

Useful, useless and unusual at US gadget show

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iMini Pet iPod players from Ozaki are on display at the 2010 International Consumer Electronics Show. The iMini Pet is an iPod dock, a radio and an alarm clock with a stuffed pet on top that moves and “dances” and "sings" as music is being played.

Cutting-edge technology grabbed the headlines at the premier US gadget show here but the showrooms also featured products better described as useful, useless and downright unusual.

Sharing space in the cavernous halls at the [Consumer Electronics Show](#) (CES) with snazzy new electronic readers, tablet computers and 3-D televisions were scores of other items -- both high- and low-tech.

Here is a glance at some of the most innovative, fun and eye-catching products on display at the Las Vegas Convention Center:

-- Samsung's "All-in-Premium Remote," a TV remote control from the South Korean company, features a built-in screen allowing you to go fix a sandwich or answer a call of nature without missing any action. It will come out later this year with Samsung's new 9000 series high-definition TVs.

-- ZOMM, a wireless leash for a mobile phone from an Oklahoma-based company of the same name. The device about the size of a poker chip attaches to a keychain or clothing and vibrates, flashes a light and emits an alarm when you walk out of Bluetooth range. ZOMM, which retails for 80 dollars, was a winner of a CES 2010 "Best of Innovations" Award.

-- SHOWWX Laser Pico Projector from Microvision, a pocket-size device that can connect to mobile phones, portable media players or computers and uses lasers to project a high-quality wide-screen image on any surface. A winner of the "Last Gadget Standing" competition at CES it will go on sale later this year for 500 dollars.

-- Boxee Box from D-Link, a set-top box that streams content from the Web to a TV without the need of a computer. The Boxee Box, which shared "Last Gadget Standing" honors with the SHOWWX projector, is to be available later this year for around 200 dollars.

-- MicroVision Optical sunglasses described as the first which can also be used to watch 3-D movies or 3-D TV. With more 3-D entertainment coming out, the glasses "should be a permanent addition to your eyewear collection," said David Johnson, president of the San Diego, California-based company. They come in various styles selling for between 32 dollars and 40 dollars.

-- MusicCap from Israeli company Walletex, a baseball cap which features an MP3 player embedded in the bill and dangling earbuds. "It's

waterproof so you can surf, ski, run, jog, fish, do any outdoor activity with your cap on your head and music in your ears," said product manager Max Fleischer. It costs between 50 and 60 dollars and comes with up to eight gigabytes of memory.

-- Jelfin, a colorful ball-shaped gel-covered mouse from an Arizona-based company of the same name. "It's funky, it's fun, it's 34.95 dollars," said Pamela North, a Jelfin spokeswoman.

-- Mint, a cleaning robot from California-based Evolution Robotics which uses light sensor feedback to move around obstacles and get into corners. The square-shaped Mint, which costs 250 dollars, dusts or mops hardwood or tile floors and is seen as a complement to iRobot's disk-shaped Roomba carpet vacuum cleaner. "We think people will want both," said Evolution's Teresa Bridwell.

-- Summit Series ski goggles featuring a built-in still and video camera from Liquid Image, a California company which made a splash at CES last year with their camera-equipped scuba diving masks. The goggles debut in June and will cost 150 dollars.

-- Digital Art Frame from Casio. It transforms digital pictures into virtual oil paintings, pastels, or water colors. It will be available by mid-year. The price was not disclosed. Another digital picture frame, the Frame Wizard, from FaceCake Marketing Technologies of Calabasas, California, can animate family photos like images in Harry Potter books. "Your face can be moving, you can be smiling," said FaceCake CEO Linda Smith. "You can have leaves or snow falling." An eight-inch (20-centimeter) frame costs 199 dollars while the 15-inch (30-cm) model sells for 299 dollars.

-- AR.drone, a flying saucer-like drone from French company Parrot which is piloted using an Apple iPhone or iPod Touch through a Wi-Fi

connection. The drone also has a camera that streams live video. It's the first product of its kind from Parrot, which specializes in hands-free wireless systems for drivers. No price has been set.

-- Nite Dawg Light-Up dog collars and leashes from Boulder, Colorado-based Nite Ize Innovation feature an LED light sewn into the material. "It's a fun product but manufactured for safety." said Nite Ize's Bill Kuntz. They each sell for 17.50 dollars.

-- the MagicJack, a controversial product from Florida company YMax which uses radio frequencies to make free Internet phone calls from inside the home by acting like a personal cell tower. The problem? The 40-dollar device uses radio spectrum without a bona fide license and the major cellular carriers pay billions of dollars for the privilege. Ymax insists it is not breaking any laws but a fight is looming.

-- Dash, a "personal Internet viewer" from Sony, has a 7-inch (18-cm) screen and sits on a nightstand or table top like a clock radio. It can display films, news, weather, social networks or other online content. The Dash will cost 200 dollars when it launches in the United States in a few months.

-- cellphone accessories, particularly for Apple's iPhone, are ubiquitous at CES. Some of the most notable: crystal-studded "Luxmo" iPhone cases from DreamWireless costing between 350 and 450 dollars. On the other end of the spectrum, iWaveAudio.com offers an "eco-friendly line" of iPhone covers made from wood and hemp for between 20 and 30 dollars.

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