

■ Cool Tech Gadgets - 2011

The new year always brings a bevy of new tech products. This year is no different - from iPad rivals to improvements in 3D technology, there are plenty of tech gadgets to suit everyone's interest. We'll go over some of the more intriguing releases in this newsletter.

Aroma TV

Picture this: You're sitting in front of the TV watching a home movie of your last vacation. You went to Hawaii and were enjoying the sun and surf. What if the scent of the ocean or suntan lotion or fragrant tropical flowers wafted by you during this viewing? Would this enhance your experience? The makers of ScentScape® hope so. They have created a product that will release scents at predetermined times during the show. The device works with both released movies as well as home movies edited with software on a PC. It is also compatible with gaming devices. Est. cost: \$70 - <http://www.scentsciences.com>

■ Tip of the Month

Reducing Energy

Along with cool tech gadgets, another trend for 2011 is energy efficiency and monitoring energy usage.

- "Smart" technologies are allowing appliances such as ovens, washing machines and dryers to turn themselves on and off when energy costs are at the lowest.
- If you leave the house and forget to turn an appliance off, no problem - just send a text message and remotely turn it off.
- Attach your appliances and devices to energy usage monitors and eliminate those vampire power drains as well as know exactly which devices cost the most to operate.

Motorola XOOM™

Although Apple's iPad is hugely popular, it may not be the best fit for everyone. A tablet soon to be released, Motorola's XOOM, will certainly give the iPad a run for its money.

Set for release in February 2011, this multi-award winning tablet has similar specifications to the iPad but offers more features such as HDMI and USB ports, dual cameras (front and rear), stereo speakers, 1080p video output, and a 32GB microSD slot for expandable memory (storage).

Additional specs include:

- » 10.1" HD widescreen touchscreen with pinch-to-zoom navigation
- » 1280 x 800 pixel screen
- » Android 3.0 (Honeycomb)
- » 1GB RAM
- » Adobe Flash player support
- » 3G and 4G (LTE) network support (Verizon)

With the XOOM, you can access the Internet, email, and calendar; download Android apps; open, edit, save, and share docs; take pictures and videos; and stream media. Multiple accessories, such as a wireless keyboard and custom case that prop the Xoom up at varying angles, complete the deal.

Although formal specs haven't been released yet, the second generation iPad will be available in Spring 2011 and will likely feature front and rear facing cameras, increased screen resolution and a lower price. It may even include a USB slot for attaching digital cameras or other devices.

■ Website Worth Watching

- » www.nps.gov/findapark/feefreeparks.htm - The National Parks offer fee-free weekends every year. Dates for 2011 include: April 16 - 24, June 21, September 24, and November 11 - 13.

All Things 3D

Although 3D TVs have had mixed reviews so far, 3D movies continue to pull in the numbers proving that consumers want 3D but they want it their way.

Several issues seem to be hampering consumer interest such as higher cost compared to 2D HDTVs and the lack of 3D content. Higher cost is inevitable with new technology but if the availability of movies has kept you from taking the plunge with a new 3D set, check out this 3D movie list for current titles:

<http://www.3dmovielist.com/3ddvds.html>

Another area that has hampered the adoption of 3D TVs is the requirement for special "active shutter" glasses. The glasses you get for "free" at the theater won't work with current 3D TVs at home because the underlying technology is different.

These active shutter glasses cost around \$150 each, are bulky, heavy, one-size-fits-all, and may not be compatible with other manufacturer's 3D TVs. It's an expensive endeavour if you have a large family or a large circle of friends. If you're interested in 3D but the glasses have kept you from taking the plunge, here are some options that will be released soon.

3D Glasses - Alternatives

- Expected later this year are TVs that can use the passive polarized 3D glasses which current theaters give out for their showings. Remember the paper glasses with one blue lens and one red lens popular in the 50s? Those are passive polarized too. Advantages include: lower cost, no batteries, lighter, universal, and for many, don't cause eyestrain. One drawback is that the picture quality is less than 1080p HD. Many companies will be releasing designer 3D glasses soon so you can fully customize your entertainment environment. LG and Vizio will be producing these 3D TVs while Panasonic is sticking with sets that require active shutter glasses.
- If you prefer the full 3D stereoscopic effect, active shutter glasses that are universal will be available soon. Multiple sizes will be available rather than the one-size-fits-all that are currently being sold. These new glasses will also include an app that you can use to customize individual pairs. You can make adjustments if you wear prescription glasses, if the

room is brightly lit, if you view 3D TV on several manufacturers' sets and even the level of intensity of the 3D effects. Although they won't be cheap, the customizability will be appreciated by many.

- Even more exciting are 3D TVs that don't require glasses at all. Sony, Toshiba and a company called iPONT are leading this foray. Many regard glasses-free 3D as the wave of the future but so far the technology isn't ready for primetime. Although the sets won't be available anytime soon, if you're intrigued, Nintendo will be releasing a 3DS gaming device in March 2011 which uses an autostereoscopic display for glasses-free 3D (may not be suitable for children under 6 years). The 3D effect will be adjustable and can be turned off completely if desired. It will also include motion and gyro sensors and a 3D camera.

Other 3D Options

Although 3D is just getting started, there are plenty of other products available if you want to take the plunge.

- **3D cameras**, although not new, are available and have gotten good reviews. The 3D images are viewable on the camera's screen so you don't necessarily need a 3D TV to see the images but it's helpful to get the full effect.
- **3D printers** which print 3D images (you will need 3D glasses to see their effects).
- **3D camcorders** which take videos in 3D and HD and capture 3D images (no 3D glasses required in some cases such as in Sony and JVC models).
- **3D monitors** and **3D laptops**.

Basically, if it has a screen, manufacturers are adding 3D technology to it. Before purchasing, it's a good idea to spend some time at an electronic retailer and try the devices out first. If you're still unsure about 3D technology, many devices offer 2D features as well so you can turn off the 3D feature if you find it cumbersome initially. 3D technology can really elicit that 'wow' factor so have fun exploring.

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