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ALAN ZISMAN



Gear Guide

A bumper crop of new gadgets from tech heavyweights

Apple drops fruit flavours for ice-white, DVD burners, and a personal power nap assistant

This month I'd like to take a look at three new products, each a class act in its own way - and at something for those of us who would rather be asleep.

Taking the colour out

For the past few years, the colour of **Apple's** computers has made them stand out in the midst of the mostly beige Windows competition. The company's iMacs and iBooks sported a range of fruit-flavour colours and even (briefly) polka-dots and flowers. But all that was so '90s. Apple has put all that behind it.

The new iMac, along with the revised iBook and Apple's iPod MP3 music player, come in any colour you want -- as long as it's ice-white. But colour isn't all that's new about the new iMac, revised from the ground up. The eye-catching design houses the actual computer in a space-saving cantaloupe-sized half-sphere that is connected to a 15-inch LCD flat panel monitor by an industrial-strength hinged arm.

Power has been boosted to a 700 or 800 MHz G4 processor, while the top-end model includes a SuperDrive that can read

and write CDs and DVDs. Prices range from \$2,049 to \$2,899.

Putting the colour back in

Colour, whether a spot of colour in a letterhead or logo, or in charts and photos, adds punch to written communication, but while many of us have colour printers at home, we may have to settle for black and white printing at work.



Okidata's C9000 series of printers is aimed at bringing fast, crisp colour output to offices and departments. Resolution is 600x1200 dpi (1200x1200 dpi for the C9400dxn model) with good, though glossy, print quality. Print speed is exceptional: 26 pages per minute for black and white, 21 pages per minute for colour output.

The printers can handle paper sizes up to 12 x 18 inches, and heavy card stock up to 110 lbs. Built-in hard drives in most models allow storage of large print jobs, while networking cards mean that everyone on the office network can easily share these printers. They're big (75 kg) and expensive (\$10,500 - \$12,300), but their speed means everyone can have access to quality colour pages.

When 640 Mb isn't enough

Recordable CD-drives ("burners") are increasingly popular computer options, either pre-installed in new computers, or as after-market add-ons. For some of us, though, the 640-700 Mb of a CD isn't enough. The 4.7 Gb capacity of a DVD disc is useful for backing up today's large-capacity hard drives, for distributing graphics, video, and other large files, and more.

Apple, **Compaq**, **Hewlett-Packard** and other computer manufacturers are starting to include DVD burners on selected models, but you can also add a DVD burner to your existing system. HP's DVD100i DVD-Writer (\$899) uses the DVD+RW, one of several competing standards, to make DVD and CD-recordable discs that can be played on most computers and commercial DVD players.

Optionally, the DVD100i allows DVD or CD discs to be written like large (in the case of DVD, *very large*) floppy disks, but in that case, the discs can't be read in standard (read-only) drives.

Blank DVD+RW disks are about \$20 each.

When 8 hours isn't enough

I'm a big fan of **Handspring's** Visor series of PDAs, which use the popular **Palm** operating system, but include a Springboard slot to make it easy to add modules to expand the handheld's capabilities.

Among the newest Springboard devices is **Jetlog's** 24x7 PowerNapping module (\$150). According to the company, "JETLOG's onboard sensor interface times Power Naps according to the most beneficial sleep stages, allowing rapid fatigue countermeasure deployments." What exactly this means is anybody's guess. Apparently the thing goes off periodically if you set it just before you start to doze, to keep you from falling into too deep a sleep.

The company notes that it's "compliant with NASA Napping Policy." For more information, visit www.jetlog24x7.com.

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