

Tech review: Last-minute gift ideas

December 19 2013, by Jim Rossman

Here is the last tech gift roundup of the season.

FRETLIGHT ELECTRIC GUITAR:

-What it is: An electric (or acoustic) guitar with tiny LEDs on the neck that light up on the frets where you place your fingers. This is an effective teaching tool. As the songs in the video lessons play on your computer, the lights flash for each chord so you can keep your eyes on the neck of the guitar and learn each song. The guitar connects to your computer, and you run videos onscreen and the frets light up where your fingers should be. Beginning lessons are included; more advanced lessons are available to purchase separately.

I plan on reviewing the Fretlight after Christmas.

-Who's it for: The budding guitarist.

-How much? Acoustic starts at \$299; electric starts at \$399

-On the Web: www.fretlight.com

ACER CHROMEBOOK C7:

-What it is: A Chromebook, which is a laptop that uses the Google Chrome operating system and uses the cloud to run programs and store files. The laptop has only 16 gigabytes of onboard storage and comes with 100 gigabytes of cloud storage. It features an 11.6-inch LCD

display and VGA and HDMI outputs to display the content on larger monitors.

The C7 needs the Internet to work. Connect to the Internet either wirelessly or through an Ethernet cable to gain access to all your documents.

There are offline options to compose email or work on saved Google documents, but to get anything done, you really want to be connected to the Internet.

Three USB ports and audio in/out round out the connections.

-Who's it for: Perfect for students who need a computer for Internet/email and homework.

-How much? \$199

-On the Web: bit.ly/1e1wl3j

NETGEAR R7000 WI-FI ROUTER:

-What it is: An extremely fast Wi-Fi router with throughput speeds up to 1,900 megabits per second.

Most of us have Wi-Fi at our homes, but the vast majority just use the built-in Wi-Fi that comes inside our broadband modem.

If you are streaming HD video to or from your computers, tablets or TVs, consider a faster wireless network. The R7000 uses multiple antennas with beam-forming to give the fastest throughput possible.

-Who's it for: Gamers or streamers of HD video.

-How much? \$200 from Amazon.com

-On the Web: bit.ly/1brwwgq

EATSMART PRECISION VOYAGER LUGGAGE SCALE

-What it is: It's a handheld scale that you attach to the handle of your suitcase. Lift the scale and suitcase and the weight of your case is displayed on the handle of the scale.

This is a huge help to people who want to avoid surprises at the baggage check-in, which can lead to heavy bag fees.

The scale has a weight limit of 110 pounds.

-Who's it for: It's priced right for anyone on your list who flies for business or pleasure.

-How much: \$20 from EatSmartProducts.com

-On the Web: www.eatsmartproducts.com/luggage-scale

CHAVAL RESPONSE XRT HEATED GLOVES:

-What it is: These are leather gloves with built-in heating elements to keep hands warm and dry during outdoor winter activities.

I thought these would only be good for skiing, but I imagine they would be popular with motorcyclists who ride in the winter as well.

Expect four to six hours of heat per charge. Max heat output tops out at 144 degrees. The gloves recharge in five to seven hours and have a built-in drying system, so they're drying while they charge.

The heating elements are paper-thin polymer film and are highly flexible.

-Who's it for: Anyone whose hands are exposed to the cold for extended periods.

-How much? \$390

-On the Web: www.chavalusa.com

LUXI LIGHT METER FOR IPHONE:

-What it is: A small plastic dome that securely clips over the front-facing camera of an iPhone 4 or 5 that works with a free app to turn your iPhone into a light meter to help you set the exposure of your DSLR camera.

Luxi doesn't work with the camera on your iPhone; it works by reading the light of a scene and telling you the proper exposure settings. You then use those settings on your digital camera.

-Who's it for: Photographers who would otherwise use a stand-alone light meter.

-How much? \$30

-On the Web: bit.ly/1fedtv8

MULTICHARGING STATION:

-What it is: A very nontechnical techie gift. It's a bamboo holder for your gadgets and the corresponding charging cables. It's a caddy for your dresser or tabletop to park your stuff while it's charging.

There is a hollow compartment in the bottom to stow excess cord length. It does a surprisingly good job at keeping things stable and upright, including my 15-inch Macbook Pro, iPad and iPhone all at the same time. No chargers or cables are included; this is a stand only.

-Who's it for: All of us have charging needs.

-How much? \$35

-On the Web: bit.ly/1iTUIII

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