

Gadget of the Year, plus other new gadgets on the block

December 10 2010, By Gregg Ellman



iHome Studio Series iA100

It's the end of the year so it's time for my unofficial "Gadget of the Year."

The rules and criteria are simple: I vote on what I like, with no tiebreakers necessary.

This year's winner is the iHome Studio Series iA100.

What I like best about it is how it combines seemingly every feature

possible into one unit. More importantly, it's simple to use.

Competitors have similar devices, with some of the features, but none seems to have it all like the iHome.

The iA100 has four speakers for great sound and continues the iHome tradition of producing great looking devices, along with their functionality for any iPhone or [iPad](#).

Beside the basics you expect from a desktop [clock radio](#) (FM stereo and alarm) and a docking system for the portable media players, it's equipped with Bluetooth to give you many other uses

Any Bluetooth-enabled phone can be paired with the system, instantly turning it into a speakerphone.

With an iPhone or iPad, it can broadcast the audio from music or video stored on the portable devices.

Also available is iHome's free apps - iHome + Radio and iHome + Sleep - enabling users to enjoy app-enhanced functionality with ease.

The radio app gives users more than 30,000 radio stations; the sleep app provides custom alarms, wake and sleep music profiles, sleep stats and the all-important social updates.

Details: ihomeaudio.com, \$199

Unless you live in a cave and have no access to technology, you need extra hard drive space.

The Memorex Mirror for Photos is a solid performing hard drive

designed for easy backup of digital photos but can be used for anything digital.

Software comes pre-loaded on the drive (Mac and Windows) and after installation automatically backs up photos instantly via a [USB connection](#)

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The pocket-sized drive (3-by-5-by- $\frac{1}{4}$ inches) requires no external power since it is USB-bus powered and comes in capacities of 320GB - \$79.99, 500GB \$99.99 and 640GB for \$119.99.

Details: memorex.com

The Verbatim Clip-it USB Drive is one of the smallest and coolest storage solutions I've seen.

Uniquely designed as a paper clip, the drive slips into any USB port and, without requiring any cover or protection, it's water, dust and dirt resistant.

When not in use, simply attach it to a bunch of papers or even use it as a tie clip.

The stocking stuffer-friendly Clip-it is part of Verbatim's Store 'n' Go line and comes in a choice of five bright colors in 4GB for \$19.99.

The thin and portable Wallet drive (\$119 for 640GB) from Verbatim is executive inspired to look like a billfold and is surrounded by a leather enclosure.

Connection is also made with a USB cable and it comes with Turbo USB software and Nero BackItUp & Burn software to give users a full system

backup along with restore functions in the event of a crash.

Details: verbatim.com

Iomega launched the new Iomega 1TB eGo BlackBelt Mac Edition Portable [Hard Drive](#) (\$229.99) earlier this year.

A unique feature Mac users like me will enjoy is a set of dual FireWire 800 ports and a single USB 2.0 port.

For Mac laptop owners without FireWire 800, the drives ship with a backward compatible FireWire 800 to 400 cable.

The drive comes with the Iomega Power Grip band. This will help protect the drive in the event of an accidental drop of up to seven feet, according to Iomega, but I would try and avoid testing the accuracy of that fact.

Details: Iomega.com

Buying a stereo system for your home can still make your head spin with all the choices available; plus, it can cost a small fortune.

A cost-efficient sound system from Orb gives you great sound from any TV, computer, iPod or other source without the hassle or complications of setting up a system with an endless amount of wires.

The compact system includes a pair of high-quality Orb speakers and a compact amplifier. A subwoofer can also be added.

In addition to the simple set up, the size makes this attractive considering

the powerful sound they provide.

The 40W amplifier measures about 7.5-by-5.5-by-2.75 inches and connects everything with 3 stereo RCA inputs.

Each speaker is about 4.25-inches rounded and is like have sound pump out of a baseball, which can be mounted on stands or sit on any tabletop.

Music can stream wirelessly when you combine the Orb system with the Apple Airport system to control the music with an [iPhone](#) or iPod.

Details: orbaudio.com, \$299.00

I have to admit it, until I was emailed a recent press release I never heard of "Toasted Skin Syndrome."

After a quick search, I found it's a reddish-brown rash, which is the result of extended exposure to heat without getting an actual burn

Laptop users are prone to this, but to the rescue comes the ThermaPak cooling pads with HeatShift technology.

With no power or refrigeration, the Pak can lower the heat from a laptop by an average of 11 degrees, according to ThermaPak tests.

Aside from blocking the heat, one can instantly see how much more comfortable you'll be compared to when the laptop sits directly on you.

Get them your choice of black, pink or white for laptops 10 inches to 17 inches ranging in price from \$24.99 to \$34.99.

Details: thermapak.com

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