

Gadgets and gizmos

Video 2 PC video converter

VIDEO 2 PC is a video conversion system that captures, converts, and improves the quality of nearly any video and audio source. It reproduces your old video tapes as digital videos on your computer.

You can watch your upgraded videos on your computer, record them onto a DVD or load them onto your portable video player, such as PSP or iPod.

This is a great gadget for rescuing your old tapes but you will need a reasonably up-to-date and fast PC or laptop. My first attempt on a two-year-old PC didn't work but it was easy to use on a new laptop.

The system requirements are Windows XP or Vista and a USB port which powers and connects the three colour-coded cables from the VCR. There is also an S-video connector on the Video 2 PC unit though the cable is not provided. My VCR was so ancient that it didn't have all three output sockets for the RCA cable but spending extra on a Scart to RCA lead got around that problem.

I was impressed with the way the video source was improved by the EZ Video Converter software, which offers a choice of formats for saving the video file. Even the first attempt with the standard settings provided a digital recording which improved on the grainy source video.

The Gadget Shop is selling Video 2 PC for £39.99 (see www.gadgetshop.com).

Hercules XPS 2.0 40 Slim Speakers

These stylish black slim-look tower speakers are a good basic stereo speaker option for a PC, laptop, bedroom telly, games console or MP3 player. Each speaker is less than 6cm wide and is 23.5cm tall and pumps out two and a half watts RMS of power (with a peak combined total power of 10w). The headphone jack and auxiliary line input are on the wired remote control, which is handier than having to mess about on the actual speakers, plus an adequate 1.8 metre cable to connect to audio source.

With their good looks, decent sound quality and handy remote to plug a player into, they are certainly a good budget option. They are available for around £29.99. Check out the range of Hercules multimedia speakers at www.hercules.com.



Deluxe Electrical Corkscrew

A stylish labour saving gadget for those who take their booze and barman duties seriously.

This rechargeable corkscrew takes any strain out of opening bottles of wine. Once the foil has been removed using the included foil cutter, just press one button to remove the cork from the bottle and another to release the cork from the screw.

Its matt black finish and funky blue light when charging and operating makes it rather stylish too. One charge should be enough to deal with 40 bottles. £34.99 from the Gadget Shop (www.gadgetshop.com).



Motormouse

Put your web browsing into top gear with this wireless mouse which looks like a model sports car.

Featured on Dragons' Den, where it won the backing of entrepreneur James Caan, the Motormouse boasts alloy wheels and rubber tyres and even comes with its own super-glide mouse mat and carrying pouch (shouldn't that be a garage?). The tiny wireless receiver is in the boot. It comes in metallic silver, red, black and baby pink. It's priced at £29.99 including batteries. See www.motor-mouse.net.

Pictured clockwise from left: The iHat, Motormouse, Deluxe Electrical Corkscrew, Hercules XPS 2.0 40 slim speakers



iHat

A great gizmo for joggers and anyone else who wants music on the move but gets fed up with fiddly earplugs.

The iHat is a black brimless cap which as well as keeping your head warm will satisfy your music needs with integral speakers over each ear and an audio cable with standard jack to plug into your MP3 player. Don't expect startling sound quality but it certainly does the job, is robust and doesn't leak enough sound to annoy anyone. £14.99 from the Gadget Shop (www.gadgetshop.com).



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