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Quick Hits

January 14, 2002

Apple enlarges screen on iBook

A pleasant surprise awaited Apple executives when they tallied feedback forms from customers of the popular, all-white iBook laptop. Apple said the most frequent response to "What would you like to see changed?" was "Not a thing."

The No. 2 most popular answer was "Make the screen bigger." At 12.1 inches, the original screen made small text hard to read.

Apple has complied. The new, \$1,799 iBook, released this week at the Macworld Expo in San Francisco, has a 14-inch screen. It shows the same number of spreadsheet cells or Web-page columns, but at a larger size. The new machine looks like the original and is equally thick when closed (1.3 inches) but is slightly wider and deeper and, at 5.9 pounds, a pound heavier.

The smaller iBook is still available in \$1,199 and \$1,499 configurations.

Car stereo comes

in living color

Desktop disc jockeys spoiled by colorful electronic skins to dress up MP3 player software can now take a bit of style on the road. A new car stereo, the Panasonic CQ-DF802 CD player-receiver, has a trademarked Ghost touch-panel display made from a new electroluminescent film that can change colors to match the driver's mood. Six colors, as well as the option to cycle randomly among them all, can be selected from the display's menu.

To help thwart thieves, the Ghost panel can also fade to black and blend in with the rest of the dashboard when the unit is not in use.

The Ghost panel flips down for access to the CD player, and the unit also includes a radio that can preset up to 18 FM and 6 AM stations.

The Panasonic CQ-DF802 stereo will be available in March with a suggested price of \$449.99, and for once, a Ghost in the machine is a welcome visitor.

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A wake-up call for Handspring Visor

Those business executives you see clutching a Handspring Visor with eyes closed may just be worried about thieves. Then again, they may be power napping.

The Jetlog Corp. has released a \$100 module for the Visor that it says will improve the effectiveness of naps by preventing excessively deep or prolonged sleeping.

The Jetlog 24X7 PowerNapping Springboard module limits naps to 40 minutes, which the company's president, Karim Daghbouche, says is optimum. When the nap time is over, an alarm with increasing volume blasts out of the Visor's built-in speaker. For situations where a wailing hand-held might be unwelcome, the module is also supplied with headphones. The module can supply a variety of wake-up sounds, including any voice the user wishes to record.

Daghbouche said that a user's muscles will relax in deep sleep, causing the person's thumb to lift away from a sensor and sounding an alarm.

Sony thinks small with video cameras

At the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas this week, Sony introduced two digital video cameras billed as the smallest and lightest ever made.

The two Handycam models, the DCR-IP5 and the DCR-IP7BT, weigh 12 ounces and measure about 3 inches long by 4 inches high by less than 2 inches thick -- small enough to fit in a pocket.

They use a new tape format, called MICROMV, to record up to 60 minutes of video at DVD resolution, on a cassette that is 70 percent smaller than a MiniDV cassette. Suggested prices are \$1,300 for the IP5 and \$1,700 for the IP7BT.

-- New York Times

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