

Tasty leftovers -- of the gadget variety

January 2 2010, By Etan Horowitz



The second-generation Flip MinoHD video camera.

Being a gadget reviewer often feels like being at a holiday feast. Every day, companies invite me to sample their products, and, even though I know I should turn some of them down, I say yes too often and end up filling my plate (or cubicle) with more gadgets than I possibly have the time or space to review in a year.

So this week's column consists of three mini-reviews of some leftover [gadgets](#) that I had once wanted to review, but never got around to writing about because I was already full.

BLURB.COM BLOG TO BOOK SERVICE

Ever worry what will happen to your amazing blog posts if the Internet blows up? With the Booksmart service from Blurb.com you can turn your blog into a book to keep on your coffee table or give to a relative who doesn't like reading on the computer.

After installing the Booksmart software (which severely slowed down my old laptop PC when I was using it), you select a blog book and then you point it to your blog to "slurp" your blog entries. The program works with blogs on Blogger, TypePad, [LiveJournal](#) and WordPress.com. You can choose to fill the book with all of your posts or only certain ones. Since the maximum length of each book is 400 pages, if you've been blogging for a while, you won't be able to fit everything. The software auto populates your book with your posts, headlines and photos and you can also manually arrange the pages if you want.

I used the Booksmart service to make a book from my mother-in-law's [Blogger](#) blog, and, despite the fact that the software was very sluggish, I found it to be a somewhat easy task. I made a 328-page 7-by-7 hardcover color book that cost \$64 (there are cheaper options). The book itself is beautiful, and the posts were laid out nicely without any weird formatting. I also like that I was able to customize the front and back covers with photos from the blog. The only problem is that the book's binding was very poor and it got worse each time I stretched the covers. A Blurb spokesman said the binding on my book did not meet the company's standards and if a customer has this problem, Blurb will send them a properly binded replacement for free.

NEW FLIP MINOHD CAMERA (\$200 OR \$230)

The second generation Flip MinoHD has the same sleek design, but it can now shoot two hours of HD video, it has a bigger screen and it now has an HDMI port so you can connect it to an HDTV. Now that iPhones and iPod nanos can shoot video, the Flip cams may be losing some of

their luster, but since they are now made by wireless networking company Cisco, we could soon see a model with built-in Wi-Fi so you can instantly post videos online.

SPRINT 4G SERVICE

In October, I had a chance to try out Sprint's 4G service for cell phones and computers on a visit to Philadelphia and Baltimore. Sprint's 4G network is only available in 26 cities, none in Florida, but more will be added next year. Sprint said its 4G service provides downloads that are up to 10 times faster than on a 3G network and is useful for passengers riding in cars or public transportation that want to seamlessly stream video.

To test the 4G, I connected the Sprint U300 3G/4G USB modem (free after rebate and two-year service agreement) to my older Dell laptop, and when I wanted a Wi-Fi network, I attached the modem to the Sprint Personal Hotspot PHS300S (\$100 with purchase of the USB modem).

I used 4G service to stream video from Hulu.com and a Slingbox simultaneously while riding in a car, and both videos played seamlessly. When I've watched streaming video with 3G Sprint service in the past, the video hasn't played smoothly.

If you live in a city that has 4G and are looking to get a USB modem, it makes sense to go with Sprint (if the price is right). But I might wait until there is a 4G version of the awesome MiFi device that gives you a personal Wi-Fi hotspot.

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