

Gorenje 'Eye-catcher' fridge

future proof YOUR HOME

Wireless networking and computer connections are so intuitive, a house can be converted into a peaceful sanctuary – or an entertainment hub – in an instant.

A REFRIGERATOR ENSCONCED in Swarovski crystals, a widescreen television with 3D animation, dramatic artwork that doubles as wall speakers, and a sumptuous bed that actually prevents snoring – the latest high-tech devices are not only ingenious and intuitive, but they can even save marriages.

Size still matters when choosing appliances, as revealed at the recent Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. The first market-ready 'Touch Watch Phone' from LG sidled up beside the biggest LCD TV yet – Sharp's 'LB-1085', a 108-inch (274cm) screen; about the same dimensions as an inflatable boat.

Apart from the buzz about gesture recognition systems and terms such as OLED (organic light-emitting diode, which will eventually overtake plasma and LCD), the overall consensus at the trade show was that every device in our lives is becoming connected to the internet. No longer a sci-fi fantasy, this revolution means that renovators need to address various electrical issues, from positioning the main computer hub to having coaxial cables installed throughout the house.

The kitchen is no longer just a place to bake, blanch and brew – it is now the home's information and entertainment hub. The new-breed media refrigerators with LCD screens have hit the market, connecting to the internet, phone and MP3 player. However, the Electrolux 'ScreenFridge' has gone one step further – its tilted screen above the door lets you open the fridge while the rest of the family are watching the news or updating Facebook.



LG 'Touch Watch Phone'

ABOVE LEFT: THE 'EYE-CATCHER' FRIDGE FROM GORENJE, ADORNED WITH 7000 SWAROVSKI CRYSTALS. LEFT: LG'S 'TOUCH WATCH PHONE', A FOLLOW-UP TO THE PROTOTYPE LG INTRODUCED LAST YEAR, IT INCLUDES A FULL TOUCHSCREEN INTERFACE, 3G CAPABILITIES AND VIDEO CALLING. DETAILS, LAST PAGES.

technology



Artcoustic speakers



Sharp's 'LB-1085' TV



Electrolux 'ScreenFridge'

ABOVE: ARTCOUSTIC'S WALL-MOUNTED SPEAKERS CAN SHOW PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES. ABOVE RIGHT: SHARP'S BIG 'LB-1085', A 108-INCH (274CM) SCREEN. RIGHT: THE NEW ELECTROLUX 'SCREENFRIDGE'. BELOW: LEGGETT & PLATT'S 'STARRY NIGHT BED' PROMISES TO ALLEVIATE SNORING. DETAILS, LAST PAGES.



Leggett & Platt 'Starry Night Bed'

< To transform a kitchen into a culinary theatre, it's worth looking at the 'Eye-catcher' fridge from Gorenje, which is adorned with 7000 hand-embedded Swarovski crystals. With a limited range of just 10, the bejewelled appliance retails for a cool \$21,500.

High-tech appliances now feature touch controls for cooking time and temperature. However, induction cooktops are taking this to a new level, with controls being completely blacked out until the cook touches the surface (see break-out box on previous page).

While a busy kitchen provides vibrancy and interaction, the bathroom works as a private sanctuary where you can unwind in a whirlpool tub, take an electronically controlled shower and chill out to the in-built music systems. To hide away an obtrusive flat-screen TV, the latest offerings such as Aquavision's flush-mounted 'Mirrorvision' instantly converts a waterproof LCD into a designer mirror.

While Blu-Ray has finally taken victory in the TV format war against HD DVD, a new skirmish is likely to take place over the next few years. At the Vegas trade show, the industry signalled the advance of 3D, with big-name brands touting their prototypes. A raft of 3D films will be released at cinemas this year, including James Cameron's *Avatar* and Pixar's *Toy Story 3*, while US sporting events will also be broadcast live in 3D. While the vision may be impressive, perhaps the boffins need to hire the likes of Gucci or Prada to bring the 3D glasses into the 21st century.

Quality surround sound can turn any movie into a cinematic experience, but an array of speakers in the living room is distracting to the eye. A Danish firm, Artcoustic, now has a visual solution with its wall-mounted speakers and subwoofers that have interchangeable screens. It means that a row of speakers can now be transformed into photographic images or a mesmerising triptych.

Surround sound, a widescreen projector and wireless internet are on the priority list when designing a new bedroom, but an American bedding company offers an extra incentive. Leggett & Platt's 'Starry Night Bed' offers all these devices, plus the technology to alleviate snoring. The bed detects the snoring vibration, and articulates sleep position by seven degrees to open the nasal passages.

To be released in mid-2009 for US\$20,000-\$50,000, this smart-tech bedding system may be pricey but, as many partners of a snorer will be happy to attest, technology just doesn't come any more intelligent than that

KERRYN RAMSEY

Induction cooktops are heating up today's kitchens



THE ULTRA CHIC, SMOOTH AND FUSS-FREE LOOK OF INDUCTION COOKTOPS CONCEALS A TECHNOLOGY BASED ON MAGNETIC FIELDS THAT HEAT THE PAN RATHER THAN THE COOKTOP IT'S SITTING ON, WHICH REMAINS COOL TO THE TOUCH AND TAKES THE HEAT OUT OF THE KITCHEN. SO TO SPEAK, THE ENERGY USED IS CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN ELECTRIC COOKTOPS, AND IT USES ABOUT HALF THE ENERGY GAS DOES.

WHILE IN PRICE, INDUCTION REMAINS IN THE HIGH-END LUXURY DOMAIN, DEMAND AND SUPPLY SHOULD SORT THINGS OUT IN THE COMING FUTURE. IN THE MEANTIME, COSTS START AROUND \$2269 FOR AN

ELECTROLUX 'EHO60140P'. OTHER BRANDS INCLUDE MIELE, ASKO AND KLEENMAID, PLUS YOU MAY HAVE TO INVEST IN NEW COOKWARE - ONLY CAST IRON AND STEEL WILL DO AS THEY CAN BE MAGNETISED. THE BEST WAY TO TEST IF A PAN WILL WORK IS TO TAKE A FRIDGE MAGNET AND SEE IF IT STICKS STRONGLY TO YOUR PAN - IF IT DOES, IT'LL WORK WITH INDUCTION.

THE BIGGEST KICK IS THE COOKING TIME, OR VAST REDUCTION OF. SASHA DEGEN, HAPPY OMEGA INDUCTION COOKTOP OWNER SAYS: 'IT'S QUITE AMAZING, IT'S FREAKY. YOU CAN BOIL WATER IN 30 SECONDS.'