



# More Fun With Tech Toys

By Shawn Conaway

## "THE FUTURE IS NOW"—NAM JUNE PAIK

The new iPod is not convergent as much as it is innovative. Convergence was the mantra of the late 90's, as cell phones, handheld PCs, digital cameras, FM radios, video games, and GPS receivers were all squeezed together into tiny, bite-sized packages. Convergence extends the life of old, tired technology, making it smaller, shinier, and seemingly more convenient, whereas innovation crushes and replaces old technology. For example, nobody is going to 'ooh' and 'aah' over yet another cell phone with a Bluetooth earphone adapter and camera. But show someone an episode of "Lost" on the new iPod and watch the reaction.

Convergence makes life more convenient, while innovation is the holistic integration of the digital world around us into products we didn't know we needed. Some innovations that will occur in the market in the next 1-3 years are:

- ▼ Huge capacity flash memory cards. 12 GB cards are on the market and 36 GB cards planned for this time next year.
- ▼ Commercially available laptop fuel cell batteries that run on hydrogen
- ▼ Large flexible organic displays
- ▼ LED TVs
- ▼ Wireless everything

These innovations will doubtlessly converge into new products. Expect in the next three years to see a laptop that rolls-up and hangs on your belt like a cell phone, with a flash drive instead of a hard drive, a bendable organic display, with a projected light virtual keyboard, and a fuel cell battery that runs for a month without refilling. Other innovations will be ultra-bright indoor lighting made of LEDs, high-definition solar-powered video sunglasses, super-efficient mobile phones that recharge from the glow of the fluorescent lights in your office, cities with complete wireless networks.

## XBOX 360™



The Xbox 360 is the hottest, most advanced gaming console on the market. Its three symmetrical 3.2 GHz cores can handle 115 GFLOPS and 500 million polygons per second, making the Xbox 360 almost 80 times faster than its predecessor. The console includes three USB 2.0 ports, two memory slots, and a 12X dual-layer DVD-ROM that supports standard CD and DVD formats as well as MP3, WMA, and JPEG CDs.

The Xbox 360 comes in two configurations: Core and Standard. The Core System includes the console and a wireless controller. The Standard System includes a console, wireless controller, head set, remote, and a 20GB detachable hard drive for saving games, music, and Xbox Live content. Each Xbox includes a Silver Xbox Live subscription.

All games can play in high definition with 16:9, 720p and 1080i output and full surround sound. Three hundred games planned by end of holiday 2005.

Xbox 360—\$399.99

Xbox 360 Core System—\$299.99

Xbox 360 Games:

Battlefield2: Modern Combat \$49.99

Madden NFL 06—\$59.99  
Call of Duty 2—\$59.99  
Quake 4—\$49.99  
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion—\$69.99  
[www.Xbox360.com](http://www.Xbox360.com)

## VIRTUAL KEYBOARD

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The i.Tech Bluetooth Virtual Keyboard (BTVKB) is unlike any other keyboard, since this keyboard doesn't have any actual keys. The pocket-sized (3.5"x1.3"x1") unit works by projecting an infrared image of a full-sized keyboard onto any flat surface. Users type onto the image as if they were using a conventional keyboard.

The BTVKB works with desktop and laptop computers. Its small size and 2 hour battery time also make it ideal for use with mobile devices like PDAs and cell phones, where using a full-sized keyboard is impractical.

\$179.99  
[www.gomogear.com](http://www.gomogear.com)

## MOBIBLU

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The MobiBLU cube is the world smallest MP3\WMA player. The player is about one cubic inch in size and weighs slightly more than half an ounce. The self-emitting blue OLED (Organic Light Emitting Diode) display with bright blue letters appears in stunning contrast against the six different colored cases.

The MobiBLU player is packed with features that would normally be found in a much larger player, like an FM radio with recorder, a built-in microphone that records up to 520 minutes of speech, five equalization modes, and a clock with sleep timer. The player appears as a 1 GB flash drive when connected to a computer via a USB 2.0 cable. The built-in bus powered rechargeable lithium-ion battery runs for eight to 10 hours on a single charge.

1 GB—\$129.72  
[Walmart.com](http://Walmart.com)

## THUMP 2

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The average MP3 player is a ball-and-chain, providing portable music, but hanging on the wearer like a wire noose. Add sunglasses, and the wearer feels both uncomfortable and a little silly.

The Oakley Thump 2 breaks the chain, combining both the convenience of a 1GB MP3\WMA player with the style of the GASCAN™ model glasses. Surprisingly lightweight, the Thump 2 glasses features over-ear speakers that fold out of the way when not in use. The built-in lithium-ion battery lasts for six hours on a 3 hour charge

\$449  
[www.oakley.com](http://www.oakley.com)

## SOLAR BACKPACK

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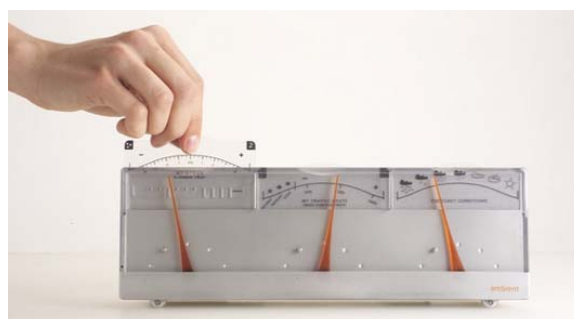


The Voltaic™ solar bag is an ideal travel bag, charging most small electronic devices like PDAs, cameras, and cell phones while on the go. The bag has three lightweight, waterproof solar panels, which generate up to 4 watts of power, enough to charge a typical cell phone in 4-6 hours. A lithium-ion battery pack inside each bag stores any surplus power. The battery pack has a charge indicator, a built-in LED torch, and a voltage converter for 5, 6, and 7.2 Volts. An AC travel charger and car charger are included for when solar charging is not practical.

\$229  
[www.voltaicsystems.com](http://www.voltaicsystems.com)

## AMBIENT DEVICES

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The Ambient Executive Dashboard is contemporary art. An amalgamation of analog dials and digital technologies, the dashboard is like a speedometer, displaying customizable, relevant information that is as easy to read as a clock. The 11" x 4.5" x 3.5" device picks up information over nationwide cellular broadcasts, and then displays the information on the three faceplates. Some of the thirty easy to switch faceplates display information on the regional weather, stock market performance, email waiting, mobile minutes used, minutes until next meeting, buddy status, traffic drive-time, and mortgage rates. This general information is accessible without registration, a service fee, or an Internet connection.

Personalized information such as personal stock portfolio performance and weather for a specific zip code is available for \$6.95 per month or \$19.95 per quarter. More channels are being developed for gardening, skiing, fishing, and support for POP email accounts. The dashboard synchronizes to the nationwide network within an hour after adding two AA batteries or connecting to a power outlet.

\$149  
[www.ambientdevices.com](http://www.ambientdevices.com)

### RACING SIMULATOR

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The Hotseat Racer is designed for racing fans that want to recreate racing conditions that are as true-to-life as possible. The sturdy welded steel frame supports up to 500 lbs and provides a solid mounting surface for the steering wheel and pedals. Designed for a superior racing experience, the Racer includes an adjustable swing away gaming table sized to fit all the popular gaming systems like Xbox, Game Cube, and Playstation. The Dolby Digital 5.1 ready surround sound system includes five satellite speakers, a subwoofer, and three audio inputs for devices like a CD player or MP3 player.

\$589.99  
[www.hotseatinc.com](http://www.hotseatinc.com)

### WEATHER STATION

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Oregon Scientific's Complete Wireless Weather Station will delight weather junkies. The main unit has a luminescent LCD touch screen with a scrolling message displaying potentially hazardous conditions and the 12-24 hour weather forecast. The station includes four individual sensors that measure wind speed, wind direction, rainfall, temperature, humidity, and barometric pressure. The outdoor sensors operate on solar power while the indoor sensor and main unit run on AC or AAA batteries.

The 7-channel main-unit can handle three additional sensors like the optional UV sensor. The main unit can be connected to computer, displayed on a desk, or mounted on the wall up to 300 feet from the sensors.

\$349.95  
[www.oregonscientific.com](http://www.oregonscientific.com)

### PIN CLOCK

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Walk into any novelty shop and you'll find a pin display with aluminum rods sticking out of a Plexiglas shell. The simple joy of a pin display is that you can squish yourself against it, leaving nose or hand artifacts behind for others to appreciate.

Working on the same principal, the pin clock has a Plexiglas shell covering hundreds of individual pins. The difference is that this 8.5" W x 3.5" D x 3.8" H clock displays three dimensional images of the time on the clock face instead of impressions of your face.

\$59.99  
[www.smarthome.com](http://www.smarthome.com)

### IDOG

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Hasbro's iDog is this year's tamagotchi, an electronic pet that needs to be fed and loved. A speaker in the dog's back plays music when it is fed with an iPod or any other music source with a headphones jack. If the dog is fed well, it will rock its head and wiggle its ears to the music. LEDs on the dog's face display its personality, which is based on the music it hears.

\$29.99  
[www.hasbro.com](http://www.hasbro.com)

## THIN DIGITAL CAMERA


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The Casio Exilim EX-S500 is barely larger than a credit card at just .54" at its thinnest point. The 5.0 mega pixel camera has a 3x optical lens that collapses flush with the camera face. The camera can record over an hour of 640x480 MPEG-4 video at 30 frames per second onto a single 1GB SD flash card. Extra features include anti-shake DSP for preventing blurry pictures and a one-touch Best Shot mode. Included are a docking cradle and a video cable for connecting the camera to a TV. The cradle can be connected to a computer with the USB cable, or connected directly to a printer that supports USB direct-print for printing without a computer.

\$349.99

[www.casio.com](http://www.casio.com)

From the newest Xbox to the smallest MP3 player to the thinnest camera, innovative products are designed to amaze. High-tech gadgets like these are sure to be in abundance under the Christmas tree this year. 

*Supporting Enterprise Networks and Operating Environments*

NaSPA member Shawn Conaway is a Systems Administrator for a Fortune 100 retailer. He currently holds the Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer, Citrix Certified Administrator, and A+ certifications. Send questions or comments to [s.conaway@naspa.com](mailto:s.conaway@naspa.com).