

# Innovation doesn't always carry a big brand name

January 15 2010, By David Colker and Dawn C. Chmielewski

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The giants of the electronics industry make the big splash at the Consumer Electronics Show, as usual, with towering displays, celebrity spokespeople (Taylor Swift sang for Sony, live and in 3-D) and invitation-only soirees.

On the far opposite end of the scale were boutique or just plain small companies, a few of which were even of the mom-and-pop variety.

Sometimes, that's where the fun stuff resided at CES, with products that varied from highly inventive to downright wacky.

Here's a look a few of the products on the outer fringes of the four-day show, which ended Sunday:

**SCORPION** -- This solar/crank powered, hand-held device, about the size of a small brick, combines an LED flashlight, AM/[FM radio](#), weather radio, cellphone charger and speaker .

Oh, and it has a built-in bottle opener.

From Eton, this \$50 item might be called the Swiss Army knife of gadgets, except that Victorinox Swiss Army Inc. was showing off a new multitasking device of its own.

The Presentation Master knife, with Bluetooth connectivity, has a fold-out USB [flash drive](#), [laser pointer](#), fingerprint scanner, nail file and

screwdriver.

It cannot open bottles.

A price was not set on the Presentation Master, which is due out this year.

**CHANGEABLE HEADPHONE** -- Designer headphones seemed to be a trend this year, but none would be more practical than these from the Fung Shing Co. of Hong Kong that adapt to the weather.

During the summer, they look like an ordinary set of inexpensive headphones. But in winter they can be fitted with a fleece-lined sleeve, making you look like you're wearing a shag carpet on your ears.

The price might be right. Wai Man Cham at the booth said it would be \$3.50, but was not sure whether that would be retail or wholesale.

More expensive, but also much more fashion forward, was a line of headphones from WESC that cost up to \$200. They come in a variety of colors, plaid and even patterned after Japanese toy characters.

The iWave company has a headset out covered in Swarovski crystals for \$2,500.

Somehow the fleece-lined set seems more comforting.

**FINGERIST** -- Air guitar was so last century. Today, faking it is all about virtual.

Pseudo musicians can pop an Apple iPhone or iPod Touch into the Fingerist, which resembles a short guitar (it has a strap to make you look more roadie-worthy). Then the user launches a guitar-simulation

program and strums away on the Apple unit's screen.

Fingerist, due out in February, will cost about \$150.

For about half that, you could get a real acoustic guitar, but what fun is that?

**CONCERT BREEZE** -- In the old tradition of convergence, in which two products that have nothing to do with each other are combined to make a new product, comes along a ceiling fan with a speaker.

That's right, a standard ceiling fan from the Hunter Fan Co., with a Soundolier speaker tucked into the unit and covered by a light.

Your friends will wonder where the music is coming from. And when they ask you to turn it down, you can do so with a remote control because the unit is wireless.

Retail is about \$500.

**TIWI** -- Responsible parents talk to their teenagers about safe driving, but why bother when a gadget can do it for them?

Tiwi is a windshield-mounted device that issues vocal messages when drivers speed, accelerate like a drag racer, slam on the breaks or engage in other forms of aggressive driving. Aimed at teens, the GPS-equipped device, which receives not only location data but the speed limit for the road the car is on, also sends parents updates -- by phone, text or e-mail -- about the teen's location and driving behavior.

The price of constant surveillance isn't cheap: \$299, plus a \$40 monthly service charge.

**L5 REMOTE -- Your iPhone might have a bazillion apps, but can it change channels on the TV?**

A new gizmo from L5 turns the Apple iPhone or iPod touch into a universal remote that can control TVs, DVRs, cable boxes and audio equipment. The \$50 device, which fits on the bottom of the phone, goes on sale next month.

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