The Top 10 Gadgets of 2007

Ben Patterson The Gadget Hound Mon Dec 17, 2007 4:49PM EST

It's been a banner year for tech—so much so that I've had a hard time whittling down my list of favorite gadgets to a mere 10. From a touch-screen phone that you've probably heard of to the latest stab at an e-book reader, I present to you (in alphabetical order) the top 10 gadgets of the year.

Amazon Kindle: It's pricey at \$399, and with its so-so screen and uninspiring design, the Kindle probably won't spell the end for your garden-variety paper book anytime soon. That said, fellow blogger Christopher Null called the light, easy-to-read, and 3G-equipped Kindle a potentially "game-changing device" that gives the sleepy e-book market a swift, much-needed kick in the pants.

Apple iPhone: In his <u>initial review</u>, Null dismissed the iPhone as a "nifty little gadget" that's "filled with flaws," and I agree with many of his criticisms. (No 3G! No games! Can't replace the battery!) That said, I'd be lying if I didn't call the iPhone—with its intuitive (nay, fun!) touch-screen interface, top-of-the-heap mobile Web browser, and unmatched integration of music and video in a handset—one of the most <u>exciting gadgets</u> I've ever seen.



Asus Eee: Try this on for size: a two-pound, paperback-sized laptop that runs Linux like a dream. The hard-to-please Null gave the Asus Eee (which comes loaded with a 900MHz Celeron CPU, Wi-Fi, and a 4GB solid-state hard drive) a test-drive last month and called it "downright exciting." Even more impressive? The \$499 price tag.

Ibiza Rhapsody: There's been a lot of buzz about Wi-Fi MP3 players this year, what with the new iPod Touch and the updated Zunes, but here's a no-name player that beats both those heavyweights at the wireless game. The Ibiza Rhapsody syncs with your Rhapsody music account over Wi-F, finds and updates your podcasts, plays MPEG-4, WMV, and H.264 video files, and even surfs the web—no PC syncing required.



Intel Classmate PC: Love it or hate it, we live in a Windows world, and Intel's Classmate PC is the only "One Laptop Per Child" device to run XP. Writing for Wired, Christopher Null reports that the "ultra-small keyboard" won't do for grown-ups, but the laptop's rugged case, cute looks, and snappy performance will make the grade in classrooms. And at \$300, the price is right.

Nokia N95: No, it doesn't have a touch screen, but the N95 is one of the most featurepacked phones I've ever tested, including Wi-Fi, 3G support (<u>new for the United States</u>), GPS, a 5-megapixel camera, quad-band GSM support for world calling, a top-notch web browser (second only to the iPhone's), an Office document reader, and a music player with support for subscription music services such as Rhapsody. Unfortunately, at \$750, the N95 won't be making any "Top 10 bargains" lists this year.

Pioneer "Kuro" Plasma HDTVs: Grayish-looking black levels are the collective Achilles' heel of flat-panel HDTVs, but here's a set that isn't afraid of the dark. Available in 720p and 1080p versions (depending on the size and model), Pioneer's line of Kuro sets blew me away with its deep, dark black levels—now *this* is what "Blade Runner" is supposed to look like.



Shure SE530 earphones: First things first: At \$450, the SE530s are among the priciest earbuds you'll ever find. But when I crammed these babies (which come complete with a trio of "microspeakers" for each 'bud) into my ears... how shall I put this? Aural nirvana. Now all you have to do is talk yourself out of 450 big ones.

<u>TiVo HD</u>: The best of the set-top DVRs made the leap to HD in late 2006, but the \$800 price tag for the new Series3 box was a bitter pill. Luckily, the \$300 TiVo HD arrived in August. In the meantime, TiVo's been busy adding support for Amazon Unbox video downloads, the Rhapsody music service, and Picasa photo libraries.



<u>Vudu:</u> It's not the perfect TV set-top box—it lacks a subscription model, it's too expensive at \$400, and video quality is shy of DVD levels (although it just launched its first HD movies), But with its peer-to-peer method of delivering a library of 5,000 movies (and now TV shows) instantly, Vudu is the closest thing I've seen to Netflix-in-abox.



And there you have it. Jumping out of your chair with cries of "But he forgot the (*fill in the blank*)," or "How could you like the (*insert hated gadget here*)?" Sure you are. Fire away!