

## **Islander January 2008 Technology Update**

### **What were the best Christmas gadgets?**

Very best wishes to you all for health, wealth and happiness in 2008. Once again I will endeavour to keep you technologically informed through this column each month....

What was the “must have” Christmas gadget present this year? Outright winner must be the Nintendo Wii. In the UK, they were selling like the proverbial hotcakes, with many shops unable to meet pre-Christmas demand. They weren’t selling quite as fast as Led Zeppelin tickets, but it was a close thing. Fortunately for us, ToysRUs España were better organised and supplies were maintained until Christmas. One cannot help suspecting that the controlled supply of the Nintendo Wii may have been a marketing ploy by clever executives in order to get everyone talking about it, and to extend demand into 2008. Cynical I know, but it seems to have worked!

Our household got to grips with the Wii Sports package over the holidays. Much cheaper and warmer than an actual round of golf, so I reckon we were euros in after just a couple of days.

The Wii system has a movement sensor that you place on top of the TV screen. Setting up the system is pretty straightforward, and off you go. In one hand you hold a remote control, the size of large mobile phone, which you tie to your wrist in case you let go of it and it crashes through the TV or the windows. This has the movement sensor and transmitter. It is used as your tennis racket, golf club, baseball bat and when doubled up with its partner, the “numchuk” they become your boxing gloves. It is pretty amazing, as you see a selected caricature of yourself on the screen and as you move your arms so does the caricature on the screen. So you have to take the correct stance for the game in question and drive, punch, serve or bat as appropriate. One of my daughters demonstrated, when boxing, that you can get so immersed in the game that you actually get closer and closer to the screen until you are in danger of putting your fist right through it! My father-in-law, an expert on all sports from the comfort of his sofa, couldn’t help giving instructions to “keep your head down” and “keep your eye on the ball” to anyone prepared to listen...

The next game we tried is a sophisticated Karaoke. Apart from singing, it’s similar to the Sport game in that you create a caricature, the stage set and your style. You then sing and get marked on every line you sing as “bad”, “decent”, “good” etc. as you go along and then with a final score. The awful finale is that it has recorded your rendition and then it plays it back with your caricature singing it on your stage. I nearly forgot, you still hold the baton and dance at the same time as singing. Not one for the shy retiring types....

This is such an entertaining and technologically sophisticated product, that I’m not surprised it has been one of the biggest hits this Christmas.

The other major two major Christmas gadgets this year, as per last year, were mobile phones and radio controlled toys.

Many of us, including myself, were trying out new, unfamiliar mobile phones, thinking “well this is nice and thank you very much, but I now have to learn how to do everything again, after I have only just got to grips with the last one”. It’s quite interesting with the ongoing march of new mobile phones to see whether they get easier to use with improvements in the user interface or not. I think on the one hand they do, but on the other we are all getting older and becoming less competent and tolerant, so the improvements are kind of cancelled out.

However, it still beats me how some manufacturers can introduce a new product with such a serious design fault as the one I have recently encountered on a “top of the range” LG phone with a 5Mb camera and a full phone sized touch screen. The screen is so dim that in broad daylight you cannot see the screen to make a phone call let alone take a photograph nor use any of its other wonderful features.

By now, I would guess, at least 85% of all flying radio controlled toys will be requiring workshop repairs and spare parts, if my personal experience is anything to go by. The model shop just off the avenidas in Palma, Kenia, must know they’re onto a good thing as before Christmas they have dads queuing up to buy their kids those radio controlled toys that they, the dads that is, have always wanted. Then after Christmas, they’re back queuing with a bag of broken bits, apologising for having broken it so soon, and please, please do you have these spare parts?

I went out with one of my mates and his boys after Christmas to fly the remote-controlled plane they had received for Christmas. He told the boys he would have a go first, just to get the hang of it before he could show them how to fly it. A few minutes later the plane only had one wing, and within fifteen minutes it didn’t have any wings at all!! One of the boys did manage to have a go in between the wing amputations and landed it 10m up a tree – the safest landing of all. I have to admit that whilst this was going on I was trying to fly my lovely new remote controlled helicopter, which also ended up in pieces due to an uncontrolled crash landing!!

### **Technology Predictions for 2008**

The technology predictions for 2008 rest mostly on enhancements and improvements to existing systems, which is not a bad thing as it means the technology will get more reliable as it beds in with more and easier to use features. I have listed a few developments that will take place in 2008:

#### **Communications**

HSDPA or HSPA mobile data services will become more widespread and more phones, in Europe and Asia will become available to use the service. I will provide an update after visiting the 3GSM World Congress next month.

VSAT worldwide coverage has increased to include the Indian Ocean, south east Asia and south west Pacific this last month. It will increase to include the north Atlantic this year. The 60cm spread spectrum VSAT will become available, thus making VSAT available to many smaller yachts.

Fleet Broadband marine antennas are being shipped as I write this, and the final Inmarsat satellite for the Pacific should be launched in April.

### **IT infrastructure**

As more and more services become IP based, the wide band, scaleable, controllable and managed networks with remote support will become a feature in 2008. These are essential if you want to reliably take advantage of all these IP services.

### **Entertainment Systems**

On the back of improvements in data connectivity and increases in bandwidth we will see more IP TV developments.

There may well be a move away from centralised servers for music and video on yachts to local sources just using iPods either belonging to owners, guests or crew or being available from a central batch of yacht iPods.

### **Navigation Systems**

We will see even more integration between products such as AIS and Digital Selective Calling, so that you will be able to call an AIS target on the VHF by clicking on the target on the screen.

As always, over the course of the year, we will aim to keep you up to date with new developments, products and services.

Roger Horner of E3 Systems

For any answers, questions or information on any of the above, please contact us. email on [info@e3s.com](mailto:info@e3s.com) and website [www.e3s.com](http://www.e3s.com)

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