

GADGETS REVIEWS

By Ted Kritsonis



Now that the cold of winter and the flurry of the holidays has set in, there may be a need for you to unwind and look into something you could really use. Gadgets are made to make life easier and snazzier at the same time, so we've got stuff that helps you pay for stuff online, talk in your car with no hands and keep a can of pop cold at your desk. Throw in a nifty wireless charger, radio from all over the world and the best iPod recorder, and you have this season's coolest tech toys.

1



1. USB Fridge

(Retail price: Approx. \$18)

The downside of this awesome unit is that it can't fit a beer bottle, but at least it can take a beer can without a problem. All you have to do with this is plug it into a USB port on your PC or Mac, and the cooling plate inside the fridge gets to its coldest point after five minutes. No need for batteries, since the power comes from the computer. Put your drink in there and it will keep it chilled for you, which makes it a pretty handy gadget to have around your home, office or even in the garage.

2



2. Powermat

(Retail price: \$99.99 US)

If you've got several different devices, then you probably have a charger for each one. You can get rid of that wire clutter by utilizing the Powermat, which can charge devices wirelessly and simultaneously. The mat itself plugs into an outlet, and you then attach connectors to the back of your devices (BlackBerry, iPhone, Nintendo DSi, etc.). Lay them flat on the mat, hear the noise, see the light, and that's it. When one of the devices is fully charged, the Powermat stops feeding power to it, keeping it at full strength until you pick it up.

3



3. Blue Mikey

(Retail price: Approx. \$80)

It may not look like it right away, but this is probably the best recorder attachment you can get for the iPod and iPhone (when in Airplane mode). Tack it on at the bottom and toggle between the three different settings to record anything from a simple conversation to a concert in full stereo. It captures amazing quality, especially when it comes to live music, and you can keep and play back your recordings on your iPod or iPhone. There's no learning curve here – just plug it in and record whatever you want.

4



4. SmartSwipe

(Retail price: \$90)

This Canadian-made unit is for all of you that cringe just a little bit when having to input your credit card number to buy something online. The SmartSwipe is pretty much like its namesake in that it connects to your PC via USB and then allows you to make transactions by swiping your credit card through it. The cool thing about it is that you can use it on any computer, and it offers a layer of security because your number isn't exposed to hackers who could steal it and cause you a serious headache.

5

5. Asus AiGuru Touch Videophone SV1T

(Retail price: Approx. \$280)

Being an avid user of Skype is easy when it doesn't cost you a penny to reach out and touch people, though you would need to dish out a few bucks for this cool videophone. The 7-inch touchscreen offers up a Skype-centric menu system that makes it easy for you to make and take calls. It connects through Wi-Fi or Ethernet and is pretty easy to get used to once you put it in the right place. Plus, if you've got parents who wouldn't know their way around a computer, they should have no problem with this thing.

6. Scosche solCHAT

(Retail price: Approx. \$100)

Living in a province that forces you to keep your hands off your phone in the car is a good enough reason to consider this cool gizmo. The solCHAT speaker connects to your phone via Bluetooth, and it's also solar-powered, so you only need to place it on the dash or windshield and let the sun do the rest. It charges the battery during the day, giving you more than enough juice to cruise at night. It also helps that the Voice Caller ID keeps your eyes on the road by telling you who's calling when your phone buzzes.

7. Motorola T325 In-Car Speakerphone

(Retail price: \$90)

Another Bluetooth hands-free speakerphone option for you that clips onto the visor in your car. And you'll like that you don't have to remember to turn it on because it starts when you open the car door to get in, and shuts off when you close it and get out of range. And to keep noise to a minimum it utilizes dual speakers with noise reduction and echo cancellation. The Caller ID tells you who's calling, but it's cooler that the T325 also keeps a contact list of 25 phone numbers you use most.

8. Myine Ira Wi-Fi Internet Radio

(Retail price: \$150)

There's a good chance that you'll really dig the idea of listening to radio stations from anywhere in the world, especially when you've got over 11,000 to choose from. It takes just a few minutes to set this thing up with your Wi-Fi network, and once you find the stations you like, you can save them among your own list of 40 presets. And if you're a fan of podcasts from certain stations, you can tap into the ones you love most when you want. Oh, and the best part? You can hook this baby up to your own set of speakers.

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