

Gadgets: Great gadgets, as a gift or not

December 17 2009, By Gregg Ellman



Cobra Electronics CBTH2

Officially this is not another gift guide. Instead I'd rather consider it the first of two roundups either of products I just haven't gotten to this year or some I have just couldn't find a home for.

Either way, you will see it's a diverse bunch of items. Some are electronic and some have absolutely nothing to do with that, but they are items I have and think would make great holiday gifts:

As much as I dislike how [cell phone](#) Bluetooth devices look while in use, they are extremely functional and even required for cell phone use while driving in many areas.

The Cobra Electronics CBTH2 (\$45) is a solid hands-free device and

paired up with my Bluetooth 2.0-enabled [BlackBerry](#) in seconds.

Two of the most important features to consider when choosing a device are comfort and whether you hear the other person talking. This unit passes the test on both features.

Users can expect seven hours of talk time and 150 hours of standby after about a three-hour charge. Calls are answered and ended with a one-touch button on the piece itself.

Cobra also has a handy vehicle charging system with the Rapid PLUG-IN Vehicle Charger (\$14). The all-in-one device works with about 80 percent of all cell phones, including the [iPhone](#). It's also compatible with devices from other manufacturers, including LG, Motorola, Nokia and Samsung.

Details: cobrahandsfree.com

The General Imaging J1050 digital camera packs a lot of features into the price-friendly camera.

Images are taken with a 12.2-megapixel resolution in a camera, which features Smile Detection to alert the camera to fire away when your subject is ready to be photographed. [Face Detection](#) is included, ensuring that the image is properly focused.

Users can easily take and make panoramic images with the Pan-Capture Panorama feature. Other easy-to-use features include a 5X optical zoom lens, in-camera red-eye removal, blink detection and an easy to view 2.7-inch LCD.

The camera stores images on SD removable media (not included) and

comes with a rechargeable LI-ion battery.

Details: general-imaging.com, \$139.99

Livio Radio's desktop system is built for Pandora (streaming music) radio listeners to access the thousands of stations in seconds in a dedicated device with full controls.

With the Pandora radio system, users can find the music types and songs they want instantly. With thumbs up and down buttons on the wireless remote and the radio itself, music can be managed and customized.

Stations from anywhere in the world can be accessed and best of all there is no required monthly fee. The stations can be heard through the built-in speakers or connected to a home stereo system.

All that's needed once the radio is purchased is power and a web connection. There is no need for a computer connection.

Details: LivioRadio.com, \$150

Digital photo memories are easily stored in photo books these days and if there is an easier way than Shutterfly's Simple Path system to make a personalized photo book, I have yet to find it.

Once photos are loaded into an album within a private account (free), users choose which of these photos they want in the book.

Then select the book style, including the size (ranging from 5-by-7 up to 12-by-12) and what type of cover (hard or soft). Not all covers come with each size, so select accordingly.

After the book style is made and the photos are loaded, the program does the rest by placing the photos in templates within the book.

Users can move photos from page to page, delete some or add more. It does allow a limited amount of cropping and text can be added in selected places.

If more photos are need than the allowed amount for the default page count, pages will be added for an additional charge.

Details: shutterfly.com/photo-books/simple-path, 5-by-7 books start at \$12.99 and 12x12 books at \$54.99.

Any coffee drinker knows the danger of drinking and driving with the results of stained seats and car mats, not to mention your clothing.

I can honestly say the Brugo travel coffee mug is the first and only coffee mug I will trust to all me to get to work coffee stain-free.

The mug allowed users to avoid the brown waves of liquid spilling because it's made with a tip and sip motion to transfer a limited (one ounce) amount of liquid at a time away from the control chamber.

This is done by only allow the limited amount in a temperature control chamber, where it cools off away from the bulk of the drink and is ready for consumption.

Believe it or not, this mug has three options to be used, Lock, Tip & Cool, and Sip. They are controlled with ease on the lid, which locks in the beverages.

The lock does just that; it closes the liquid off from getting out in any

way. The tip and cool feature allow for slow drinking. Sip allows for drinking the entire beverage without any being limited to the control chamber.

Details: brugomug.com, \$14.95

The Aquapod Bottle Launcher from Great American Projects, Inc., is pure entertainment, at least for me.

The launcher will send 2-liter plastic bottles in the air up to 100 feet. There is no assembly required except for filling an empty bottle 1/3 full of water.

To launch it, just put it over and secure it on the launching tube. Then, with a bicycle tire pump (not included), give it 10 to 15 pumps.

It's recommended you move back about 15 feet to do the launching. You then pull the trigger and the bottle soars in the air.

The company recommends adult supervision for anyone under 10 years of age using the launcher.

Details: theaquapod.com, \$24.99

Earlier this year MSI Computer announced the newest addition to its line of Wind Netbooks -- Wind U110 Eco.

Inside the unit is an Intel Atom™ Processor Z530 (1.60GHz) and a 160GB hard drive.

The laptop is built for portability and weighs 3.2 lbs. and includes

10-inch backlit LCD screen with a 1024-by-600 resolution.

It also has a standard ergonomic keyboard along with a super long-lasting battery, which can last up to 15 hours.

Built-in features include stereo speakers, 2-channel microphone, wireless capability (802.11b/g/n), Bluetooth and a 1.3 megapixel webcam.

Details: msimobile.com, \$429.99

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