneeze over the camera.



#### Lonely? Plan it...

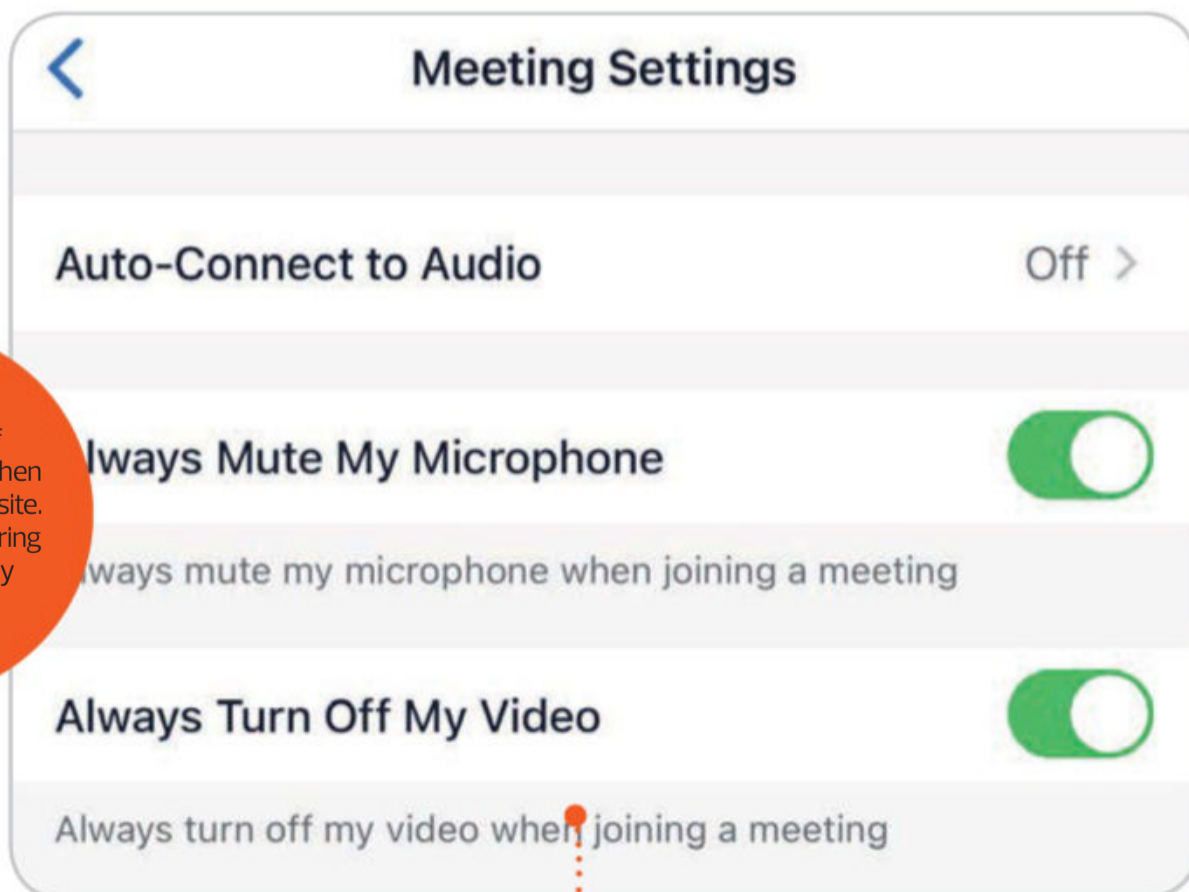
People thrive on routine. For colleagues working remotely, having a set time on a weekly basis to just see other people and chat can boost morale. But even with friends, setting up a regular meeting means people are likely to attend. It's far better than the usual "We should totally set up a chat at some point" – which inevitably never happens.

#### Go on the record

The idea of recording your meetings might whiff of Orwellian surveillance, but recordings can be handy for your own reference and to share what was said with someone who couldn't attend. Note that if you're not the host they'll need to give you permission to record, and all participants are notified when a recording begins.

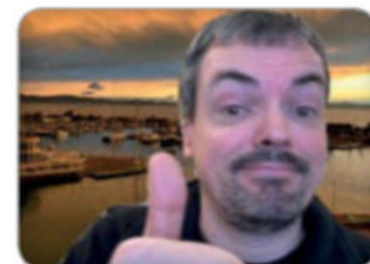
#### Pay for today

Zoom's free tier is generous, enabling you to have chaotic video chats with up to 100 people. However, meetings are short (40 minutes maximum) and recordings are local, not cloud-based. Pay £12 per month and meetings can last as long as you like. Too much? You can always time a month of premium to coincide with important events.



#### I get tweak

Zoom has a lot of settings, not least when you head to the website. They're worth exploring in detail, to properly fine-tune your personal setup.



### SPECIAL EFFECTS

#### Transport yourself

Not had time to tidy? Fire up a virtual background and pretend you're somewhere far nicer. Or add your own custom snap of you looking at the screen, to make out you're paying attention in your meetings when you're not even in the room.

#### Flatter yourself

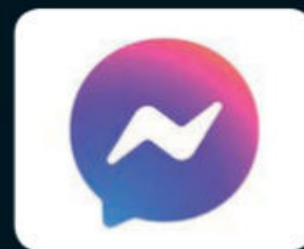
Feeling old and wrinkly? The 'Touch up my appearance' setting removes rough edges, to the degree it'll look like you've been ironed. Still, on the desktop client you can tame this filter, and also adjust your video for low light.



Need a new webcam? Turn the page...



## OR USE ONE OF THESE...



### MESSENGER

Nobody likes Facebook but almost everyone's on it. Take advantage of that by kicking off a group chat in Messenger, prodding the camera icon and having a chinwag with your chums – or some randoms you unwisely accepted friend requests from in 2005.

**Free** / [messenger.com](https://messenger.com)



### SKYPE

Not keen on having all your video chats under the watchful eye of Zuckerberg? (In which case, also avoid WhatsApp.) Skype fell out of fashion after ill-advised attempts to transform it into a chat app, but the video bit works well.

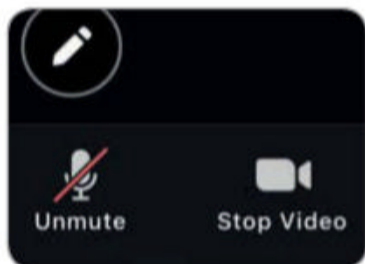
**Free** / [skype.com](https://skype.com)



### FACETIME

If your friends (or at least the ones you care about) have Apple kit, FaceTime is an option. Kick off a Messages thread, click Details on Mac or tap the group name on mobile, and prod the FaceTime icon to start throwing around emoji poos.

**Free** / [apple.com](https://apple.com)



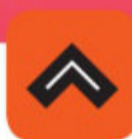
### QUIET RIOT

#### ■ Mute yourself

Get into the habit of muting your microphone in group chats with a lot of people, or you'll find background noises take over. 'Alt+A' on Windows or 'Cmd+Shift+A' on macOS or iPadOS will instantly switch the mute status of your mic.

#### ■ Mute everyone else

If everything gets too noisy, you could yell "SHUT UP!" and stomp out of the room. If you're the host, though, and it's appropriate to, instead mute everyone with 'Alt+M' (Windows) or 'Cmd+Ctrl+M' (Apple). Or, you know, just count to ten.



### SAFETY DANCE

#### ■ Stay on these codes

By default, new Zoom meetings have a passcode, required to gain entry. Don't omit it, because people do gatecrash Zoom calls. Also: don't paste meeting invites publicly – unless you want just anyone to rock up.

#### ■ Shut that door

Once your meeting's underway and every participant is there, turn on Lock Meeting from the Security menu (under 'More' on mobile). This bars anyone else from joining the meeting, even if they have a passcode.

#### ■ Carry that wait

For meetings with friends, disable the waiting room (which is where people otherwise sit until the host rocks up) and let participants join at any time; when you arrive, you take over. Be more formal for business, though.



### CARING SHARING

#### ■ Show me, love

So suity types can show their boring spreadsheets, Zoom has screen sharing – but the host must enable it for everyone. On a PC, you can share your entire desktop or a single window; on mobile, the screen, photos, or files saved in the cloud.

#### ■ Win, lose or draw

Within the screen-sharing options, you'll see Whiteboard. Fire it up and you can share what you draw. Again, it's aimed at business meetings... but when everyone's talked out it can be used for an impromptu Pictionary game.

# Fix up, look sharper

Good news if you're confident enough to let the world stare at you in UHD: Logitech has brought 4K to the world of webcams

£199 / [stuff.tv/LogitechBrio](http://stuff.tv/LogitechBrio)

■ The pandemic caught webcam makers on the hop. Shop around and the selection is pitiful, but Logitech is bucking that trend with its Brio, which betters most built-in cams by ramping the resolution up to 4K... while HDR helps with low light, sunlight, in fact any old light.

■ Stream in 4K at 30fps if you want to, and yes we looked fantastic, dahling; but not everyone has blisteringly fast broadband or OnlyFans followers to please, so stepping down to 1080p at 60fps or 720p up to an ultra-smooth 90fps served us just as well.

■ The cam's dinky design is just the right side of subtle – but while it's best placed atop a display, the monitor mount is a fiddly affair and at no stage does it feel particularly securely clamped on. Viewing angle options are pretty decent if finding your best side is a struggle.

■ The dual omnidirectional mics include noise-cancelling tech and capture sound from a metre away while muffling out the rest. Testing this theory with the TV turned up in the background, the Brio passed with flying colours.

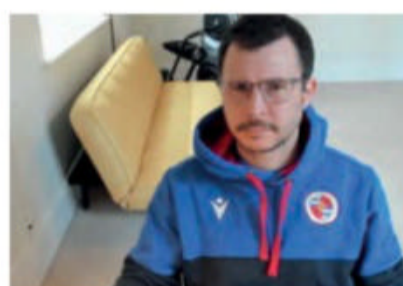
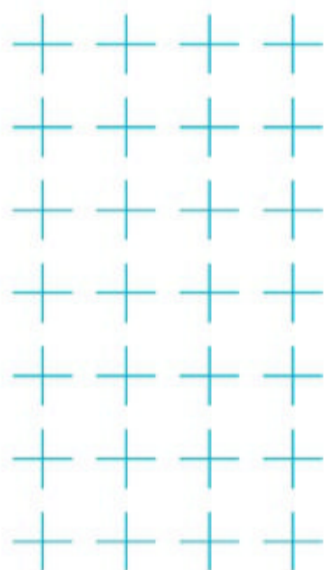
■ Deep dive into Logitech's G Hub software and this webcam becomes greater than the sum of its parts, with a selection of modified and virtual backgrounds, lighting effects for gaming streamers, and customised settings depending on your intended use.

## Tech specs

**Resolution** 4K @ 30fps, 5x digital zoom  
**Mics** Stereo omnidirectional  
**Connectivity** USB, USB-C  
**Compatibility** Windows, macOS, Chrome OS  
**Dimensions** 102x27x27mm, 63g



**Wake on me**  
 Thanks to Windows Hello integration, the Brio's optical and IR sensors can be used for face-recognition logins.



## Fields of bold

You can pick from a 65°, 78° or 90° diagonal field of view. The former is great for head and shoulders, the latter for revealing far too much about your life to your colleagues – but if you're taking a fitness class it's dead useful.



## Leap of face

Terrifying as it sounds, the Brio has a 5x zoom feature that maintains 4K resolution. It's one to be avoided on your off days, but Logitech's RightLight 3 auto-adjusting tech is definitely your friend here.

**STUFF SAYS** A remarkable webcam at a price that might be too much for some ★★★★★

It's the best you can buy... but does that mean you should?

James Day



The Logitech Brio represents the new gold standard for webcams and is a seriously premium upgrade to your computer's inferior built-in offering. It's about time 4K was on the table... the only snag being that Logitech has seen fit to charge close to £200 for the privilege. We can't blame them, but at this price there's an argument for investing in an action cam with webcam capabilities instead.

# Stuff

## DIGITAL EDITION



Available from [shop.kelsey.co.uk/stuff](https://shop.kelsey.co.uk/stuff)  
plus Readly and Pocketmags

# Titch, better halve my money

Not everyone has a huge telly or a huge budget, so these two teeny soundbars aim to help you save space and cash without sacrificing sound

## Yamaha SR-C20A

### What's the story?

If anyone knows what's what when it comes to soundbars, Yamaha knows. The company's been liberating big, high-quality sound from slim little bars for most of this century. This SR-C20A is small (by anyone's standards), cheap (by Yamaha's standards if no one else's), and designed as a sort of all-round option.

Want to put a rocket up your TV's sound without finding space for a gigantic slab? Want to improve your gaming experience no end but don't want to have to rearrange all your gear? This could be the answer.

### Is it any good?

Despite its titchiness, this wee Yamaha has plenty of width and even a little height to its soundstage, while bass is properly varied depending on whether you're listening to instruments or the solid fist-on-jaw impact of a beat-'em-up.

It's not perfect: Yamaha's suggestion that the SR-C20A can convince you sound is coming from the side or even the rear is far-fetched; and if you just want a soundbar for one specific purpose, you can probably do better than this without spending any more. But if you want something small and discreet yet able to sound convincing no matter what the content, this should be near the top of a very short list.

**Price** £229 / [stuff.tv/SRC20A](http://stuff.tv/SRC20A)

● 100W, 2x 46mm drivers, 1x 75mm woofer ● Dolby Digital, Dolby Pro Logic II ● HDMI, 2x optical, Bluetooth ● 600x94x64mm, 1.8kg

**Stuff says** ★★★★★

A little bit of a soundbar that can do a little bit of everything

## Panasonic SC-HTB01 SoundSlayer

### What's the story?

If you're a movie buff, there are plenty of soundbars at a wide variety of prices ready to bring your audio experience into line with the superb images from your TV. If you're a gamer, though, there aren't many inexpensive options that will do the same job for your console or PC.

Companies like Creative and Razer do have pricier bars that can do games justice, but now a proper mainstream brand is getting in on the action. Hands up who thought that would be Panasonic?

### Is it any good?

Sure, this soundbar is always ready to get a bit hard and shouty at high volume, and the bassy stuff can overstay its welcome... but overall it's a far better sonic experience than your TV is capable of delivering. Mind you, if all what you want is a budget bar to improve film night, then your choice is already extensive.

As a music speaker, the SC-HTB01 is a bit of a blunt instrument; but for big gaming audio, this slightly ridiculously named SoundSlayer is well worth a listen. It's better made, better specified and less showy than most gaming speakers, and crucially it sounds better too.

**Price** £250 / [stuff.tv/SoundSlayer](http://stuff.tv/SoundSlayer)

● 80W, 2x 40mm drivers, 2x 14mm tweeters, 1x 80mm woofer ● Dolby Atmos, DTS:X, DTS Virtual:X ● 2x HDMI, optical, Bluetooth ● 431x132x52mm, 1.8kg

**Stuff says** ★★★★★☆

For big gaming audio without a big speaker, this is a mighty mini choice

## BAGUETTES GET READY TO RUMBLE

● The monstrous Sonos Arc and Sennheiser Ambeo soundbars are each the width of a 55in TV. That's great for packing in numerous drivers and directional speakers, but not so good for the bedroom. Yamaha's mini bawler would still have room to spare when sitting in front of a 32in screen, and that even puts it in home office territory.

● But wait! If you think that's small, Panasonic's SoundSlayer could be considered the ultimate space-saver. It's 17cm slimmer than Yamaha's effort – which means not only that it'll sit in front of a minuscule TV or a gaming monitor, but also that you could conceivably take it with you on holiday or carry it round to a pal's place when all this is over.



TEST  
WINNER

2

1

4

3

### 1 Breadth of the wild

Yamaha's bar has four modes: 'stereo' for music, 'standard' for most TV, 'game' to ramp up immersion and 'movie' to enhance space.

### 2 Grand heft auto

There's no Dolby Atmos, and Yamaha's virtual surround tech isn't perfect, but the SR-C20A sounds huge for its size no matter the source.

### 3 Cyberfunk 20:20

Not only can Panasonic's bar work with 4K HDR – it also handles 24-bit/192kHz audio for Dolby Atmos and DTS:X soundtracks.

### 4 Resonant evil

It has specific sound modes for RPG and FPS games, plus a voice mode for enhancing the dialogue in adventure titles and cut scenes.

ORDER OUR NEXT ISSUE NOW  
AND GET FREE DELIVERY\*

**ECO-FRIENDLY SPECIAL**

# Stuff

GADGETS / GAMES / GEAR

## GREENER GADGETS

How tech  
is tackling  
sustainability



### PLUS!

Exciting new EVs  
Indoor pizza ovens  
Noise-cancellers do battle  
Xiaomi's cut-price flagship tested



**DON'T  
MISS OUT!**

PAY THE NORMAL SHOP  
PRICE\* AND GET THE NEXT  
ISSUE DELIVERED DIRECT  
TO YOUR DOOR

ORDER ONLINE AT [SHOP.KELSEY.CO.UK/STUAPR21](https://shop.kelsey.co.uk/stuapr21)  
CALL NOW ON 01959 543747\*\* & QUOTE STUAPR21

Terms and conditions apply. You should receive your copy around 18 March. Front cover is for illustration purposes only and is subject to change.

\*Delivery is included in the cover price for UK customers only. An additional £1 will be added to any overseas addresses.

\*\*Lines are open Mon-Fri 8:30am-5:30pm. Calls are charged at your standard network rate.

# Earholes and villains

True wireless earbuds in the style of anime cyborgs tasked with saving Tokyo from the bad guys? Makes perfect sense to us...

£199 / [stuff.tv/EVA2020](http://stuff.tv/EVA2020)

■ The EVA2020 x Finals could be the nerdiest earphone collaboration ever, bringing together Japanese personal audio gurus Final and legendary animators Studio Khara to produce a trio of wireless buds based on EVAs – the giant cyborg battle-things from anime classic *Neon Genesis Evangelion*.

■ Final has done an impressive job of translating the EVA styles and colours into earbud form, and we're delighted not to have to test more boring black blobs of audio. The case looks cool too, if huge, but then it is hiding an absolutely massive battery (see below left).

■ The case might be the size of a cyborg's gonad but the buds are small, light and delightfully comfortable. We wore them for hours on end without fatigue, something the competition needs to consider more, plus they come with five tip sizes to choose from.

■ Each earbud houses a single dynamic driver serving up precision and scale we'd typically associate with pro in-ear monitors. They're clean too, with superb instrument separation and detail, but compared to the similar-priced Sony WF-1000XM3s they are lacking in the fun department.

■ Setup and connectivity are solid, and we love that First Lieutenant Maya Ibuki talks us through the pairing process. It's a sweet touch, even if our early sample was still in Japanese. Control comes from a single button, which needs quite a firm prod to wake up.

## Tech specs

**Connectivity** Bluetooth 5 aptX, USB-C **Battery life** Up to 9hrs, up to 63hrs with case **Weight** 2x 5g, case 78g



### Seal flows

The ear-tips sit at the opening of the ear canals, instead of having to be shoved in deep. You can almost forget you're wearing them.



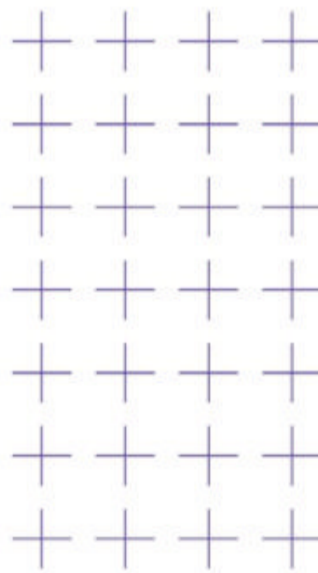
### ■ God only glows

Audio kit always claims to let you "hear the music as the artist intended", but here you get to see it too, with the designs using the colours of the Evangelions: the purple Unit-01 (above), red Unit-02 and blue/orange Unit-06.



### ■ Serves up

The case contains a chunky 950mAh battery that can refuel each bud eight times. Combined with 9hrs of wireless playback that means a total of 63hrs, long enough to watch all 26 episodes plus both movie spinoffs.



**STUFF SAYS** An impressively executed collaboration in both sound and style ★★★★★

The styling is cartoonish but the sound is anything but

Chris Haslam



Until Cambridge Audio brings us a *Danger Mouse* DAC, the EVA2020 x Finals will remain our favourite audio/animation collaboration. *Neon Genesis Evangelion* is a cult classic with a loyal fanbase, but Final has delivered with a product that faithfully recreates its original style without compromising its own ability to build excellent earphones. They're not the last word in audiophile quality, but the battery is massive and they fit snugly.





# INSTANT UPGRADES GOOGLE PIXEL 5



**FIRST ADD THESE...**



## ONE IDEAL OF SWEDEN QI CHARGER

If Studio 54 were resurrected as a purveyor of decadent phone accessories, from its star-dusted loins this Qi charger would be born. Looking like a glamorous coaster but offering a practical 10W wireless fuel-up, it comes in a host of styles and will power up your Pixel as you revel in its gold-trimmed opulence. £45 / [idealofsweden.co.uk](http://idealofsweden.co.uk)

## TWO GOOGLE PIXEL 5 FABRIC CASE

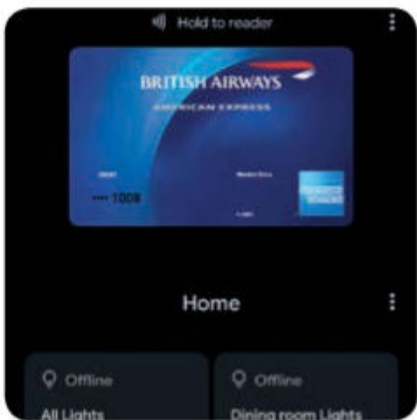
If you watched the latest series of *Cobra Kai*, you may have spotted Google's Fabric Case in Ali's demure digits. In addition to offering small-screen cred, the case will protect your Pixel in four dappled colours – and each one comprises 70% recycled materials, including fabric made from old plastic water bottles. £35 / [store.google.com](http://store.google.com)

## THREE SHURE MV88+ VIDEO KIT

Microphone or tripod? No need to decide, as Shure's MV88+ checks both boxes. Grab rock-steady snaps and video thanks to the bundled Manfrotto mobile tripod, and enjoy rich sound-recording with Shure's stellar external mic, which gives you granular control over your audio settings through the Shure Motiv app. £219 / [shure.com](http://shure.com)

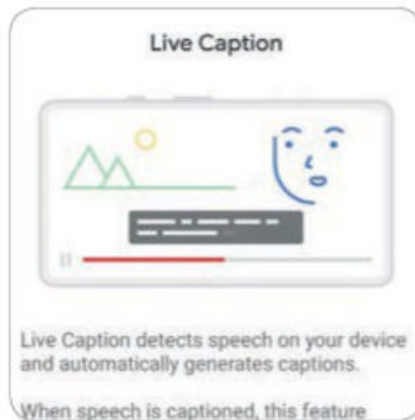


NOW TRY THIS...



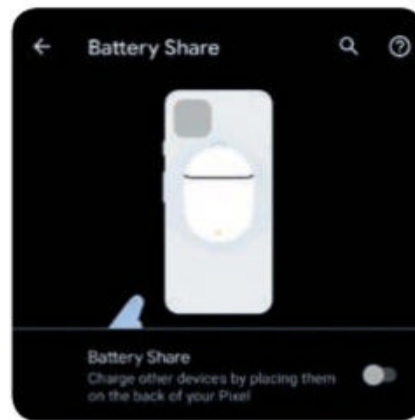
### 1 BUTTON YOURSELF UP

Google's powered up its power button, adding a bundle of options to the power-off menu. If you've assigned a credit or debit card for Google Pay mobile payments, the feature's given pride of place here, along with shortcut access to store cards. This is also your place to toggle lights, control smart speakers and manage other smart home bits – perfect if you're sick of saying "Alexa" and "OK Google".



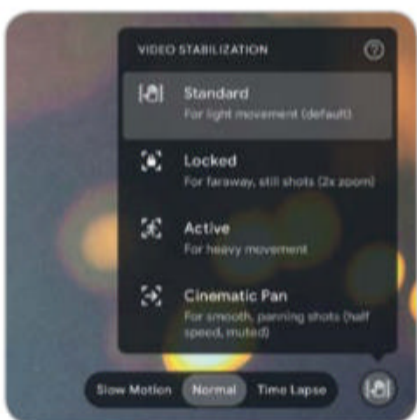
### 2 GET IT ALL IN WRITING

Google's speech recognition is stellar, and on the Pixel 5 it's put to excellent use in two ways. The first is Live Caption, which adds real-time subtitles to anything playing on the phone. To activate it, press the volume button then select the box that pops up below the slider. The other is transcribing with the Recorder app: when capturing sound that includes speech, the Pixel 5 outputs it as plain text.



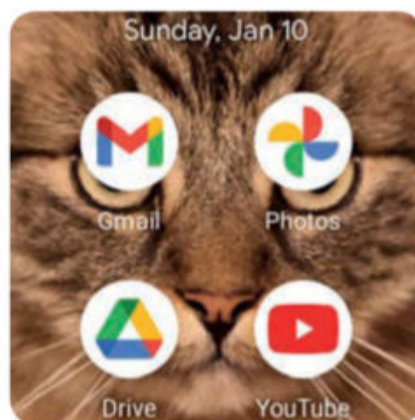
### 3 CHARGE AROUND

Reverse wireless charging means you can power up a compatible device (earbuds, a watch, another phone) by firing up the feature and placing the second device on the back of your Pixel. But here's a neat new trick: this phone turns the feature on automatically when you plug it in to charge. The result: you can power up two devices (the Pixel 5 and its charger) with one cable.



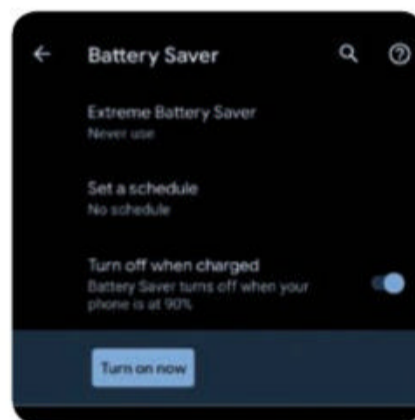
### 4 SHAKE OFF THE SHAKE

Don't let the dinky looks fool you: this is a mean, green-ish filming machine. Loaded up with optical and electronic image stabilisation, it has four options when shooting video. To access these, fire up the video camera, tap the 'shaky hand' icon and choose from Standard (for light movement), Locked (for faraway objects), Active (for heavy movement), or Cinematic Pan (for smooth panning shots).



### 5 FEEL RIGHT AT HOME

Long-press your home screen, select Styles And Wallpapers, and you can enjoy a richer choice of customisation than ever on a Pixel phone. Choose from a range of grid sizes, filled with as few as four big icons or 25 dinky ones. This is also where you can mess with typefaces, icon styles and highlight colours... plus you get a host of animated Come Alive wallpapers that add a subtle dash of fun.



### 6 BOOST THE BATTERY

With great power management comes great battery life. Fire up this Pixel's smart power-saving skills by selecting Adaptive Battery in Settings > Battery. If you need your phone to last as long as possible, engage Battery Saver, which shuts off a handful of background processes; or for maximum longevity switch to Extreme Battery Saver, which disables all but the most essential apps.

AND GET THESE...



### WONDERCISE

For less than £5 a month, this fitness app lets you stream unlimited classes; and if you have a Garmin watch, it matches your movements with those of an on-screen trainer. **£free (IAP)**



### THE MANDALORIAN AR EXPERIENCE

Playground AR is absent from the Pixel 5, but you won't care once you've got a lifesize 'Baby Yoda' sitting in your AR living room. **£free**



### MOMATU

Google Photos can easily turn into a dustbin of accidental snaps and rejects. Curate your memories with this digital scrapbook that everyone from kids to gramps can add to. **£free (IAP)**

# Sci-fi Wi-Fi hi-fi

Looking like something out of HG Wells' *The War of the Worlds*, Q Acoustics' first proper bash at wireless speakers appear alien for a reason...

£1499 + £349 stands (pair) / [stuff.tv/Q200](http://stuff.tv/Q200)

A bit like Steve Buscemi or Uma Thurman, the Q Acoustics' Q Active 200 speakers have an odd sort of sexiness you can't help but admire.

The British brand has been on a hot streak of sonically excellent home cinema and passive speaker solutions, but these asymmetrical boomers mark its first serious foray into active sound systems that don't require a separate amp.

It's a very well connected hi-res package, with everything from Apple AirPlay 2 to Google Chromecast built-in, a choice of voice assistant and streaming service integrations, and HDMI ARC for plugging them into your tellybox.

The Q Active 200s have a special party trick too: it's called 'dynamic widescreen sound', and it should mean Cliff Richard can always find your sweet spot for an outstanding audio experience no matter where you're sitting or standing.

### Wide side pride

The Q Active 200s look distinctly different due to off-centre BMR (balanced mode radiator) drivers and some striking Tensegrity stands – a £349 option (1). Q says the driver placement helps you fine-tune their 'dynamic widescreen sound' – more on that in the panel opposite.

### Low throw pro

Inside each cabinet you'll find two 2.25in BMR drivers, a rear-firing 4.5in long-throw sub (3) and six discrete amps with a total output of 280W. Plump for the pricier Q Active 400 floorstanders and you'll bag two extra amps and 440W of power, but you'll kiss goodbye to those sexy stands.

### Sheer clear cheer

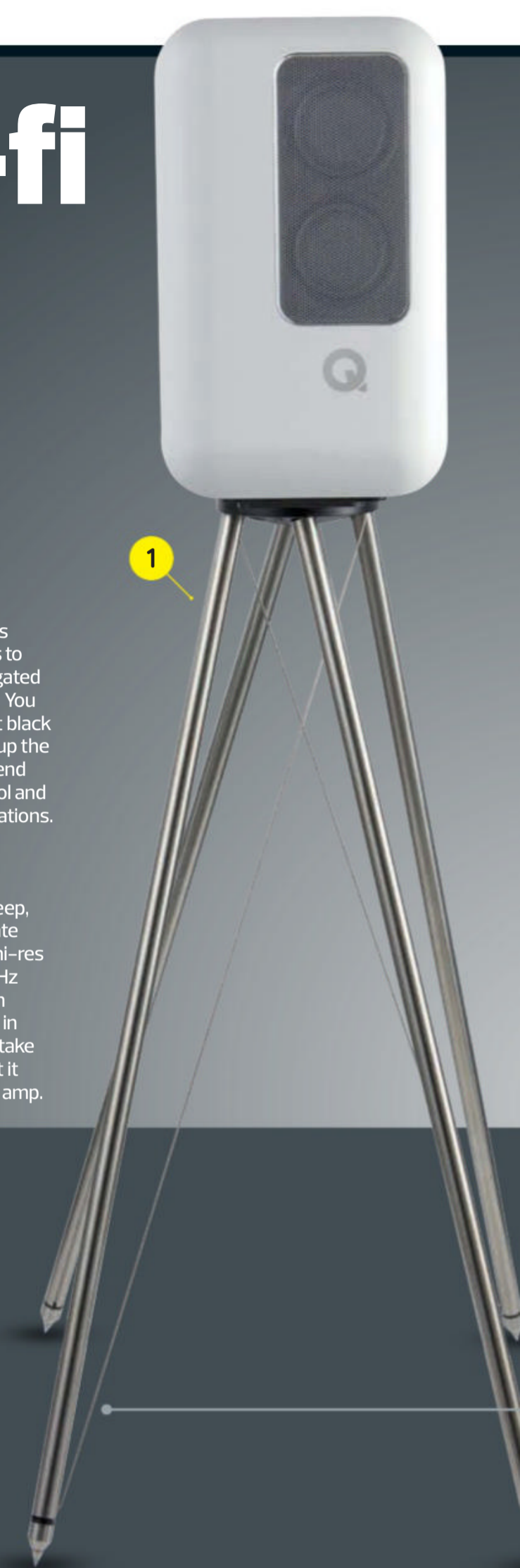
How do they sound? Stonking. It's immediately apparent how smart the Q Active 200s are at separating the highs and mids from those beautifully wobbly lows. Switching between AirPlay 2 and Bluetooth 4.2, frequencies feel consistently clearly defined with impressive levels of clarity.

### Bright white sight

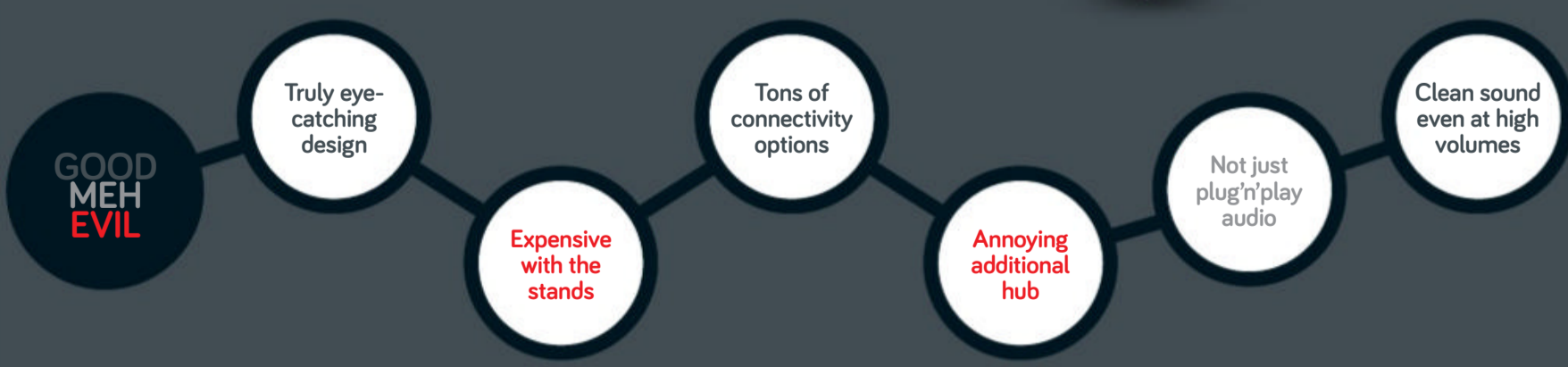
The 'industrial chic' design is carried on from front drivers to rear subwoofer via a corrugated control panel on the top (2). You can pick from stealthy matt black or white; and while setting up the stands is a bit of a faff, the end result is unquestionably cool and helps to minimise floor vibrations.

### Hub club nub

Connectivity options run deep, but it all comes via a separate wireless hub that'll handle hi-res audio at up to 32-bit/192kHz over 5.8Ghz wireless. It's an annoying extra thing to plug in when the speakers already take up a mains socket each, but it takes up less space than an amp.



[Words James Day]





**Best fest nest**  
The stands are inspired by the 1951 Festival of Britain's Skylon structure and do a sterling job of reducing resonance.

## Tech specs

**Drivers** 2x 2.25in full-range, 1x 4.5in sub (each)  
**Power** 280W (each) **Connectivity** Wi-Fi, Bluetooth 4, AirPlay 2, Chromecast, Works with Alexa, NAS, Roon, UPnP, HDMI ARC, optical, Ethernet **Dimensions** 290x284x170mm, 922x338x286mm with stands, 7.5kg (each)

## Audiophile be there for you

Playing around with Q's 'dynamic widescreen sound' will make you grow a strokable jazz-beard in minutes



### ■ Spread the love

Q says using BMRs rather than normal drivers gives a wider spread instead of focusing on a central sweet spot. Plus they can go down to 150Hz before passing things over to the sub, so there's no crossover distortion.



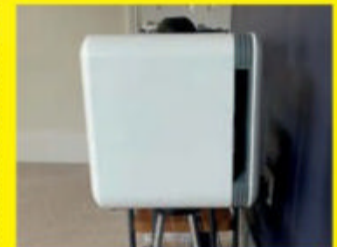
### ■ I'm outer, love

Round the back of each cab you'll find a switch for designating left/right, so you can have the drivers on the inside or outside. The size and shape of your room will determine which configuration maximises your listening pleasure.



### ■ Love is wall around

Next to that you'll find a boundary setting switch with three options for speakers close to a wall, in corners, or wombling free out in the open. Pick the one that matches your setup for the best low-end response.



### ■ Love me splendour

There's definitely a degree of audiophile twattery at play here, but honestly? It's good clean fun, not least because perfecting your preferences does seem to hammer home the lack of crossover between the frequencies.



At this price the Q Active 200s should sound exquisite, and they do – the R&D budget has been put to good use and the alluring design isn't just for aesthetics. The hub is irritating, the stands are expensive, and we kept re-pairing the remote; but in terms of connectivity and sound, this is a worthy centrepiece to a tasty multiroom setup. *@james\_a\_day*

## STUFF SAYS ★★★★★

They cost a pretty penny, but the Q Active 200s marry serious audiophile qualities with oodles of connectivity options



# GET THE BEST GADGET DEALS WITH STUFF

**TESTED LEICA SL2-S**

## What's not to Leic?

At nearly £4K the SL2-S is not a cheap camera—but since the nights out have tailed off, perhaps it's the perfect companion to bubble with

**£3975 (body only) / stuff.tv/SL2S**

It feels like a welcome focus on a handset phone, but nobody buys a 'proper' Leica camera without very careful consideration. Being engineered to the highest standards is a given, but you also get the impression that each one has been crafted with the luxury of giving little or no thought to the cost.

The SL2-S is being pitched as an alternative to the SL2, the key difference being a new 24MP full-frame BSI-CMOS sensor instead of the SL2's mammoth 47MP one... and with it comes a slightly less scary price.

Whether you're looking for an entry into L-mount lenses or just don't want to deal with colossal files, the SL2-S is a tempting proposition— and with the latest firmware updates it gives the SL2 a run for its £5300 of money on video and light sensitivity.

So, bringing a new meaning to 'neighbourhood watch', we spent a week swivling it around on our daily lockdown walks.

**Life Leic**  
Leica promises around 510 stills from a full charge. We reckon that's accurate, as it'll take about two hours to charge from flat to full.

**Tech specs**  
Sensor: 24MP full-frame BSI-CMOS ISO 50-100,000 Video: 4K @ 60fps Displays: 3.2in 2100k-dot LED rear, 1.28in LCD top Connectivity: Wi-Fi, Bluetooth 4.2, NFC, USB-C Dimensions: 146x107x53mm, 973g

**Leica rolling stone**  
Made in Germany, this is an angular, imposing solid block of metal that's seriously chunky and weighs at almost 1kg (1). It actually is a pinch heavier than the larger—sensored SL2, has an IP54 waterproof rating, and feels more like a pro DSLR as opposed to a full-frame mirrorless.

**This is what it feels like**  
The lowly textured grip would make it possible to hold this camera one-handed if it weren't for the heavy lenses, and that's some mesh-like texture (2) runs across the entire body. There are three buttons devoid of markings, which is a little intimidating but good for stylish minimalism.

**I Leic the way you move**  
With no mode dial on top, you press a rear area towards the wheels between modes. There's a joystick (3), which is a stretch for small hands but a huge asset. Throw in a 3.5mm mic socket, HDMI port, USB-C charging port and two SD card slots, and that's a well-connected bit of kit.

**Looks Leic: we made it**  
The menu system is a joy, specially switching between stills and video. The LCD touch (4) is big, bright and easy to operate, but disappointingly fixed to the camera. The a top plate too, which is useful for settings and is visible from all viewing angles.

**GOOD MEH EVIL**

- Attractive minimalist styling
- But it's really very expensive...
- ...and really very heavy
- Focus can be troublesome
- Excellent image quality
- Equally great for video

**Leica SL2-S**

**Stuff**

**REVIEW**

### Bowers & Wilkins PX7 review

No-nonsense noise cancellers with excellent sound

★★★★★ **£350**

**Bowers & Wilkins PX7 deals**

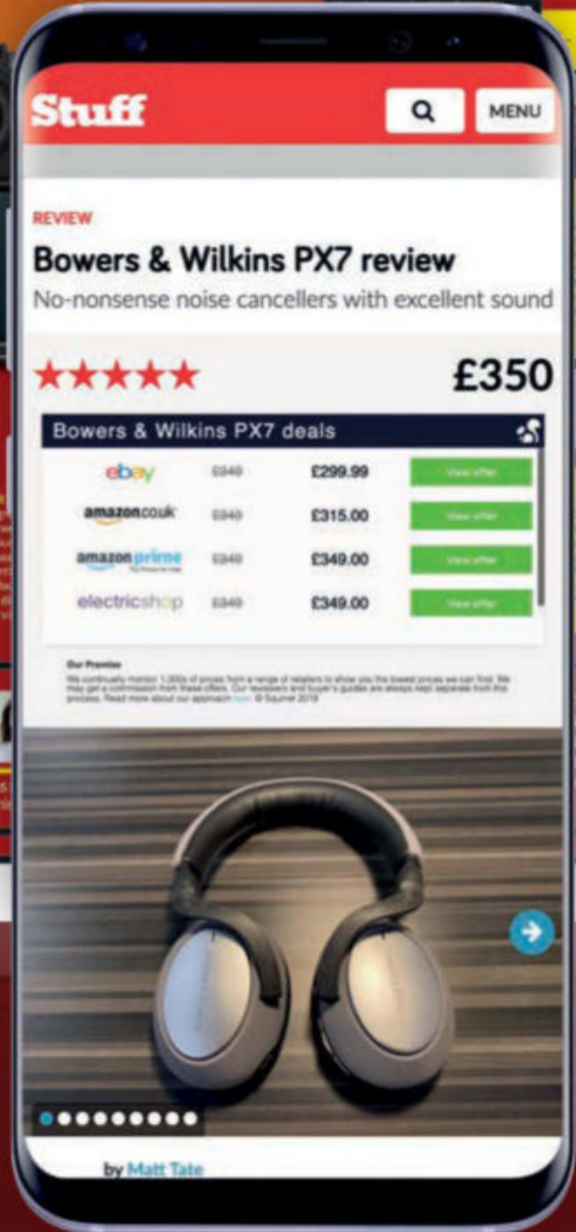
ebay	£349	£299.99	View offer
amazon.co.uk	£349	£315.00	View offer
amazon prime	£349	£349.00	View offer
electricshop	£349	£349.00	View offer

**Our Promise**  
We continually monitor 1,000s of prices from a range of retailers to show you the lowest price we can find. We also get a commission from these offers. Our readers and buyer's guides are always kept separate from the prices. Read more about our approach [here](#). © Stuff 2019

by Matt Tate

**In the mag**  
We pick out the best price for every featured product

**Online**  
Choose from our roster of great-value retailers



Ever wondered what's up with the links in *Stuff*? We've got a team of retail pros who scour the web to find you the best gadget deals – visit any [stuff.tv](http://stuff.tv) link in this issue and you'll be taken to the best deal for that product. If you make a purchase, we may get a small commission. It's that simple, and has no impact on how much you pay.

# Nice and easy buzz it

Sensate's vibrating pebble lets people seeking meditation, escapism and a better night's sleep hide under a rock

£199 / [stuff.tv/Sensate](https://stuff.tv/Sensate)

## Pouch potato

The Sensate 2 comes with a USB charging cable, a travel pouch, a lanyard for dangling it around your neck and an eye pillow.

## We tried it too...

### ■ It buzzed all my cynicism away

There are two terms that are guaranteed to wind me right up: 'mindfulness' and 'chillout music'. Which is hardly helpful in this context... but Sensate made fending off my inner cynic easier than I feared. The sounds are inoffensively relaxing, and the vibrations add to the sense of immersion in a way I wasn't expecting.

**Richard Purvis**

### ■ An odd sensation, but very relaxing

The only thing normally vibrating on my chest is the rumble of the PS4 controller after nodding off during a late-night THPS session. The Sensate vibrations were stronger than I was expecting, but they soon merged with the music and generally left me deeply relaxed. Just avoid the new-age chanty ones.

**Ross Presly**



■ The Sensate 2 is a strange little Bluetooth vibrator (not that sort) that rests upon your chest to help lull you into moments of calm. It does this using near-infrasound bone conduction on your sternum, in tandem with a selection of musical soundscapes from its companion app.

■ Choose from 10, 20 or 30 minutes of mindfulness with sounds across 'nature', 'space & time', 'sacred spaces' and 'breathe'. These work with the Sensate 2's haptic core so moments of zen are felt as well as heard. Neil from *The Young Ones* would approve.

■ You can adjust the volume and intensity of the tuned vibrations, and play the sounds through your usual headphones (or a speaker), while a suitably stress-free setup process means there's no need to register an account or subscribe to anything.

■ Sensate says the pebble uses a "proprietary audio mix of four trade-secret elements", which sounds a bit like 'special stuff' from *The League of Gentleman* but equates to vagus nerve toning. In short, it helps the brain sustain wellness by calming your organs.

■ Judging mood, anxiety and stress levels during a pandemic is a tough one, but lying back in a darkened room while being semi-aggressively wobbled with the blower on 'Do not disturb' feels nice; and after repeating the mantra of "For God's sake relax!", quality of sleep did improve.

## Tech specs

**Connectivity** Bluetooth, microUSB charging

**Compatibility** Android, iOS

**Battery life** Up to 7 days

**STUFF SAYS** It's not cheap, but for helping you get a decent kip it's dead clever ★★★★★☆

**Lock the door, lie back, switch on the vibrator and let yourself go**

*James Day*



The key to tapping into the Sensate 2's power is ensuring your environment is right before settling, because you don't want to be disturbed. I wouldn't call it a miracle cure for stress, but a week in I was sleeping better and waking abuzz. We do wonder whether an app using your phone's vibrating powers could do at least a basic version of the same job, but there's no sign of such a thing existing just yet.

# People get tready

Having revolutionised the spin-bike world, Peloton now hopes to do the same for the treadmill... so marathon runner Kieran Alger spends January going nowhere fast

£2295 + £39/m / [stuff.tv/Tread](http://stuff.tv/Tread)



## ● DAY 01

Peloton's swapped the equipment but the angle is the same: get reluctant gym-goers off the sofa by combining a cardio machine with workouts beamed into your home. Only this time it's about running, not cycling.

If you like the sound of that, you'll need deep pockets to join the Tread revolution: for full annual access to all the classes plus extra accessories such as dumbbells, you're looking at a

combined outlay of £2870. So is it worth it? Or should you, well, run a mile?

I'm putting it to the test for four weeks to find out – and the first victory is discovering that it comes assembled. As treadmills go, it's a looker, with cleaner lines and less bulk than most gym monsters. Into the spare room it goes.

The 150cm-long belt offers plenty of roomy running space

and a road-firm running surface. Kicking off with a 90-minute half marathon, it's no trouble at all: unique controls make shifting tempo and incline a doddle. One roller changes speed in 0.1mph increments, to a maximum of 12.5mph; a second adjusts the incline from 0 to 12.5% in 0.5% increments. Each roller also houses a button for 1mph speed and 1% incline jumps.

The rollers are easier than stretching for a touchscreen, but it's not always easy to hit the precise increases that trainers often recommend. We'd like a button to jump down in steps too,

because coming off an all-out sprint into an easy jog requires tricky backward rolls of the knob (said with a straight face).

The sweatproof touchscreen is bright, sharp and responsive, with a built-in camera for connecting with training buddies. You can tilt it for floor exercises too. The loud four-speaker sound system, meanwhile, is really bringing the studio vibes.

Final note: you'll need reliable Wi-Fi. Even the on-demand experience is streamed rather than stored locally, and a poor connection causes buffering that wrecks havoc with your stats.



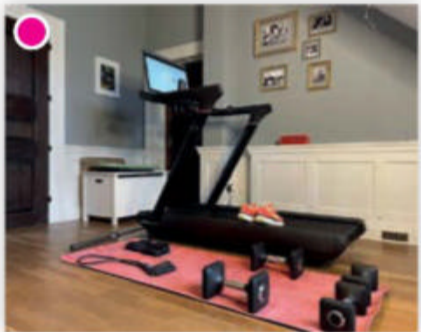
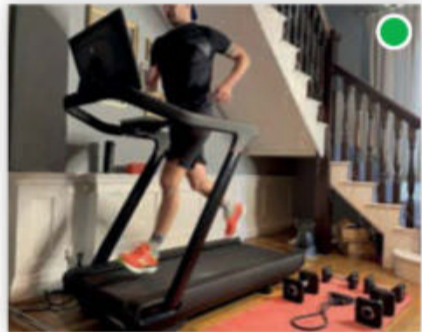
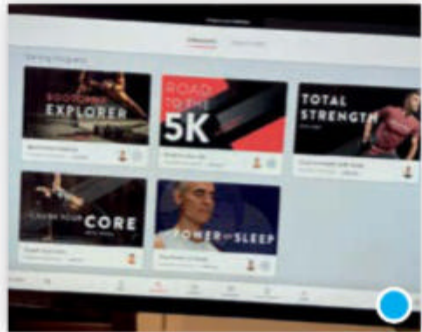
**It has cleaner lines and less bulk than most gym treadmills, and the belt offers plenty of roomy running space**

**Donut of Truth™**

- 01 Excellent coached training experience
- 02 Brilliant variety of workouts, not all running
- 03 Well designed with a solid build
- 04 No option for streaming video or music
- 05 Can't create your own structured workouts
- 06 Very expensive, with limited training plans

**Tech specs**

- Display**  
23.8in HD touchscreen
- Max speed**  
20kph (12.5mph)
- Connectivity**  
Wi-Fi, Bluetooth 5, ANT+, USB-C, 3.5mm audio
- Dimensions**  
1570x840x730mm, 132kg



**DAY 07**  
I'm immersed in a connected and coached fitness universe. There's a bias towards beginners but it's easy to go from rest to a sweaty mess inside 45 minutes, including getting changed.

The Apple-esque interface makes other treadmills feel old, with filters for duration, intensity, workout type and difficulty. Sessions last up to an hour and go way beyond running, with HIIT, strength and even yoga workouts available. During workouts you get pace, speed and distance stats in a customisable layout; there's also session breakdown, time remaining, real-time heart rate and a leaderboard.

**DAY 11**  
The real-time readouts that show if you're ahead or behind your PB are brilliant, if excruciating, because chasing records every time you train isn't smart.

If you need someone whooping in your ear the whole time, you'll love the coaching. Prefer to zone out? It really won't be your cup of glucose... and there's only so many times you can hear stories about a trainer's new puppy. Some days I've opted for subtitles, or uncoached runs with scenic videos – how zen.

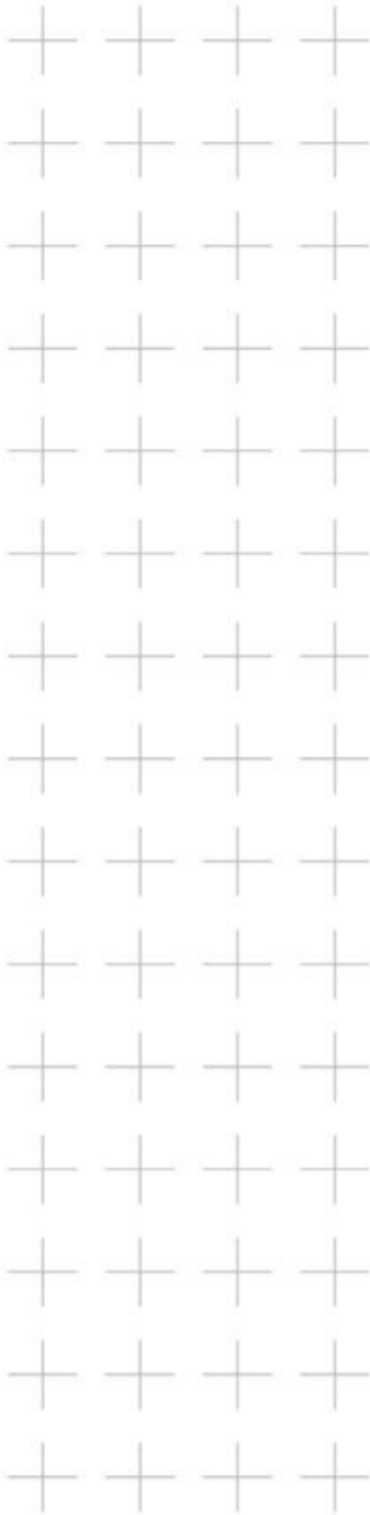
**DAY 23**  
It's time to dissect my end-of-run stats in greater detail. They're less comprehensive than Garmin or Strava, but you get charts for heart rate and speed along with pace splits and overall position, plus badges for challenges.

You can connect to Spotify or Apple Music, but only to like tracks heard during a class – you can't play or control your own music. You can forget Netflix too.

**DAY 29**  
A broader selection of goal-based running programmes would be nice: Couch To 5K and Road To Your 26.2 (the latter in the Peloton app) are currently the only options.

Overall it's a top experience, though – friendly, engaging and motivating, provided you're smart about mixing the intensity of your sessions. Solid hardware and slick software provide a potent mix; and if your goal is general fitness, the Tread dishes out coaching with unrivalled convenience.

It's a powerful weapon in the war on repetitious (and ineffective) treadmill cardio, and a brilliant way to unleash those happy chemicals that come with high-tempo workouts. It's just a shame it comes with such a big price tag.



**STUFF SAYS**

**If you've got the space and the cash, this is a brilliantly accessible route to fitness**

★★★★☆



# Hitman 3

The third and final instalment in the *Hitman* reboot series gives our chrome-domed killer plenty of new murderous playgrounds to explore... and a story to complete

**B**y giving locations the same focus as central character Agent 47 and his stabby shenanigans, the *Hitman* series has succeeded in gaining a unique identity among stealth games.

*Hitman 3* concludes the story of the first two titles, expounding on Agent 47 and his handler Diana Burnwood's struggle to topple Providence, the Illuminati-style group of heartless elites influencing world events with terrorism and espionage. There are clever twists

and countless turns, but *Hitman* has never been reliant on its narrative to draw players in. This spy thriller story exists as a means to tie together 47's globetrotting adventures – travel is as much a motivation as murder.

The game offers six new locations, each (bar one notable exception) an intricately crafted sandbox packed with interesting characters, places and ways to off your targets, from the opulent upper floors of the world's tallest skyscraper in Dubai (yes, you can

push people off) to a nightclub in the shell of a disused German power station (yes, you can impersonate the DJ).

Wandering around and listening in on conversations is as much fun as the missions, while outlandish assassination methods (including poorly wired art installations and exploding golf balls) bring an absurdist and almost satirical flavour that neatly sidesteps any on-paper grimness.

Each location has several story missions, played through step by

step to get to Agent 47's prey, as well as a long list of challenges and other achievements to reward multiple playthroughs.

With the ability to import your progress and locations from the previous games, *Hitman 3* is the definitive way to experience this fantastic franchise. We're just sorry this seems to spell the end for Agent 47's adventures, at least for now... but hey, we'll always have Paris. And Sapienza, and Hokkaido, and Miami, and Dartmoor.

**Sam Kieldsen**

**STUFF SAYS** A poignant end to the *Hitman* trilogy that doesn't mess with the recipe ★★★★★☆



all formats / [stuff.tv/Hitman3](https://stuff.tv/Hitman3)

Travel the world disguised as the sax player in a Madness tribute band.

In this memorable scene, Agent 47 is about to ask for directions to the lavatory.



## Aim for the head(set)

New locations are the real draw of *Hitman 3*, but there are new features too. Chief among them is a VR mode, allowing you to play all levels from the entire trilogy (should you own them) from a totally fresh perspective. The only downside here is that it's currently a PSVR exclusive for PlayStation players only, so more powerful headsets (and indeed computers) will have to wait.

In terms of in-game additions, there's a new persistent shortcut system: find and open a shortcut during one playthrough of a level and it'll be unlocked permanently, giving you a quicker and easier route through the location. There's also a camera gadget for both locating clues and hacking electronic locks, with an in-game photo mode for creative screenshots.

Neither of these transforms gameplay drastically, but both feel like welcome refinements. In truth, the core gameplay of sneaking around locations, disguising yourself to access prohibited areas and using your environment and/or equipment to eliminate your targets hasn't changed since the original *Hitman* reboot of 2016 – but given how well it works and how much fun it is to play, that's no bad thing.

XSS, PC / [stuff.tv/Medium](http://stuff.tv/Medium)

# The Medium

Almost three months after launch, the Xbox Series X gets its first next-gen console exclusive... but is it better than medium-quality?

**T**he *Medium* is a horror title with next-gen aspirations that rely on a split-screen dual-reality system and ray-tracing rather than its style, which evokes classic survival horror games.

The titular medium is Marianne, a woman haunted by the dream (or memory?) of a girl's murder; in this role you have the power to communicate with spirits as well as a sixth sense for hidden objects. Things start off pretty sombre, but pick up after a mysterious phone call leads you to a nearby abandoned hotel...

Fans of *The Shining* will know hotels are never a good sign: what was originally a holiday resort in Communist-era Poland transpires to be the site of a grisly massacre, while its history goes further back to the Nazi occupation. Here the game touches on sensitive topics like child abuse and the Holocaust, though it's careful not to fall into crude exploitation.

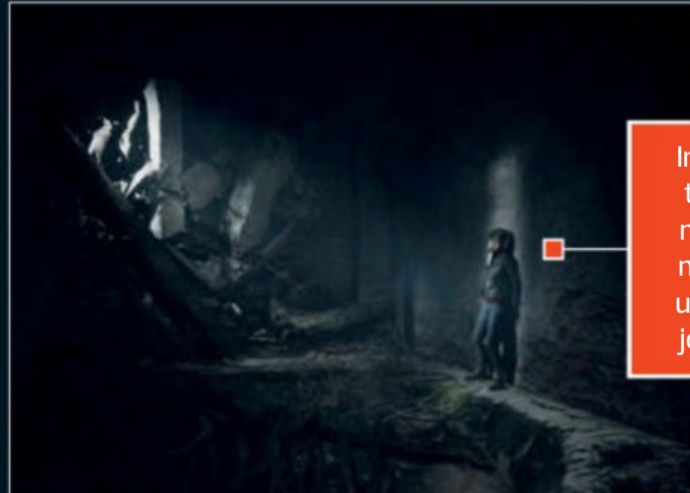
Setting the story in the late 1990s feels like a deliberate nod to survival horror games of that period – right down to the fixed

camera perspective and the way you traverse between the real world and a more nightmarish one, as in *Silent Hill*. What's unique about this game is that Marianne is able to exist in both the physical and spirit worlds at the same time, presented in split-screen.

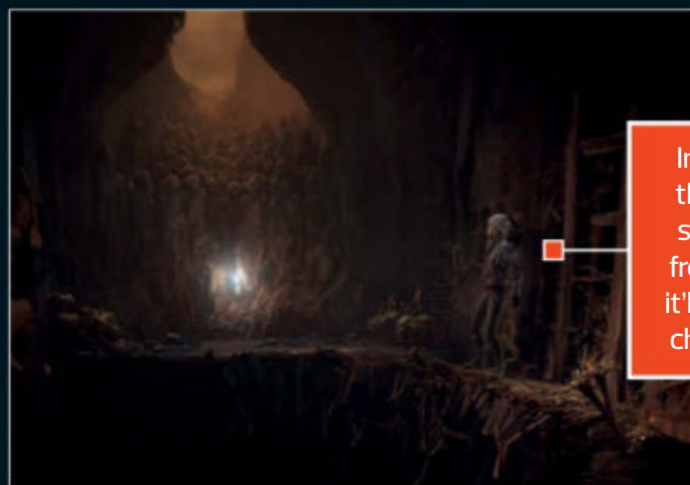
It's an intriguing technique, seemingly only possible with super-fast SSDs; but as fine as it looks, it can feel like a gimmick since you're usually only focusing on one world. Sometimes the two realities interlink – but it's telling that the best puzzles take place when traversing between worlds in more conventional ways.

Despite an undercurrent of disturbing eeriness, the underlying problem for *The Medium* is that it just isn't scary. There's a decent story to keep you involved, but if it's not sending chills down your spine, does it matter? And while it's technically impressive, it rarely makes the most of its presentation. Anyone hoping for this game to fill a *Silent Hill* hole should adjust expectations accordingly.

**Alan Wen**



In this reality, the builders made a right mess of that underpinning job last year.



In this reality, there's some sort of portal from hell. Well, it'll probably be cheaper to fix.

**STUFF SAYS** A decent premise, but this is not very next-gen and not very scary ★★★☆☆

# DELVE DEEPER INTO THE WORLD OF PROPER CAMERAS AND UP YOUR PHOTOGRAPHIC GAME

Subscribe today  
and **SAVE 25%**



*The essential bible  
for camera lovers*

**NEW! FROM THE  
PUBLISHER OF**

# Stuff

Get the following  
every 4 weeks:

How to improve your  
photo technique

Advice on the best  
kit for you

New monthly edition from the  
Amateur Photographer team

**3 Great reasons to subscribe**

**1** Free home delivery

**2** Never miss an issue

**3** Save over £16

**ORDER  
NOW**

Visit [shop.kelsey.co.uk/APPADS](http://shop.kelsey.co.uk/APPADS)

Call 01959 543 747 and quote APPADS

**Stuff**

# TOP TEN

OF EVERYTHING

This gadget has leapt straight outta testing and into our rankings.

**NEW**

**HOT BUY**

**BARGAIN BUY**

**UPDATE**

Time changes everything, including *Stuff* Top Ten entries.

Searing with techy genius, a product that's set our hearts aflame.

A solid gold bargain. Worth owning, regardless of cashflow.



HOW TO USE THEM

Smartphones	83
Headphones	84
Smartwatches, fitness tech	85
Laptops	86
Speakers	87
TVs	88
Soundbars, streamers	89

Tablets, consoles	90
Games	91
E-bikes etc, electric cars	92
Smart home	93
VR headsets & games	94
Drones & action cams, tech toys	95
Cameras	96
Budget buys	97

1

HOT  
BUY

UPDATE



## Samsung Galaxy S20 5G

£899 / [stuff.tv/S205G](http://stuff.tv/S205G)

The bigger and flashier S20+ and S20 Ultra models are the headline-grabbers, but the 'basic' Galaxy S20 feels like the Goldilocks of flagship phones right now – and it's a fair bit cheaper than some. It delivers excellent battery life, a phenomenal display, blistering performance and superb photos. The only question is, are the new S21 models (see p31) good enough to keep Samsung out in front?

Stuff says ★★★★★

All the features you'd want in a flagship smartphone, plus a few more



● NOW ADD THIS

**SanDisk Ultra Dual Drive 128GB**

This USB-C drive will double your S20's 128GB storage to 256GB for a lot less than you might expect.

£13 / [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)

### TIPS & TRICKS

- Slide your thumb in from the edge and back for one-handed mode, which adjusts the screen layout.
- Screen recording is great for capturing Instagram live sessions. You'll find it in system settings.
- Single-take mode uses all the lenses to snap various stills and video clips to cherry-pick from.

2



### Apple iPhone 12

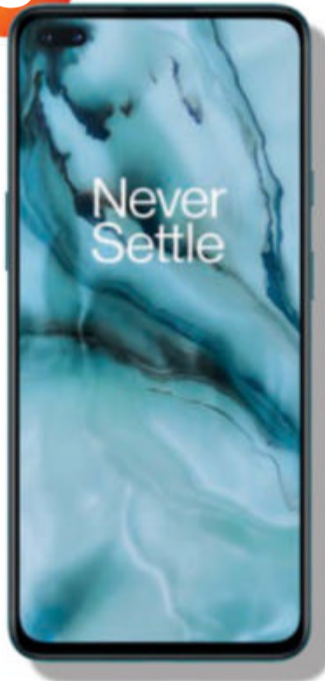
from £799 / [stuff.tv/iPhone12](http://stuff.tv/iPhone12)

We loved the iPhone 11, and its successor carries a whole host of improvements. If you can live without the telephoto camera of the flagship 12 Pro (and most can), you should save yourself some cash and get the 12 instead. In many ways it's the same phone.

Stuff says ★★★★★

A top display and all the power you'll ever need in an iPhone

3



### OnePlus Nord

from £379 / [stuff.tv/Nord](http://stuff.tv/Nord)

OnePlus wanted to get back to its bargain roots with the Nord, and it's mostly pulled it off. You may not get a top-end CPU, but the rest is here: reliable performance, a solid camera, a strong OLED screen and plenty of storage... and it's still classier than a Moto.

Stuff says ★★★★★

This is one of the best-value 5G smartphones you can buy

4



### Apple iPhone 12 Pro

★★★★★ from £999 / [stuff.tv/12Pro](http://stuff.tv/12Pro)

An iPhone for the few and not the many, the 12 Pro is suited to serious photo fiddlers and AR explorers.

5

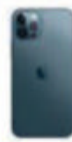


### Realme X50 Pro 5G

★★★★★ £434 / [stuff.tv/X50Pro](http://stuff.tv/X50Pro)

Realme's high-spec, mid-price marvel makes for a compelling alternative to a OnePlus.

6



### Apple iPhone 12 Pro Max

★★★★★ from £1099 / [stuff.tv/12ProMax](http://stuff.tv/12ProMax)

The only choice if you want to fully Max your iPhone experience... but not a big upgrade over the 12 Pro.

7



### OnePlus 8

★★★★★ from £549 / [stuff.tv/OnePlus8](http://stuff.tv/OnePlus8)

The mid-range Android king glides stylishly over the 5G hump. See also the plainer but zippier 8T model.

8



### Apple iPhone 12 Mini

★★★★★ from £699 / [stuff.tv/12Mini](http://stuff.tv/12Mini)

A 5.4in-screened cutie packing Apple's lauded A14 Bionic chip and the same cameras as the iPhone 12.

9



### Samsung Galaxy Z Fold2

★★★★★ £1799 / [stuff.tv/ZFold2](http://stuff.tv/ZFold2)

Still prohibitively expensive, but the first folding phone that doesn't feel like an awkward prototype.

10



### Sony Xperia 5 II

★★★★★ £799 / [stuff.tv/Xperia5ii](http://stuff.tv/Xperia5ii)

Everything we loved about the Xperia 1 II, made a lot more affordable with minimal compromise.

1

HOT  
BUY

## Bose QuietComfort Earbuds

£250 / [stuff.tv/QCE](https://stuff.tv/QCE)

They're bulkier than the average in-ears and come with a ridiculously large case, but otherwise the QC Earbuds are difficult to knock. The noise-cancelling doesn't do a disservice to the esteemed QC name, it's hugely customisable, and the buds themselves sound great: bassier than you might expect, but in a nicely rounded way that retains lots of detail. They're at the upper end where price is concerned – but if silence is what you seek, you currently won't find better.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

A fun listen with excellent noise-cancelling skills, these are the best buds to stick in your ears

1

HOT  
BUY

## Sony WH-1000XM4

£309 / [stuff.tv/XM4](https://stuff.tv/XM4)

With their perfect balance of wearability, active noise-cancelling prowess and audio performance, there just hasn't been a better package than the Sony XM3s... until now. The XM4s look and sound almost identical, but a range of new features – including Speak-to-Chat, which stops the music when you start talking – aims to lure you away from your current 'phones. If those are the XM3s, it's tough to justify the upgrade; but it's going to take something extraordinary to knock Sony off its perch now.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

Not surprisingly given their heritage, these are the best all-round noise-cancelling headphones you can buy

2



### Sony WF-1000XM3

£168 / [stuff.tv/WFXM3](https://stuff.tv/WFXM3)

The way Sony's XM3 buds serve up such spectacular sound quality while being truly wireless, while effectively cancelling background noise and while remaining comfortable in the ears, is quite something.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

Great design and stunning performance

2



### Sony WH-1000XM3

£219 / [stuff.tv/XM3](https://stuff.tv/XM3)

Only just outshone by the new XM4s, Sony's previous flagship over-ears still offer reliable Bluetooth, great active noise-cancellation and fantastic sound quality – and they're now available at a bargain price.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

Sony's last-gen ANC cans remain a class act

3



### Technics EAH-AZ70W

£170 / [stuff.tv/AZ70W](https://stuff.tv/AZ70W)

Technics has shrunk down its hi-fi skills to deliver affordable personal audio. While the charging case lacks a little juice, the AZ70s score highly for noise-cancelling and even higher when it comes to sound quality.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

Technics' true wireless debut is a sonic triumph

3



### Bowers & Wilkins PX7

£349 / [stuff.tv/PX7](https://stuff.tv/PX7)

B&W's second ANC headphones place greater emphasis on comfort and are all the better for it, while the noise-killing is as effective as you'll find anywhere. Oh, and they sound flipping good too.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

B&W takes on the best with top-class cans

4



### Campfire Audio Ara

★★★★★ £1299 / [stuff.tv/Ara](https://stuff.tv/Ara)

These exquisite in-ear monitors offer a neutral tone with astonishing clarity.

4



### Bose NCH 700

★★★★★ £350 / [stuff.tv/BoseNCH700](https://stuff.tv/BoseNCH700)

Great ANC, and you won't find a better voice pickup system than Bose's.

5



### Sennheiser Momentum True Wireless 2

★★★★★ £279 / [stuff.tv/MTW2](https://stuff.tv/MTW2)

A pleasure to listen to, no matter what sort of music you want to hear.

5



### Philips Fidelio X3

★★★★★ £299 / [stuff.tv/FidelioX3](https://stuff.tv/FidelioX3)

These bonkers-big cans are one of the best ways we can think of to enjoy some 'me time'.

1

HOT BUY



## Samsung Galaxy Watch3

from £349 / [stuff.tv/GW3](https://stuff.tv/GW3)

Sneaking into the top berth courtesy of a slightly underwhelming Apple Watch update, Samsung's gorgeous Watch3 is an easy wearable to love. It's superbly made and very attractive, and the spinning bezel makes it a joy to use. Samsung's Tizen OS is slick too, with lots of customisation and shortcut options to keep things feeling fresh – made all the better by a class-leading screen. It also has all the fitness skills you're ever likely to need, with handy auto-tracking features.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

A beautiful and powerful piece of kit that you'll be proud to have on your wrist

1

HOT BUY

BARGAIN BUY



## Mi Smart Band 5

£30 / [stuff.tv/MiBand5](https://stuff.tv/MiBand5)

With no installable apps, Xiaomi's dinky wearable can't stack up to smartwatches or reply to notifications, but it can relay alerts and track everything from sleep to workouts. It's better than the Mi Smart Band 4, thanks to a bigger and brighter screen, smarter software and a charger that's much less annoying. The slightly reduced battery life really isn't an issue – and with the addition of activity, stress and menstrual cycle tracking, this is a £30 gift that keeps giving.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

Fantastic value and decent features make this an easy fitness tracker to recommend

2



## Garmin Fenix 6

£421 / [stuff.tv/Fenix6](https://stuff.tv/Fenix6)

Anyone who's truly into their fitness will appreciate the Fenix 6's endless feature list. This is the finest fitness watch money can buy – if you're getting more serious about shaping up, you can't go wrong here.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

The best fitness-orientated smartwatch

2



## Peloton Bike+

£2295 + £39/m / [stuff.tv/PelPlus](https://stuff.tv/PelPlus)

A fitness phenomenon based around a connected bike with a Full HD touchscreen that streams live and on-demand training sessions 24/7. The '+' version brings some useful upgrades, including a bigger screen.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

Peloton owners look smug for a reason

3



## Apple Watch Series 6

from £379 / [stuff.tv/WatchS6](https://stuff.tv/WatchS6)

The Series 6 is a superb smartwatch with ambitions to be a total wellness deity; but while the new sensors are useful, they're not vital for most. This is a fine statement gadget, but there are better deals to be had.

**Stuff says ★★★★★☆**

A great all-rounder, especially for iPhone users

3



## Wattbike Atom (Next Generation)

£1899 / [stuff.tv/WBAtom](https://stuff.tv/WBAtom)

The latest upgrade to the already exceptional Wattbike Atom indoor cycling trainer brings electromagnetic resistance, enhanced sensors that check your data 1000 times every second, plus improved power output.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

The benchmark for serious indoor cyclists

4



## Apple Watch SE

★★★★☆ from £269 / [stuff.tv/WatchSE](https://stuff.tv/WatchSE)

The most obvious alternative to the Watch Series 6 – and it looks identical.

4



## Slinger

★★★★★ £780 / [stuff.tv/Slinger](https://stuff.tv/Slinger)

Finally, a tennis practice partner that genuinely wants you to get better.

5



## Oppo Watch

★★★★☆ from £187 / [stuff.tv/OW](https://stuff.tv/OW)

This Apple Watch lookalike streamlines Wear OS to put it ahead of many rivals.

5



## Hyperice Hypervolt with Bluetooth

★★★★★ £348 / [stuff.tv/Hyperice](https://stuff.tv/Hyperice)

A sadistic wellness coach that will pummel you into a new personal best.



1

HOT  
BUY**TIPS & TRICKS**

The Sidecar feature on macOS Big Sur lets you use an iPad as a second display for your MacBook.

Apple charges a hefty premium for extra storage, so consider a cheaper external SSD.



## Apple MacBook Air (M1)

from £999 / [stuff.tv/AirM1](https://stuff.tv/AirM1)

The early-2020 version was already the best MacBook Air ever – and this one brings a real step up in power. Apple's amazing new M1 processor means that, for once, we aren't hankering after a Pro for video editing and graphics-heavy gaming. It's a pity about the rubbish camera, but this is a stunning laptop in every other respect.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

**Our go-to MacBook just keeps getting even go-to-er**



● **NOW ADD THIS**

**Satechi Type-C USB 3 Combo Hub**

Two ports not enough? This hub adds loads more and sits snugly against the MacBook Air's side.

£49 / [amazon.co.uk](https://amazon.co.uk)

2



### Apple MacBook Pro 13in (M1)

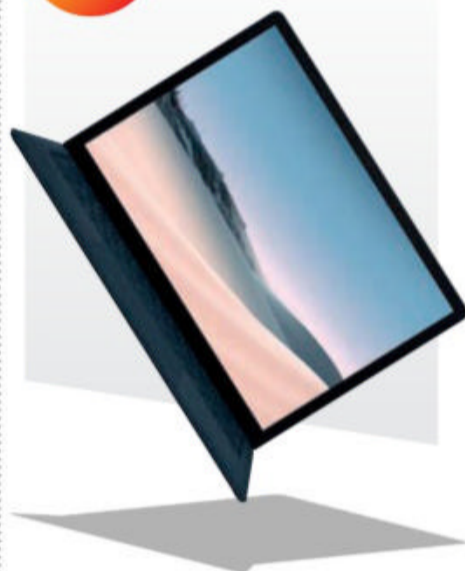
from £1299 / [stuff.tv/Pro13M1](https://stuff.tv/Pro13M1)

The new M1 chip has given this business-class performer an injection of jet fuel. The 13in Pro remains a sturdy notebook, but its processing power is incredible. Our review unit, with just 8GB of RAM, left a higher-specced 2020 Intel MacBook Pro in the dust.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

**Believe the hype: the Pro with an M1 chip inside kicks big, big bottom**

3



### Microsoft Surface Laptop 3

from £849 / [stuff.tv/SurfaceLap3](https://stuff.tv/SurfaceLap3)

The Surface Laptop 3 seems plain on paper – no second screen, no graphics card, no hybrid hinge, no fingerprint scanner – but Microsoft has put supreme attention to detail into every bit that matters. The keyboard, the speakers and the overall build quality are all superb.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

**Forget frills and gimmicks: this is everything a laptop should be**

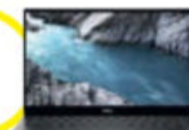
4



### Apple MacBook Pro 16in

★★★★★ from £2399 / [stuff.tv/MacBookPro16](https://stuff.tv/MacBookPro16)  
Not just a bump up in screen size, but a serious upgrade to the already top-class 15in Pro.

5



### Dell XPS 13

★★★★★ from £1379 / [stuff.tv/XPS13](https://stuff.tv/XPS13)  
Style, portability, performance... there's nothing else out there that's quite so well rounded.

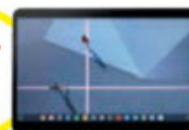
6



### Huawei MateBook X Pro

★★★★★ from £799 / [stuff.tv/MateBookXPro](https://stuff.tv/MateBookXPro)  
Not massively better than the 2018 model, but this is a real powerhouse of a Windows laptop.

7



### Google Pixelbook Go

★★★★☆ from £629 / [stuff.tv/PixelbookGo](https://stuff.tv/PixelbookGo)  
A light and stylish touchscreen laptop built for those who like to live and work in the cloud.

NEW

8



### Microsoft Surface Laptop Go

★★★★☆ from £549 / [stuff.tv/LaptopGo](https://stuff.tv/LaptopGo)  
A well-built ultraportable that does the basics well, but others offer more power for less cash.

9



### MSI GS66 Stealth

★★★★☆ from £1399 / [stuff.tv/GS66](https://stuff.tv/GS66)  
Gets hot and bothered at times, but a great fit for gaming/work jugglers.

10



### Razer Blade 15 Advanced

★★★★☆ from £2350 / [stuff.tv/BladeAdvanced](https://stuff.tv/BladeAdvanced)  
Razer's Blade models are our favourite gaming laptops, and this is a worthy flagship.

1

HOT  
BUY**TIPS & TRICKS**

You can control your Move with the touch controls on top, the Sonos app, Google Assistant or Alexa.

Auto Trueplay adapts the Move's sound to different rooms, while the app offers additional EQ tweaks.

**Sonos Move**£399 / [stuff.tv/SonosMove](http://stuff.tv/SonosMove)

The Sonos range of wireless speakers had been crying out for a battery-powered portable model for ages – and finally our favourite multiroom audio specialist caved in. Luckily, the Move was worth the wait. Its adaptability and sound quality mean it's fine value for money, and a no-brainer for anyone who's already a fan of the brand. Not only is this the speaker Sonos should have launched years ago – it's one of the best products of its type and price that we've heard.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

**Sonos finally gets up to speed with the portable speaker craze, and in style**



● **NOW ADD THIS Primephonic**

Bringing sexy Bach, this is streaming for classical music. Niche, yes, but its not-on-Spotify film and game scores offer a great way into the genre. from £9.99/month / [primephonic.com](http://primephonic.com)

2

**Sonos One**£199 / [stuff.tv/SonosOne](http://stuff.tv/SonosOne)

The Sonos One is now a more well-rounded device than it was at launch, supporting Spotify with voice control as well as Amazon Music and TuneIn Radio, while the early Alexa hiccups seem to have been fixed. It's a class apart from the competition.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

**A great balance of sound and smarts for forward-thinking audio nerds**

3

**Naim Mu-so 2nd Generation**£1290 / [stuff.tv/Mu-so2](http://stuff.tv/Mu-so2)

The second Mu-so is a fuller, richer, more detailed and louder listen than the model it replaces, with lots of added functionality, and is every bit as handsome and decorative. It's more than capable of maintaining Naim's position at the front of the hi-fi pack.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

**Naim's luxury wireless speaker sequel is an improvement all round**

4

**B&W Formation Wedge**★★★★★ £900 / [stuff.tv/BWWedge](http://stuff.tv/BWWedge)

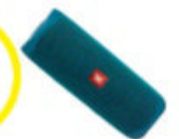
Pricy, weird-looking... and a brilliant illustration of what a wireless speaker is capable of.

5

**Marshall Emberton**★★★★★ £130 / [stuff.tv/Emberton](http://stuff.tv/Emberton)

A tiny speaker that packs an unexpected punch without scrimping on refinement.

6

**JBL Flip 5 Eco**★★★★★ £120 / [stuff.tv/Flip5Eco](http://stuff.tv/Flip5Eco)

A portable party speaker that does its bit for the green cause while sounding fantastic.

7

**JBL Xtreme 2**★★★★★ £149 / [stuff.tv/Xtreme2](http://stuff.tv/Xtreme2)

A hefty portable speaker that growls with confidence whatever you play through it.

8

**Small Transparent Speaker**★★★★★ £450 / [stuff.tv/Transparent](http://stuff.tv/Transparent)

Stylish, portable, loud enough for any bedside table... and now also available in matt black.

9

**Klipsch The Fives**★★★★★ £829 / [stuff.tv/TheFives](http://stuff.tv/TheFives)

Stacks of functionality in a couple of tidy speakers that make up a one-plug hi-fi system.

10

**KEF LSX**★★★★★ £999 (pair) / [stuff.tv/KEFLSX](http://stuff.tv/KEFLSX)

Fine stereo hi-fi sound without cables... plus look out for the LS50 Wireless II and LS50 Meta.

1

HOT  
BUY**TIPS & TRICKS**

Filmmaker Mode switches off the picture-processing so you see films the way the director intended.

Hit the remote's Ambilight button for a selection of lighting effects based on motion or music.

The soundbar can be used as part of a multiroom system with compatible DTS Play-Fi speakers.

**Philips 48OLED+935**£1799 / [stuff.tv/OLED935](http://stuff.tv/OLED935)

Close to two grand for a 48in TV is no one's idea of a bargain. But when you consider the level of audio-visual fidelity this money buys, not to mention the convenience of the integrated soundbar, it's hard to suggest the 48OLED+935 isn't worth every penny. Next-gen gamers may lament the lack of HDMI 2.1, but for anyone other than the most ardent button-bashers the lovely picture (with Ambilight) is quite immersive enough.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

Expensive for its size, but the wonderful picture and sound justify the price



● **NOW ADD THIS Philips TAW6205**

This wireless DTS Play-Fi speaker offers 40W of power, is wrapped in Kvadrat acoustic fabric and includes built-in Ambilight LEDs.

£180 / [selfridges.com](http://selfridges.com)

2

**Philips 65OLED+984**£2777 / [stuff.tv/OLED984](http://stuff.tv/OLED984)

Only surpassed by the even better OLED+935 above, our second-favourite Philips TV offers outstanding picture performance with universal HDR support, and goes above and beyond what we expect from television sound thanks to a custom-made speaker system from British hi-fi brand Bowers & Wilkins. Plus it looks gorgeous in any living room, particularly with that four-sided Ambilight in full effect.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

A television that goes big on design, performance and sound

3

**Samsung 75Q950TS**£6999 / [stuff.tv/Q950TS](http://stuff.tv/Q950TS)

It's not like every home has even taken up 4K yet, so who needs an 8K telly? And yet, despite everything – the price, the lack of 8K content to actually watch, the price again – the Samsung 75Q950TS is an absolute stormer in the picture stakes. Upscaling from lower resolutions is stunningly impressive; and if you positively must have the best images you can buy, along with as much future-proofing as possible, then this is currently the TV for you.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

Ridiculously extravagant... but no other 75in TV looks quite so elegant

4

**LG OLED 65GX**★★★★★ £2299 / [stuff.tv/OLEDGX](http://stuff.tv/OLEDGX)

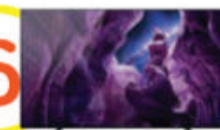
Expensive, yes, but once you see it on your wall you'll forget all that.

5

**LG OLED 55CX**★★★★★ £1299 / [stuff.tv/OLED55CX](http://stuff.tv/OLED55CX)

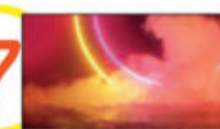
LG knows exactly what it's doing with OLED and the results here are mighty impressive.

6

**Sony KD65A8**★★★★★ £1999 / [stuff.tv/SonyA8](http://stuff.tv/SonyA8)

What's a few gaps in specification when performance is as barnstorming as this?

7

**Philips 55OLED805**★★★★★ £1499 / [stuff.tv/OLED805](http://stuff.tv/OLED805)

All the things we love about OLED without the flagship price tag.

8

**Samsung QE65Q65T**★★★★★ £1099 / [stuff.tv/Q65T](http://stuff.tv/Q65T)

Overlook the humdrum sound and this is one of the best pound-for-pound goggleboxes around.

9

**Sony KD-49XG9005**★★★★★ £769 / [stuff.tv/XG9005](http://stuff.tv/XG9005)

Other Sony TVs are bigger and slimmer, but none can match this one for value.

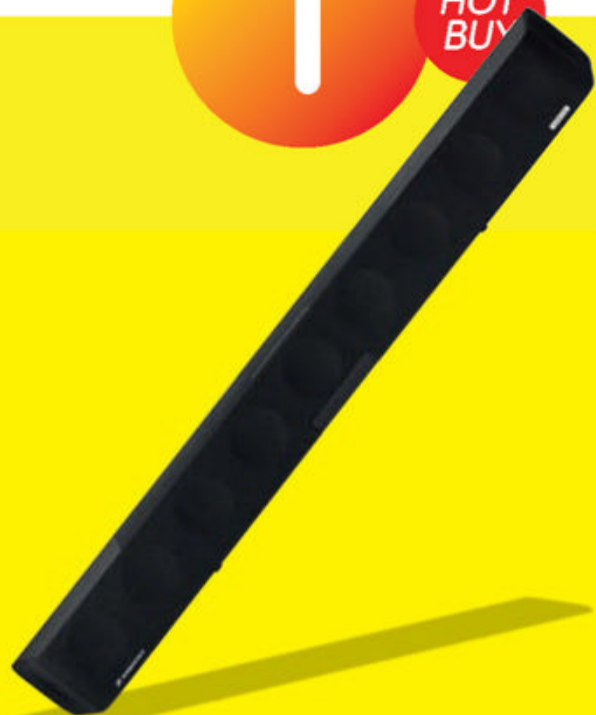
10

**Panasonic TX-58GX800**★★★★★ £649 / [stuff.tv/58GX800](http://stuff.tv/58GX800)

Not the last word in picture excellence, but this is a lot of TV for the money.

1

HOT BUY



## Sennheiser Ambeo Soundbar

£2199 / [stuff.tv/AmbeoSoundbar](http://stuff.tv/AmbeoSoundbar)

Utterly convincing Dolby Atmos and DTS:X 3D sound, ample power and lots of inputs mean no other soundbar currently available can perform feats with the solidity and confidence of this Sennheiser. The sheer room-filling scale of this device's sound is remarkable, and it's hard to think of any content that wouldn't benefit from being Ambeo'd. That's why, as well as being the biggest and the most expensive, it's the best you can buy.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

The Ambeo Soundbar is a big unit but the sound it makes is bigger still

2



### Sonos Arc

£799 / [stuff.tv/SonosArc](http://stuff.tv/SonosArc)

Don't expect this soundbar to do everything a multi-speaker Dolby Atmos setup can do, but its up-firing and side-firing drivers give a real sense of scale for an immersively cinematic TV-watching experience.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

Big-screen sound for your big-screen binges

3



### Roku Streambar

£130 / [stuff.tv/Streambar](http://stuff.tv/Streambar)

It's a compact soundbar and a versatile streaming stick in the same box – and both parts of the deal work brilliantly well. This is the simplest and cheapest way to upgrade your TV's sound and smarts in one go.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

A punchy little bar with built-in streaming skills

4



### Sonos Beam

★★★★★ £399 / [stuff.tv/SonosBeam](http://stuff.tv/SonosBeam)

Sonos's great-value Alexa soundbar is affordable and packed with smarts.

5



### B&O Beosound Stage

★★★★★ from £1250 / [stuff.tv/BeosoundStage](http://stuff.tv/BeosoundStage)

A classy offering from the tasteful hi-fi kings, with the performance to back up its price.

1

HOT BUY



## Sky TV

from £25/month + setup / [stuff.tv/SkyTV](http://stuff.tv/SkyTV)

Already home to the biggest selection of 4K content, from blockbuster films and original dramas to top-flight sport, Sky has adopted a can't-beat-'em-join-'em approach to streaming by incorporating the likes of Netflix, Disney+ and BT Sport in its user-friendly interface – and now Amazon Prime Video too. It's also restructured its packages to make them more affordable, while multiroom and mobile options round off the most comprehensive content system money can buy.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

Sky has come out fighting to move with the times and its selection of shows is unrivalled

2



### Amazon Fire TV Cube

£110 / [stuff.tv/FireTVCube](http://stuff.tv/FireTVCube)

The Fire TV interface is easy to use and all the big catch-up services are available via this tidy box – and best of all, Alexa voice control works brilliantly. You'll never have to worry about losing the remote again!

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

A marvel of voice control for your telly

3



### Amazon Fire TV Stick 4K (2018)

£50 / [stuff.tv/FireStick4K](http://stuff.tv/FireStick4K)

This streaming stick offers 4K plus a faster processor than the original Fire TV Stick, and comes with an Alexa Voice Remote... but look out also for the cheaper non-4K version and the bargain Lite model.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

Simply a great 4K streaming stick

4



### Chromecast with Google TV

★★★★★ £60 / [stuff.tv/ChromecastTV](http://stuff.tv/ChromecastTV)

A solid buy if you like Google's casting tricks but also want all your TV apps in one place.

5



### Amazon Fire TV Stick (2020)

★★★★★ £40 / [stuff.tv/FireStick](http://stuff.tv/FireStick)

A solid little HD streamer for all the best bits of Amazon and more.

1

HOT BUY



## Apple iPad Air (2020)

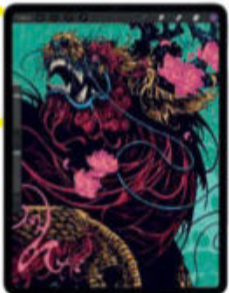
from £579 / [stuff.tv/iPadAir](http://stuff.tv/iPadAir)

The 4th-generation iPad Air ushers in big changes. It looks the spit of an 11in iPad Pro (at least from the front), and supports Apple's snazzy Magic Keyboard and second-gen Pencil... and the A14 chip makes it blazingly fast, leaving its predecessor in the dust. Sure, there are compromises, but none are critical. So if you were considering an iPad Pro but don't care about audio apps in portrait, a 12.9in display or more advanced cameras, save yourself a couple of hundred quid and buy the new Air instead.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

Pointing to the iPad's future rather than its past, this is a meaningful, impressive, powerful Air update

2



## Apple iPad Pro

from £769 / [stuff.tv/iPadPro](http://stuff.tv/iPadPro)

With its huge and super-slick 120Hz Liquid Retina screen, ludicrously speedy internals and double-lens camera, this is one working device to rule them all – and the best tablet to replace your laptop.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

Apple's mega-tablet is a performance beast

3



## Microsoft Surface Go 2

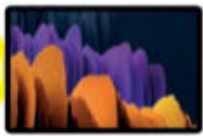
from £399 / [stuff.tv/SurfaceGo2](http://stuff.tv/SurfaceGo2)

The Surface Go 2 feels less user-friendly and slick than an iPad, but pair it with the optional Type Cover and it turns into a neat mini-laptop. It's also a surprisingly good way to play games.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

Just enough power to be a genuine iPad rival

4



## Samsung Galaxy Tab S7+

★★★★☆ from £719 / [stuff.tv/TabS7Plus](http://stuff.tv/TabS7Plus)

A true iPad Pro alternative that brilliantly balances productivity and entertainment.

5



## Apple iPad (2020)

★★★★☆ from £329 / [stuff.tv/iPad2020](http://stuff.tv/iPad2020)

The A12 Bionic chip turns Apple's cheapest tab into an absolute powerhouse.

1

HOT BUY



## Sony PlayStation 5

£450 / [stuff.tv/PS5](http://stuff.tv/PS5)

The PS5 is not a modest upgrade. Its hulking design means it'll make a bad first impression on some, but spend time playing it and it'll soon win you over – and then some. This is essentially a high-spec gaming PC for the living room: stupendously powerful, with greatly reduced loading times compared to the PS4. Most last-gen titles will run fine, many with a boost, and the line-up of new games is strong; we just hope developers make use of that fascinating DualSense pad and its haptic feedback trickery.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

Huge power, clever hardware and a guarantee of great games to come make the PS5 hard to resist

2



## Nintendo Switch

£280 / [stuff.tv/NintendoSwitch](http://stuff.tv/NintendoSwitch)

Nintendo's console earned a promotion in our list after it impressed us with a growing list of fantastic games. Plus, no other device here offers the joy of portable gaming. Train journeys will never be boring again.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

This 2-in-1 console is the real deal

3



## Sony PlayStation 4 Pro

£350 / [stuff.tv/PS4Pro](http://stuff.tv/PS4Pro)

If you're in no great hurry to go next-gen, the PS4 Pro remains a supremely powerful console with a dizzying line-up of top-class games. It's discontinued now, but there are still some kicking around.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

The best last-gen system for 4K gaming

4



## Microsoft Xbox Series X

★★★★☆ £450 / [stuff.tv/XSX](http://stuff.tv/XSX)

A fully future-proofed beast of a console that needs more games to make it sing.

5



## Microsoft Xbox Series S

★★★★☆ £250 / [stuff.tv/XSS](http://stuff.tv/XSS)

Delivers affordability without sacrificing key features, but still falls short on new titles.

1

HOT  
BUY**The Last of Us Part II**

£30 / PS4

Just as *The Last of Us* proved to be the perfect swansong for the PS3 era, *The Last of Us Part II* is a masterful triumph to see off the PS4 in style: a rare superior sequel that can be mentioned in the same breath as *The Godfather Part II*. An unparalleled masterclass in everything it does, with an extensive suite of accessibility options that every game should adopt as the standard, it's a game with a story that challenges us – and one we'll be discussing long into the new console generation.

**Stuff says ★★★★★****Naughty Dog has done it again with this brutal, bleak and beautiful game**● **OR PLAY THIS****Uncharted: The Lost Legacy**

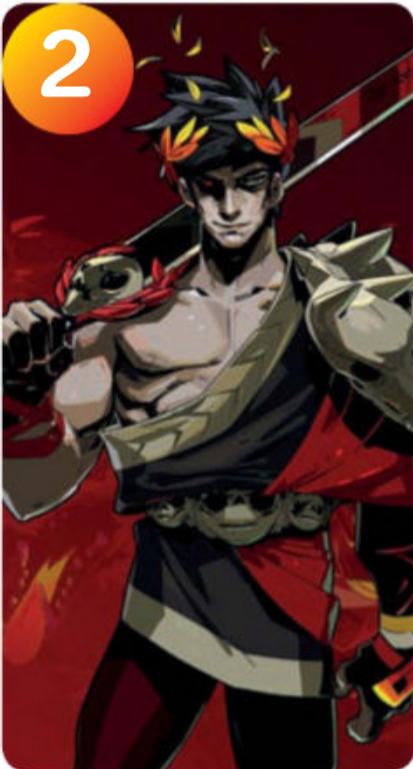
A leaner and somewhat less grim action adventure from Naughty Dog, starring a pair of kick-ass women.

£12 / PS4

● **TIPS & TRICKS**

- Take your time exploring – you'll find key resources, notes, even some fun Easter eggs.
- Not keen on all the violence? A lot of confrontations can be avoided. Just look out for sniffer dogs!

2

**Hades**

from £18 / PC, Switch

Just when you think you've seen all this hellish roguelite has to offer, a new tweak yanks you out of your comfort zone. It quickly becomes very addictive... and even if you'll have to face numerous setbacks, few games make you feel so godly.

**Stuff says ★★★★★****Great even if you don't like roguelites ...and if you do, it's the best there is**

3

**Demon's Souls**

£60 / PS5

This is a lovingly attentive remake that transforms an old game into a next-gen must-play. It's going to make you work for it, as beneath that shiny new coat it remains a uniquely foreboding challenge, but overcoming *Demon's Souls* is its own reward.

**Stuff says ★★★★★****A gorgeous and faithful remake of a hugely influential cult classic**

4

**Doom Eternal**

★★★★★ from £15 / all platforms

A ferocious shooter that marries incredible production values with cathartic ultraviolence.

5

**Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales**

★★★★★ £45 / PS5, PS4

A visually stunning superhero romp, ideal for showing off the power of your new PS5.

6

**Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 1 + 2**

★★★★★ from £33 / PS4, XB1, PC

A superb remake of two of the best sports games ever committed to disc.

7

**Final Fantasy VII Remake**

★★★★★ £32 / PS4

The greatest remake of one of the all-time greatest video games.

8

**Ori and the Will of the Wisps**

★★★★☆ from £25 / Switch, XSX, XB1, PC

A sequel to get well and truly lost in, plucking your heartstrings as it tests your gaming mettle.

9

**Assassin's Creed Valhalla**

★★★★☆ from £38 / all platforms

A brilliant instalment with meaty combat and a world ripe for pillaging.

10

**Animal Crossing: New Horizons**

★★★★☆ £37 / Switch

A life-sim with enough personality to keep you coming back for years.

1

HOT  
BUY

## VanMoof S3

£1798 / [stuff.tv/VanMoofS3](http://stuff.tv/VanMoofS3)

VanMoof's second-gen S3 (or X3 if you're under 5ft 8in) looks like a normal bike, rides like a normal bike and, crucially, doesn't cost a ridiculous amount of cash. The chunky 50mm tyres, slightly swooped bars and upright riding position all combine to make it super-comfy, and 30 miles with the power assistance set to level three (out of four) left us completely sweat-free with 20% still in the tank. Plus, for such a looker, the S3 has a lot of tech hidden away to make it a less than ideal target for thieves.

Stuff says ★★★★★

This smart-looking e-bike offers a great ride, great features and some genuinely useful security smarts

2



## Cowboy 3

£1990 / [stuff.tv/Cowboy3](http://stuff.tv/Cowboy3)

The 43-mile range, app-controlled lights, smart tracking and anti-theft tech make this bike a true commuter contender. It's a handsome steed, and a close match for the VanMoof on performance.

Stuff says ★★★★★

A light e-bike that's ideal for commuting

3



## Specialized Turbo Vado SL 5.0 EQ

£4000 / [stuff.tv/VadoSL](http://stuff.tv/VadoSL)

With the electrics hidden away in the frame, this hybrid bike looks pretty discreet – but it has a mass of added extras, including an extra boost of assistance for daunting hills and a kickstand for statement propping.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Pricey, but well built and a real easy rider

4



## GoCycle GX

★★★★★ £2899 / [stuff.tv/GoCycleGX](http://stuff.tv/GoCycleGX)

A foldaway e-bike that's awesome and expensive in equal measure.

5



## Ribble Hybrid AL e

★★★★★ £2199 / [stuff.tv/RibbleHybrid](http://stuff.tv/RibbleHybrid)

A secret e-bike that proves you don't need fancy extras for an excellent ride.

1

HOT  
BUY

## Porsche Taycan

from £83,580 / [stuff.tv/Taycan](http://stuff.tv/Taycan)

It was about time someone took the fight to Tesla, and boy has Porsche delivered with the Taycan. This electric four-door saloon is the EV that petrolheads have been waiting for. In full-fat Turbo S flavour, the Taycan hits 62mph in 2.8 seconds – and adding more drama to proceedings is how it shifts up through its two-speed gearbox. The Taycan has a dynamism that can't be matched by other electric cars, with a surefootedness that encourages you to press on.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Big power, sports-car handling and lots of clever tech make the Taycan the most exciting EV yet

2



## Honda E

from £27,160 / [stuff.tv/HondaE](http://stuff.tv/HondaE)

Born to be a city commuter (its maximum range is just 137 miles), the E is light, nimble and planted, but also delivers a completely comfortable and saloon-like refined ride for longer journeys.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Pricier than the equivalent Mini... but more fun

3



## Polestar 2

from £46,900 / [stuff.tv/Polestar2](http://stuff.tv/Polestar2)

From Volvo's EV subsidiary, this five-door all-electric fastback blends elements of a futuristic saloon with bits of an SUV and totally gets away with it... thanks in part to a staggering 660Nm of torque.

Stuff says ★★★★★

A speedy five-door EV that's a joy to drive

NEW

4



## Volkswagen ID.3

★★★★★ from £32,990 / [stuff.tv/ID3](http://stuff.tv/ID3)

A solid hatchback that looks ice-cold but is equally good at the mundane stuff.

5



## Nissan Leaf

★★★★★ from £26,845 / [stuff.tv/NissanLeaf](http://stuff.tv/NissanLeaf)

An accomplished family car that packs some serious range, performance and gadgetry.

● Electric car prices include government plug-in car grant (PiCG)

1

HOT  
BUY

## Amazon Echo (4th Gen)

£70 / [stuff.tv/Echo](http://stuff.tv/Echo)

Having morphed from a cylinder to a sphere, the latest Echo is an excellent newsreader, weather forecaster, personal assistant and intercom straight out of the box; but it's now also a capable speaker and a very accessible smart home hub. It doesn't sound as good as the Sonos One or Apple HomePod for listening to music, but it's significantly smarter than both and considerably cheaper too.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**  
An all-round upgrade that makes the Echo a smarter speaker than ever



**● NOW ADD THIS**  
**Honeywell T6R**

This Zigbee-enabled thermostat is wireless so you can place it where it's most convenient.  
£156 / [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)

### TIPS & TRICKS

- The Echo's built-in Zigbee hub can hook up hundreds of smart home devices without a bridge.
- Pair a compatible thermostat and the Echo's temperature sensor can activate the heating.
- Alexa Flash Briefings deliver bursts of news or trivia; choose from 5000 sources in the app.

2



### Amazon Echo Dot (4th Gen)

from £35 / [stuff.tv/Dot](http://stuff.tv/Dot)

It can't match a full-size smart speaker for audio, but as a radio and Alexa assistant for the bedside or kitchen, this cutie gets the job done. It's worth paying £15 more for the 'with Clock' version, which adds extra functionality beyond telling the time.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**  
With the optional clock, this is our favourite bedside wondergadget

3



### Amazon Echo Show 8

£80 / [stuff.tv/EchoShow8](http://stuff.tv/EchoShow8)

This is a bargain smart display that's big enough for easy video chatting and loud enough to fill most rooms. Its 8in touchscreen may not be the most refined, and the sound won't worry Sonos, but you can't really complain at this price.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**  
The Alexa home invasion continues apace with this superb smart display

4



### Google Nest Mini

★★★★★ £49 / [stuff.tv/NestMini](http://stuff.tv/NestMini)

Louder and cleverer than ever... and it'll only improve over time with updates.

5



### Tado Smart Thermostat

★★★★★ from £120 / [stuff.tv/TadoV3Plus](http://stuff.tv/TadoV3Plus)

This heating system roasts the competition with its blend of simplicity and smarts.

6



### Ring Indoor Cam

★★★★★ £49 / [stuff.tv/RingIndoor](http://stuff.tv/RingIndoor)

This cute little spy-cam is a bona fide bargain for anyone with security worries.

7



### Nest Learning Thermostat (3rd Gen)

★★★★★ £183 / [stuff.tv/Nest3](http://stuff.tv/Nest3)

A simple and mess-free smart thermostat with Alexa compatibility.

8



### Philips Hue Starter Kit

★★★★★ from £70 (white) / [stuff.tv/Hue](http://stuff.tv/Hue)

Become an indoor god with the smartest way of lighting up your home remotely.

9



### Brisant-Secure Ultion Smart

★★★★★ from £259 / [stuff.tv/UltionSmart](http://stuff.tv/UltionSmart)

Tradition and tech partner up in a smart lock to please everyone.

10



### Dyson 360 Heurist

★★★★☆ £800 / [stuff.tv/Heurist](http://stuff.tv/Heurist)

Dyson's intelligent robo-vac is really pretty great at sucking (in a good way).



1

HOT BUY



## Oculus Quest 2

from £299 / [stuff.tv/Quest2](http://stuff.tv/Quest2)

The original Quest felt almost too good to be true. Its successor lacks the same wow factor, but you can't argue with a better display and processor – not to mention a lighter, more comfortable build – for less money. Are there more powerful headsets? Is motion sickness still an issue? Yes to both, but superb tracking and a total absence of wires make this the VR package to get... that is, unless you're boycotting Facebook, because you have to be logged in to use it.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Not a complete reinvention, but our favourite VR headset is now even better... and cheaper!

2



### Valve Index

£919 / [stuff.tv/ValveIndex](http://stuff.tv/ValveIndex)

While not revolutionary, the Index carries enough subtle upgrades to put it atop the PC-based headset pack. Everything looks fabulous and the controllers deliver the most fluid-feeling VR interactions to date.

Stuff says ★★★★★

The best of the performance-PC VR options

3



### HTC Vive Pro

£599 (headset only) / [stuff.tv/HTCVivePro](http://stuff.tv/HTCVivePro)

No longer the top dog for high-end VR using a PC, the Vive Pro remains a strong headset thanks to its crisp screens and comfy fit. But the Valve Index beats it for sheer immersiveness.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Impressive, but not the best around in 2021

4



### HTC Vive Cosmos

★★★★☆ £699 / [stuff.tv/Cosmos](http://stuff.tv/Cosmos)

A simple setup with potential for upgrades, but tough to recommend at this price.

5



### PlayStation VR

★★★★☆ from £260 / [stuff.tv/PSVR](http://stuff.tv/PSVR)

Held back by niggling issues... let's hope the rumoured second-gen PSVR will fix those.

1

HOT BUY



## Half-Life: Alyx

from £44 / [Oculus](http://Oculus), [Vive](http://Vive), [Valve Index](http://Valve Index)

Announcing *Alyx* as not only a 'midquel' but a VR exclusive got some *Half-Life* diehards riled up... but in classic Valve fashion, the end result is utterly brilliant. *Alyx* succeeds because its universe just happens to be a perfect fit for the format. It's also larger and much more robust than most VR games, at a meaty 12-15 hours. And though it unfolds at a different kind of cadence to past *Half-Life* games, it feels like a fully fledged solo campaign and a key part of the franchise narrative.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Valve's beloved series returns... and offers one of the strongest arguments to date for VR gaming

2



### Beat Saber

from £23 / [Oculus](http://Oculus), [Vive](http://Vive), [PSVR](http://PSVR)

Gleefully swing your twin lightsabers to chop blocks that are flung your way to the thumping beat of a song. This game has reinvented the rhythm genre for VR and it's glorious, especially on the cable-free Quest.

Stuff says ★★★★★

A mesmerising musical melee

3



### Superhot VR

from £19 / [Oculus](http://Oculus), [Vive](http://Vive), [PSVR](http://PSVR)

There's something really cool about hiding behind a desk before blitzing your opponents with streams of bullets as if you were starring in your very own *Matrix* movie. A wonderfully action-packed title.

Stuff says ★★★★★

A superb 2-in-1 VR puzzler and shooter

4

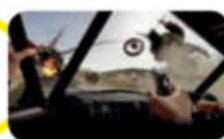


### Astro Bot Rescue Mission

★★★★★ 20 / [PSVR](http://PSVR)

This 3D platformer serves up a heaped helping of *Mario*-esque magic.

5



### Blood & Truth

★★★★★ £16 / [PSVR](http://PSVR)

A rollicking PSVR-exclusive action thriller with brilliant set-pieces and terrific gunplay.

1

HOT BUY



### DJI Mini 2

£419 / [stuff.tv/DJIMini2](http://stuff.tv/DJIMini2)

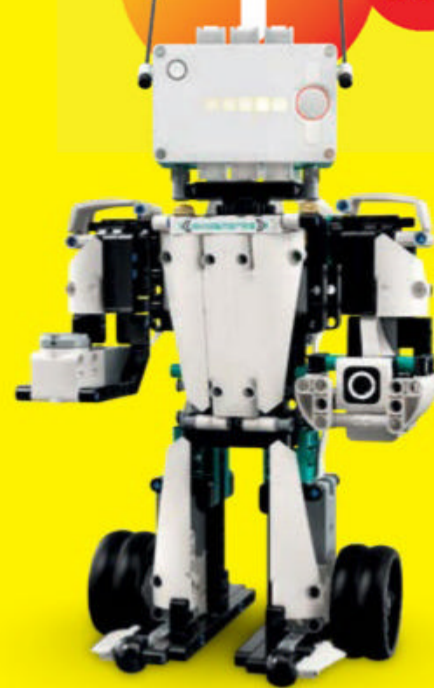
Just light enough to avoid having to be registered with the CAA, DJI's latest pocket drone is a little beast that grabs stellar aerial video. It's also categorically the most intuitive drone *Stuff* has ever used, with a controller that's a multi-function marvel: the basic stick controls are all you really need to get started, with everything the camera sees displayed in real time on your phone using the DJI Fly app. Best of all, unlike the old Mavic Mini, it's capable of shooting in 4K.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

**Fly, shoot, repeat: DJI's latest dinky drone soars above the competition**

1

HOT BUY



### Lego Mindstorms Robot Inventor

£330 / [stuff.tv/Mindstorms](http://stuff.tv/Mindstorms)

It's clear Lego has prioritised immediacy and fun with its latest build-your-own-bots kit, which lets you and/or your little ones create five different coding-controlled mecha-beings. Yes, the set lacks a proper screen and relies on a separate device for programming; but it offers great clarity and scope, plus an attitude that encourages tinkering... whatever your age.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

**A fun, versatile set for Lego electronics newcomers and old hands alike**

2



### DJI Mavic Air 2

£769 / [stuff.tv/MavicAir2](http://stuff.tv/MavicAir2)

DJI has built on the platform of a simple entry-level drone and thrown in a heap of pro features, so those dipping a toe into aerial photography or videography no longer have to put up with mediocre content.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

**This is DJI's finest sub-£1K flyer yet**

2



### Sphero RVR

£260 / [stuff.tv/SpheroRVR](http://stuff.tv/SpheroRVR)

The RVR pulls off the balance between serious coding and knockabout fun perfectly: it's an all-terrain vehicle that you can throw around without worrying about it breaking, but also has serious programming chops.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

**Enough fun to convert any coding-phobe**

3



### GoPro Hero9 Black

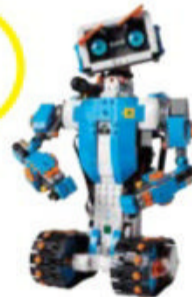
£330 / [stuff.tv/H9B](http://stuff.tv/H9B)

It's bulkier than the Hero8 Black and needs an add-on to match its ultra-wide video... but better image detail, battery life and features make this one of the most versatile bits of filming and photography kit we've used.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

**The pinnacle of action-cam excellence**

3



### Lego Boost Creative Toolbox

£150 / [stuff.tv/LegoCreativeToolbox](http://stuff.tv/LegoCreativeToolbox)

Building Lego is already ridiculously good fun, and when this model's complete it turns into a functioning robot. Simpler than the Mindstorms kit, it can still be programmed to move, fire projectiles and play games.

**Stuff says ★★★★★**

**A programmable Lego kit for younger kids**

4



### GoPro Hero8 Black

★★★★★ £280 / [stuff.tv/H8B](http://stuff.tv/H8B)

Overtaken by the Hero9 Black... but this is still arguably a better option if you don't need 5K.

4



### Sphero Bolt

★★★★★ £150 / [stuff.tv/SpheroBolt](http://stuff.tv/SpheroBolt)

This little rolling ball of tech is great fun, and educational to boot.

5



### Nextbase 622GW

★★★★★ £249 / [stuff.tv/622GW](http://stuff.tv/622GW)

Much more than just a dash cam – and bordering on a bargain.

BARGAIN BUY

5



### Kano Harry Potter Coding Kit

★★★★★ £40 / [stuff.tv/KanoHarryPotter](http://stuff.tv/KanoHarryPotter)

A magical way to make coding accessible and fun to learn.

1

HOT  
BUY

## Fujifilm X-T4

£1549 / [stuff.tv/XT4](http://stuff.tv/XT4)

The Fuji X-T4 might be the high-end mirrorless camera of your dreams. Relatively affordable for a flagship, it excels at stills and video thanks to in-body image stabilisation, high-speed shooting and 4K recording at up to 60fps. Rapid shooting is backed up by fancy AF tricks that feel equally fast and reliable, and even the battery life goes above and beyond the usual standards. There's no doubting this is a worthy successor to the already fabulous X-T3.

Stuff says ★★★★★

**A superbly capable mirrorless camera for shooting pretty much anything in style**



● NOW ADD THIS

**Fujifilm XF 16-80mm f/4**

This versatile lens covers a bigger zoom range than most and adapts to pretty much any requirements. £699 / [wexphotovideo.com](http://wexphotovideo.com)

### TIPS & TRICKS

- It's easy to set up the X-T4's customisable Q button: just hold it down for a couple of seconds for options.
- Avoid those wonky horizons by turning on the built-in on-screen level in screen settings.
- Fujifilm X Acquire is a clever bit of PC/Mac software that backs up all your X-T4's custom settings.

2



### Sony A7C

£1899 / [stuff.tv/A7C](http://stuff.tv/A7C)

Putting full-frame sensors in small bodies is one of Sony's greatest strengths, and the A7C minimises things even further – but this is a compact package with a lot of imaging power. For photographers and video makers who want to carry everything with them in a modest bag (or hanging around their neck), the A7C fits the bill better than any other interchangeable-lens camera.

Stuff says ★★★★★

**Superb quality and full-frame goodness from a half-pint camera**

3



### Sony A7 III

£1699 / [stuff.tv/SonyA7iii](http://stuff.tv/SonyA7iii)

The A7 III manages to pack in a lot of technology and desirability for less than £2000. It's a fantastic all-rounder that's well suited to a bunch of shooting scenarios, coping well with landscapes, portraits, and even a little bit of high-speed sport shooting. As a camera design it's admittedly not the prettiest thing we've ever seen, but it handles well for its compact size.

Stuff says ★★★★★

**An excellent all-rounder that excels in low-light conditions**

4



### Nikon D780

★★★★★ £2199 / [stuff.tv/D780](http://stuff.tv/D780)

An all-round DSLR that's built like a tank and borrows the best tricks of its mirrorless siblings.

5



### Fujifilm X-T30

★★★★★ £749 / [stuff.tv/XT30](http://stuff.tv/XT30)

Does a brilliant job of distilling the X-T3's appeal into a cheaper, more compact body.

6



### Canon EOS RP

★★★★★ £1399 / [stuff.tv/EOSRP](http://stuff.tv/EOSRP)

A full-frame mirrorless marvel that's light enough to not be a burden and offers top picture quality.

7



### Fujifilm GFX 50R

★★★★★ £3199 / [stuff.tv/GFX50R](http://stuff.tv/GFX50R)

The ultimate image quality in a medium-format camera that's not too ridiculously huge to carry.

8



### Nikon Z6

★★★★★ £1549 / [stuff.tv/Z6](http://stuff.tv/Z6)

A top-notch and reasonably sized mirrorless camera from the optical experts.

9



### Sony ZV-1

★★★★★ £699 / [stuff.tv/ZV1](http://stuff.tv/ZV1)

With ace video and a flippable screen, Sony's clever compact is a vlogger's dream.

10



### Nikon Z50

★★★★★ £929 / [stuff.tv/Z50](http://stuff.tv/Z50)

One of the best APS-C cameras out there, offering a multitude of pro-level features.

1

HOT  
BUY

## Amazon Echo Dot (4th Gen)

from £35 / [stuff.tv/Dot](https://stuff.tv/Dot)

This fabric-covered take on Marvin the paranoid android in disguise as a Magic 8-Ball feels playful yet classical. It can't match a full-size smart speaker for audio, but as a little radio and an Alexa assistant for the bedside table or kitchen worktop, this cutey gets the job done. It's worth paying £15 more for the 'with Clock' version, which adds extra functionality beyond telling the time.

Stuff says ★★★★★

With the optional clock, this is our favourite bedside wondergadget



● NOW ADD THIS  
**Sportlink Wall Mount**

This minimalist acrylic mount for the Dot will keep it clear from wet surfaces in the bathroom or kitchen. £12 / [amazon.co.uk](https://amazon.co.uk)

### TIPS & TRICKS

- Fed up of yelling? Alexa's voice can work like an intercom with connected Echo devices.
- Alexa Voice Shopping lets you order from Amazon; add a 'voice code' to keep the kids off.
- Dot at your bedside? Saying "Alexa, turn on whisper mode" will stop it waking up sleepyheads.

2



**Sega Mega Drive Mini**  
£70 / [stuff.tv/MegaDriveMini](https://stuff.tv/MegaDriveMini)

There'll always be rows over whether Nintendo's or Sega's games are better, but the Mega Drive Mini wins the miniature retro console war in terms of the faithful recreation of both hardware and software – especially as there are 42 titles included.

Stuff says ★★★★★

Sega's back – and this really is the ultimate mini gaming machine

3

NEW



**Raspberry Pi 400**  
£94 / [stuff.tv/Pi400](https://stuff.tv/Pi400)

This DIY computer kit isn't about the work (or homework) it can do, but what you can turn it into. It's an affordable standalone programming rig, a hub for electronics and a storable device that can become any classic home computer in seconds.

Stuff says ★★★★★

A superb gadget for hacking around and exploring computing's past

4



**Moto G8 Plus**

★★★★★ £180 / [stuff.tv/G8Plus](https://stuff.tv/G8Plus)

This is classic Moto: a smart, well-equipped smartphone for under £200.

5



**SoundMagic TWS50**

★★★★★ £79 / [stuff.tv/TWS50](https://stuff.tv/TWS50)

Expertly judged wireless in-ear performance at an eye-catching price.

6



**Mi Smart Band 5**

★★★★★ £30 / [stuff.tv/MiBand5](https://stuff.tv/MiBand5)

Fantastic value and decent features make this an easy fitness tracker to recommend.

7



**Ring Indoor Cam**

★★★★★ £49 / [stuff.tv/RingIndoor](https://stuff.tv/RingIndoor)

This cute little spy-cam is a bona fide bargain for anyone with security worries.

8



**Ultimate Ears Wonderboom 2**

★★★★★ £90 / [stuff.tv/Wonderboom2](https://stuff.tv/Wonderboom2)

A rugged little wonder that'll bring a sonic boost to any occasion.

9



**Chromecast with Google TV**

★★★★★ £60 / [stuff.tv/ChromecastTV](https://stuff.tv/ChromecastTV)

A solid buy if you like Google's casting tricks but also want all your TV apps in one place.

10



**Apple HomePod Mini**

★★★★☆ £99 / [stuff.tv/HomePodMini](https://stuff.tv/HomePodMini)

This smart speaker is a sonic success... but only worth getting if you're an Apple Music subscriber.

### Toe infinity and beyond

Adidas has brought the Micropacers back multiple times, including a 30th anniversary pair in 2014. They were less clunky but still had that silvery look.



RANDOM ACCESS MEMORIES 1984

## ADIDAS MICROPACER

### **B**uck Rogers wants his kicks back.

Ah, you can always count on *Stuff* for nice up-to-date references.

While anyone born after 1985 quickly Googles who Buck Rogers is, these are the Adidas Micropacers – a pair of trainers that were a good 20 years ahead of their time. Released to coincide with the Los Angeles Olympics in 1984, the silver sneakers had a microsensor in the left toe that could measure distance and pace, and show you how many calories you'd burned via a digital display built into the tongue. The cost to you? Just over \$100.

### Is that all? My Yeezys cost nearly twice that!

Yes, but this was the era of floppy discs and Wham!, not AirPods and Ed Sheeran. A ton was a lot to pay for a pair of shoes back then. Besides, the tech was some way behind what we have now. Instead of the almost impossibly lightweight materials that high-end running shoes are sculpted from today, the Micropacers were made of relatively heavy leather. And the sensors would only give you approximations – a long way from the more accurate stats we get from GPS, accelerometers and heart-rate monitors nowadays.

### Still, genuine trailblazers...

Absolutely. While the reviews at the time were less than complimentary – with some criticising their weight and lack of accuracy, and others wondering who they were actually for (yuppies, apparently) – it was a long time before anything similar came along. The introduction in 2006 of Nike+iPod, which required a sensor to be attached to your laces, arguably kickstarted the trend for personal exercise and health metrics that now means we have watches that can tell us how much oxygen is in our blood. And not even Buck Rogers had one of those.

[ Words Tom Wiggins ]

**DON'T MISS THE NEXT ISSUE! ON SALE 18 MAR**

EMBERTON

# PACKS A PUNCH

WITH 20+ HOURS OF PORTABLE PLAYTIME

*Marshall*



Speaker of the Year  
Marshall Emberton