

# Tech Toys Review

By Shawn Conaway<sup>®</sup>

Technical  
and Operating Environments

**THE** Creature from the Black Lagoon is a classic. Released in 1954, it was one of the first 3D movies to make it big at the box office. Often imitated in TV and movie clips, the Creature has a cult following over 50 years later. When screaming teenagers clad in 3D glasses are shown in TV and movie clips, the Creature is inevitably on screen. The fascination with 3D that movies like the Creature kindled has helped move 3D from the theatres and into the home. Technology is now available to convert 2D movies into 3D with special 3D glasses.

Another classic, the Sony Walkman is often considered the first easily portable music player. This smoking hot idea put the company on the map in 1979 with consumers and made the company rich. Although innovative, the Walkman was not a unique idea. Sony based its idea for portable music other players that were considerably bulkier and inconvenient to carry. These bulky music players, in turn, trace their roots back to the reel-to-reel payer, the gramophone, and finally to Thomas Edison's cylinder phonograph in 1877.

Classic inventions like these are recycled constantly. Apple's iPod put a new twist on a classic idea by reinterpreting the portable music concept. Once MP3 audio format came out, Apple inundated the marketplace with their portable iPod MP3 player, displacing Sony's portable CD player. Like an old vinyl record, Sony spun around again in September with their new 20 GB MP3 Walkman and 40 GB Vaio Pocket music player.

The iPod, like most of the gadgets and tech toys in this article, are innovative reinterpretations recycled from classic ideas. The rest are innovative gadgets made out of recycled materials.

## MOTHERBOARD ART

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Eco-artware markets environmentally friendly, recycled, and reused accessories and gifts from 25 different artists. Each year, the artisans rescue 30,000 pounds of obsolete or used television, phone, and computer circuit boards destined for the landfills. The boards are fashioned into unique and colorful products like coasters, money clips, business card holders, clocks, and clip boards.



Motherboards are also crafted into cuff links, making particularly delightful pieces of jewelry. Old green circuit boards are recycled into 3/4 inch platters and mounted into silver plated findings. Voila! What once was cutting edge technology is now cutting edge fashion.

[www.eco-artware.com](http://www.eco-artware.com)

- Motherboard Cuff Links - \$65
- Circuit Board Money Clip - \$12
- Six Motherboard Coasters - \$20
- Motherboard CD Desk Clock - \$20
- Motherboard Business Card Case - \$25

## NETWORK STORAGE

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Adding storage to your network is simple with Buffalo's 400 GB LinkStation. Just plug in the power and connect the 10/100/1000 Mbps LAN jack to your network. The LinkStation automatically grabs an IP address using DHCP. No special formatting is required for Windows and Mac clients—it works right out of the box. The NAS recognizes when it is directly attached to a computer, and

then self-configures itself to communicate without using a crossover cable.

The LinkStation runs a Linux variant called Monte Vista on a 266 MHz Power PC with 64 Mb of RAM. Data on the NAS is secured using group and user level security and is accessible using FTP or by mapping a network drive. Additional drives can be attached to the two USB ports for more storage. The LinkStation will also act as a print server if a USB printer is attached.

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

400 GB Model: HD-HG400LAN - \$450 street price

## LIGHT SABER

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Save the universe with a Star Wars Light Saber replica from Information Unlimited. A 10mm glass neon tube in a protective plastic sleeve generates a bright blue, green, or red plasma field. Probes on the saber handle control the length of the plasma field in the interchangeable 24" or 36" blades. The saber runs on two 9-Volt batteries.

[amazing1.com](http://amazing1.com)

- 24" Saber with blade - \$49.95
- 36" Saber with Blade - \$79.95

## SOUND LOUNGER

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Enjoy playing video games in style with the Sound Lounger from Pyramat. Built into the headrest are two 4" co-axial side speakers and a 5" active subwoofer, which are controlled by the detachable remote. The mat is 64" long, 19" wide, and has a 3" thick dual-layer cushion. At the foot are two RCA audio inputs, two RCA audio outputs, and one power connection. The audio outputs are used to daisy chain up to eight Sound Loungers together. The 28 pound Pyramat can be hooked into any audio source, such as your entertainment center, computer, or iPod.

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

Pyramat PM550 Sound Lounger - \$149.99

## 3-D GLASSES

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eDimensional's wireless E-D® 3D glasses convert standard PC video games into 3D games. A kit includes one pair of wireless 3D glasses, a video synchronization module, an infra-red transmitter, and special software. Just install the software, plug the module into your PC, and you're ready to play games in 3D like Microsoft Flight Simulator or

watch specially produced 3D videos like Spy Kids 3-D: Game Over or the Sports Illustrated 3D Swimsuit Video.

The glasses have a 10 foot wireless range and last for 50-100 hours on standard lithium cell batteries. They work with all video cards and both CRT and LCD monitors, but not laptop screens.

E-D® 3D glasses - \$99.95

Spare glasses - \$49.95

3D Videos - \$8.95 - \$14.95

## NINTENDO GAME BOY MICRO



Nintendo brought their newest creation, the Game Boy Micro, to market on September 19th. The Micro is basically the same as the Game Boy Advance SP, but much smaller and with a 2" back-lit screen with adjustable brightness. The Start/Select buttons glow neon-blue.

The tiny gadget is only 4" wide x 2" long by 0.7" thick. At only 2.8 ounces, the player weighs about the same as 80 paper clips. It is available in both black and silver versions, each with three unique faceplates. As powerful as the previous Game Boy Advance, the Micro is able to play all 700+ Game Boy Advance games.

[micro.gameboy.com](http://micro.gameboy.com)

Nintendo Game Boy Micro - \$99.99

## ATOMIC JAMIE



Thirty-somethings have wanted their own personal arcade ever since Ricky Schroder played Dragon's Lair, Pac-Man, and Asteroids in his game room on Silver Spoons. Lunacade is able to make what was once only a dream in 1983 a reality today with Atomic Jamie, a customizable gaming cabinet with the look and feel of a real arcade game. The cabinet includes everything you would expect in a standard arcade cabinet, such as an 8-way joystick, 11 fully configurable buttons, side pinball buttons, Philips stereo speakers, protective glass over the screen, and a back-lit marquee.

The gaming cabinet fits over a standard 15" monitor. There is enough room in the bottom for an old PC running a standard game emulator like MAME (Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator).

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

Atomic Jamie - \$745, based on configuration

## THE CUBESHIELD



Possibly the only practical item in this article, the CubeShield™ makes cubicle dwelling a bit more comfortable. CubeShields block out glare caused by windows and overhead lights. The 4' nylon shield attaches to the top of cubicle walls with included Velcro tape strips.

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

CubeShield - \$29.99

## THE CUBES

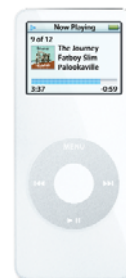


Brighten your office cell with The Cubes™, sets of posable action figures that satirize cube life. Each set contains four cube walls, a desk, chair, file cabinet, in/out box, phone, and computer. A sheet of stickers with cube decorations, motivational posters, and office articles like a dry erase board completes the parody. Six cube sets and four expansion sets are available, including a Break Room, a Copy Center, Tom the Motivational Speaker, Eve the Sensitivity Consultant, and Sam the Delivery Driver.

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

\$4.95 for individual figurines, \$12.95 for each set.

## IPOD NANO



Apple's iPod nano is roughly the size of a credit card, and nearly as thin. At 3.5 x 1.6 x 0.27 inches, its diminutive size betrays its ability to store up to 1,000 songs or 25,000 pictures. The 1.5 ounce nano can run up to 14 hours on a single three hour charge. The iPod is available in either black or white and comes with a built in 2GB or 4 GB flash drive. The 1.5-inch color display has a resolution of 176 x 132 pixels. The nano has added features like a sleep timer, alarm clock, and support

Apple's iCal and Microsoft's Outlook. It even features Solitaire and three other games.

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

2 GB iPod nano - \$199

4 GB iPod nano - \$249

## THE BOSE® SOUNDDOCK™



The Bose SoundDock™ delivers the rich, expansive, high quality sound traditionally found in the mid-range Bose® speakers. The artistically designed SoundDock is a subtly curved speaker with an attached cradle for docking the iPod® or iPod mini. The minimalist design with subdued white and grey tones compliments the décor of any room. The SoundDock comes with a remote control, enabling wireless control over your iPod.

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

SoundDock™ - \$299

## FLYING LAWNMOWER



Lawnmowers can't fly. Of course not! Something would have to be seriously out of whack with reality for one to fly. That is why it is impossible not to laugh the first time a Sky Cutter takes flight.

The attention grabbing Sky Cutter is a covering kit that is designed in the shape of a lawnmower with wings in the shape of a push handle. Considered an EZ-Kit, the covering kit is ideal for first time builders because it is easy to build and easy to fly. The kit includes, among other things, balsa, foam, landing gear, nose gear, vinyl covering material, and full sized plans with step by step instructions. A four channel radio controller, engine, fuel tank, pushrods, wheels, prop, glues, and basic hobby tools are required to complete building.

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

Sky Cutter .40 V2 with Green Covering Kit - \$139.99

## PLUSDECK



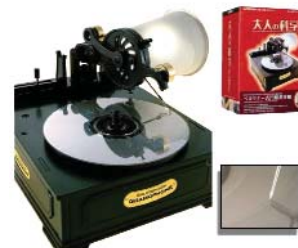
The Plusdeck2 is a cassette deck for your computer that you would normally expect to see only in your car. The deck can play and record on cassette tapes just like regular cassette decks. It can also capture audio from old cassette tapes and convert it to MP3 format. CDs, MP3s, and internet broadcasts can be moved onto tape for later enjoyment in your car.

The drive plays and records with full auto reverse. The full-sized drive installs into a 5.25 inch bay like a CD-ROM drive.

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

Plusdeck2 - \$149.99

## GRAMOPHONE TURNTABLE




Emile Berliner's gramophone was invented in the 1880s to directly compete with Thomas Edison's cylinder phonograph. This do-it-yourself kit, which takes about an hour to build, is a replica of one of Emile Berliner's gramophones. Just toss a CD onto the platter, switch the gramophone to record, and speak into the paper cup. An analog message is written to the disc much like the way vinyl records were created.

Messages can be recorded onto any smooth surface, like used CDs, cereal boxes, or photographs. You can even record onto a postcard, and then mail it to a friend with his own gramophone.

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

Gakken Emile Berliner Gramophone Turntable - \$59.99

Classic ideas don't go out of style. Like chocolate and peanut butter, classic ideas are often combined for surprisingly good, sometimes unexpected results. Computer emulated arcade games, computer mounted cassette decks, motherboard cufflinks, and a Star Wars light saber are all innovative reinterpretations recycled from classic ideas. Of course, some things are just fine left alone...eight-track tapes, for instance. 

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*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).*