

10 unusual gadgets and gifts for geeks

November 12 2009, By Evan Narcisse

Nerds. Geeks. Fanboys. Whatever you call them, the comics aficionados, movie buffs and videogame enthusiasts who dwell amongst us can be really hard to shop for. But it gets dramatically worse this time of year, when everyone revisits their love/hate relationship with the holiday shopping season.

On one hand, so much cool stuff hits the shelves that it's hard not to have a brain explosion. On the other hand, who has the time to wade through all of it to find just the right gear for that special someone? Let this humble [gift](#) guide serve as a cheat sheet for the loot you'll either be picking up or dropping hints about.

1. Cinemin Swivel, \$349, [wowie.com](#)

What it is: A handheld, pocketable projector that you can hook up to laptops, game consoles and iPods. It can throw up images that are up to 60 inches wide and its hinged design allows you project onto ceilings, too.

Why they'll want it: Sure, you can use it for boring tasks like office presentations or vacation-photo slideshows. But, can you resist staging giant gaming sessions that dwarf the biggest television in your home? We didn't think so.

Another option: Without a hinge, it's not as versatile as the Cinemin, but the Optoma PK102 (\$229) packs 4 GB of internal memory for storing your presentations or video clips.

2. Marvel Comics' Digital Comics Unlimited, \$49.99 for 12 months, marvel.com/digitalcomics

What it is: This virtual initiative by the folks who bring you Spider-Man and the X-Men offers up access to over 5,000 comics via the Web. You'll get choices from recent releases like "Invincible Iron Man," back-catalogue classics like "The Infinity War" or online exclusives like "Spectacular Spider-Girl."

Why they'll want it: Take it from me, comics take up lots of space. But Marvel's DCU means you don't have to give up your superhero addiction to clear out space for a yoga nook. It also features rare comics from the '40s and '50s that would cost a fortune for the physical versions. So, you're saving square footage and money!

Another option: If your favorite fanboy or fangirl wants their paperless comics on the go, the Comixology Comics app (\$0.99) on iTunes lets them download full issues of great titles like "Irredeemable" and "The Unknown," and cues up loads of free comics to boot.

3. Logitech Driving Force GT Racing Wheel, \$149, Logitech.com

What it is: This wheel-and-pedals combo adds even more realism to racing simulators like "Gran Turismo 5 Prologue" for the PlayStation 3.

Why they'll want it: That car in the driveway? Face facts: The morning commute will never show you what it's really capable of doing. So it's off to the virtual tracks, where the force feedback on the Driving Force wheel will translate every bump and serpentine turn into hours of excitement.

Another option: The Xbox 360 Wireless Racing Wheel (\$99) offers a similar experience for folks who'll be putting the pedal to the carpet in

Forza Motorsport 3.

4. iHome Studio Series IP1, \$299, ihomeaudio.com

What it is: Developed with the input of engineer Tony Bongiovi, who's recorded Madonna, the Rolling Stones and Bon Jovi, the IP1 iPod speaker system aims to satisfy any audiophile's picky ears.

Why they'll want it: Advanced digital processing makes your tunes sound like they did in the original studio environment, with crisper highs and deeper bass tones. It's not an eyesore either, unlike some other fancy iPod docks we could name.

Another option: For exceptional acoustics on the go, Logitech's Pure-Fi Express Plus (\$99.99) will fill any camping tent or hotel room with 360 degrees of crystal-clear sound. It's an alarm clock, too, so you won't have to worry about missing your return flight either.

5. "Fight Club" (Blu-ray, Nov. 17, 2009), \$34.99, amazon.com

What it is: David Fincher's iconic adaptation of the Chuck Palahniuk novel gets a shiny new edition 10 years after it shocked audiences in the theater.

Why they'll want it: The Blu-ray release gets two new features sure to please hardcore Fight Clubbers. A Hit in the Ear gives you the ability to remix four scenes from the movie, and Insomniac Mode promises to let you access the disc's bonus content with interactive search tools.

Another option: If your would-be giftee leans toward more cosmic fare, then you won't go wrong with J.J. Abrams' triumphant reimagining of "Star Trek" (three-disc Blu-ray set, \$39.99). The deleted scenes and commentary tracks will energize your beloved Trekkie like nothing else.

6. "Justice League: The Complete Series" (DVD, Nov. 10, 2009), \$99.99, amazon.com

What it is: This 15-disc set collects five seasons of awesome action from the series based on DC Comics' premier super-team. Tons of fan-favorite characters show up to help Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman stop threats to Earth, the universe and beyond.

Why they'll want it: The intricate plots and surprising characterizations in "Justice League" thrilled young viewers and old-school fans alike. 2009's slate of superhero movies delivered nothing but weaksauce -- so use this massive collection to wash that bad taste out.

Another option: "The Venture Bros. Season Three" DVD set (\$29.99) juggles action, drama and a metric ton of laughs as the adventuring family of Hank, Dean, Brock and Dr. Venture trample everything older geeks hold sacred.

7. Electroflow Inductive Charger, \$29.99, penguinunited.com

What it is: Videogame-accessories manufacturer Penguin uses cutting-edge technology to juice up the included rechargeable batteries without having to plug the Wii Remote into anything.

Why they'll want it: Nothing kills a heated Wii Sports competition like a dying Remote. The Electroflow keeps your Nintendo waggle-sticks ready for action, so your grandparents won't have any excuses for their laughable gutterballs.

Another option: Featuring the same wireless technology, the Energizer 2X Induction Charge Station (\$50) does the recharge thing while taking up less of that precious entertainment-center real estate.

8. Altec Lansing Expressionist Ultra speakers, \$199.95, altec Lansing.com

What it is: Who needs cable when you've got Hulu? With 200 watts of power, this three-part setup makes great solution for anyone who regularly uses their PC for watching movies or TV.

Why they'll want it: Those tinny speakers that came with your desktop aren't cutting it for your weekly Crysis multiplayer sessions. After all, what good is destroying your opponents in a fiery explosion if you can't feel it rattling your bones?

Another option: The Audioengine 2 speakers (\$199.99) may only measure only six inches high, but you're not sacrificing quality for size. Get ready to turn your desk into a first-class soundstage.

9. Kodak EX1011 Wireless Digital Frame, \$129.95, store.kodak.com

What it is: Everyone knows paper photos have gone the way of the dodo, but the problem with most digital frames is that they need to be plugged into a computer for you to upload new pics. Don't worry about losing another remote, either, since the touch-sensitive strip lets you smoothly navigate through menus right on the frame.

Why they'll want it: You'll be able to connect the frame to Kodak's online photo-sharing service, so you can send and receive new photos of your loved ones almost as soon as they're shot.

Another option: If you've got photos floating around on Picasa, Facebook or Twitter, the Kogan WiFi LCD Frame (\$129) can pull them straight into your living room. It's also got its own e-mail address, so snapshots can go from phone to home in a flash.

10. Turtle Beach Ear Force X41 wireless headphones, \$199.95,

turtlebeach.com

What it is: The thing with surround sound is that it spoils you; you get to wanting that excellent sound design all the time. These headphones deliver 7.1 Dolby surround sound and let your favorite avid gamer control chat and game audio volumes separately.

Why they'll want it: These cord-free cans will help your romantic relationship. Slip them on and it's an end to those heated requests to turn that crap down.

Another option: For PC gamers wanting to enveloped in similar sound quality, the Logitech G35 headset (\$129.99) plugs into any USB port on your high-end gaming rig.

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