WE PICK THE BEST

AWARDS EDITION
WHEN IT COMES TO INNOVATION, LG IS A CLEAR LEADER

With six awards at this year’s Smarthouse Smart Awards, including the prestigious ‘Vendor of the Year’ Award, LG’s smart thinking and imagination is certainly bearing fruit.

In just 15 years, LG has transformed the Australian market with a wealth of innovative products that allow for a more efficient home.

More than just the ultimate in design, LG products deliver positive change to everyday life through superior, intuitive technology.

Find out more lg.com.au

WINNER
VENDOR OF THE YEAR

LG Life’s Good

Winner Appliance of the Year
LG door-in-door GR-D907SL Fridge

Winner Product of the Year
LG 84” Ultra HD 3D TV

Winner Best TV over 75”
LG 84” Ultra HD 3D TV

Winner Best Monitor over 23”
LG IPS277L Monitor

Runner Up Best Value Home Theatre
LG BH9520TW Home Theatre
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COMMENT

SOFTWARE DRIVING GREAT DESIGN

This year’s SmartHouse Awards reveal consumer technology is heading in a new direction where software is as important as the physical hardware.

Functionality wrapped around beautiful design is not new. Sony was doing it years ago but somehow they forgot what was important. They also failed to recognise that software was the means by which users had access to functionality.

It took Apple with their iPad to change all that and what we have now are products that not only look good, but deliver a great user experience.

This year we have two Product Of The Year Awards: the LG 44 inch Ultra High Definition TV and the Samsung Galaxy Note 2.

The LG 44 inch TV has established a new benchmark for TV quality and as now Ultra High Definition movies become available, such as the soon to be released The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey, owners of this TV will be able to take advantage of the stunning picture quality this TV delivers.

We have also given LG Electronics our Vendor Of The Year Award. This was not an easy choice as both Samsung and LG have delivered some excellent products to market this year.

LG won the award because we have witnessed a major turnaround in not only their products, but their go-to-market strategies. Their standout products include their new range of French Door Fridges; their Smart TV range (which has led to them comfortably anchoring into the $5k TV slot); their Cinema 3D Sound Home Theatre kit and their IPS monitors.

On the other hand Samsung has been driving the market with innovations spanning their communication product range with the Galaxy S3, their 75 inch Smart TV and their PC range which is now outselling several other PC brands in the market.

They are also pushing the design envelope with their new Smart refrigerators.

Other categories that have driven the market in 2012 have been tablets where Apple has excelled, headphones where Sennheiser still has a very strong presence in the docking market where brands like Monster, Samsung and Sony have delivered new high performance devices.

Another standout product is the Samsun I9500, which delivers a new level of capability to what was already an award winning brand.

A late entrant to this year’s award was the Samsung Galaxy Camera. This device is a smartphone as it houses a full Android Jelly Bean Operating System and a Quad-core 1.4GHz processor that stitches several panoramic images together in seconds.

At the top end of the digital camera market Nikon has again stolen the show with their highly popular D4/D3000 camera.

The one thing standing out in competition is pushing manufacturers to deliver a new generation of technology and that by marrying software functionality with great design, everyone is a winner.
COMMENT
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Introduction

2013
Smart Awards

Twenty-twelve was the year televisions went ultra, computers learned touch gestures and loads of gear went wireless. Over these digital pages are the best products the year had to offer, making them the products we recommend going into 2013. Plenty of research, scrutiny and office banter went into picking the winners and we hope you have just as much fun reading about them.
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**Vendor of the Year: LG**

**A Brand Going Places**

A BRAND NEW MANAGEMENT TEAM, NEW PRODUCTS AND A WHITE HOT DESIRE TO DELIVER A NEW LEVEL OF SERVICE AND Capability FROM THEIR PRODUCTS HAS PAID OFF FOR LG ELECTRONICS WHO IS THE WINNER OF THIS YEAR’S VENDOR OF THE YEAR AWARD.

By David Richards

A household name for more than a decade, LG Electronics started
life in Australia as Lucky Guinea, from offices in Ryde, New South Wales. The Company has grown to become a billion dollar operation in Australia.

This year LG pushed Sony out of the #2 slot with a new range of Smart TVs, which includes their award winning #4 inch Ultra High Definition TV.

Early in 2013, LG Australia will launch their new Optimus G smartphone which some observers are touting is a serious competitor to Samsung. LG has a strong retail presence in the three months to end September jumped 80 percent on a year ago and 20 percent on the previous quarter to a record 7 million.

In a show of growing confidence, LG recently compared its Optimus G against Samsung’s flagship Galaxy S3, boasting the Optimus has a larger battery life and a camera that delivers sharper picture quality.

Dubbed “monster phone” in the market, the Optimus G is the result of LG’s cooperation with its component units, including Apple’s applications LG Display, LG Chem and LG Innotek. Together these LG divisions have worked together to deliver a smartphone that could well shake up the Australian market.

In 2011, the Korean Company launched their Cinema 3D strategy in Australia. Backed by heavy TV advertising, the Company has been able to grow sales of their Cinema 3D Smart TV range, especially in the over $5000 market.

While most Smart TV manufacturers were launching improved versions of their active 3D panels, LG chose to launch Cinema 3D TVs featuring passive 3D eyewear and Smart TV functionality. The strategy worked.

LG claims the switch which was made after they studied why people were not buying 3D TVs. They discovered active shutter glasses were uncomfortable, heavy, and were separate. LG’s Film Patterned Reflector (FPR) technology was then developed to resolve most of these problems.

Back at the 2012 CES Show, LG revealed a new range of appliances. Among them was their new French door fridge range, which is proving highly popular in Australia to the point some retailers have it on back order, despite its $4999 plus price tag.
Vendor of the Year: LG
A Brand Going Places

A brand new management team, new products and a white hot desire to deliver a new level of service and capability from their products has paid off for LG Electronics who is the winner of this year's Vendor of the Year Award.

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A household name for more than a decade, LG Electronics started life in Australia as Lucky Guilaroves, from offices in Randwick, NSW. The company has grown to become a billion dollar operation in Australia.

This year, LG pushed Sony out of the #1 TV slot with a new range of Smart TVs, which includes the award winning 46 inch Ultra High Definition TV.

Early in 2013, LG Australia will launch their new Optimus G smartphone which some observers are tipping to be a market leader.

In Australia, LG has regained their competitiveness by introducing their Optimus series of smartphones and allocating more resources to high-end phones. The company is determined to take on arch rival Samsung, who have sold over 20 million Galaxy S3 smartphones globally this year.

LG's smartphone shipments in the three months to end-September jumped 59 percent on a year ago and 20 percent on the previous quarter to record 7 million.

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THE COMPANY HAS BEEN ABLE TO GROW SALES OF THEIR CINEMA 3D SMART TV RANGE, ESPECIALLY IN THE OVER $5 000 MARKET.
During the past year LG has moved to enhance its competitive advantage in the refrigerator and washing machine market. They have invested in smart appliance technology along with new marketing programs.

On top of that, LG is pushing the boundaries of smart appliances with new and improved Smart ThinQ technology, which they claim delivers enhanced convenience and smarter savings. Smart Shopping offers online grocery shopping directly from the refrigerator’s LCD panel or by way of a smartphone. LG’s Smart Appliances, combined with the upgraded Smart ThinQ technology, is allowing the company to grow appliance sales at the expense of their competitors.

IN 2013 LG PLANS TO PROVIDE UPGRADED PREMIUM LINES OF THE COMPANY’S ENERGY EFFICIENT, LARGE-CAPACITY REFRIGERATORS

In 2013 LG plans to provide upgraded premium lines of the company’s energy-efficient, large-capacity refrigerators equipped with LG’s Linear Compressor technology and washing machines equipped with the Inverter Direct Drive motor, raising the bar as they compete for sales.

In 2013, LG aims to be the top selling washing machine brand in the globe for the fifth consecutive year, as it has done since 2008. Refrigerator production is expected to top ten million units for the third consecutive year. When LG first moved into the Australian market trading as LUXHY Goldstar, they sold big, bulky and expensive monstrosities. Recently LG launched a new range of IPS monitors that are light, reasonably priced and above all, are brilliant in quality. LG has already garnered a strong reputation for demonstrating impressive advances in displays and monitors. It has earned praises for its 3D technology and the benefits of IPS monitors were also recognised at a number of game conventions recently. One of the best advertisements that we saw this year was for the LG IPS monitors. The new LG advert prominently shows IPS monitors capable of producing lifelike display. To prove this, they replaced the floor of an elevator with their new monitors and simulated the floor going up. The reactions of participants are a testament of the monitor’s convincing display quality.

Already 16 million people have seen this advertisement. Take a look at yourself, you will be amazed.

These monitors, along with their Cinema 3D Smart TV, energy efficient appliances, Smart ThinQ technology, linear compressors and direct drive motors are reasons why LG has been chosen as Smarthouse’s Vendor of the Year.
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Smart Awards

Products of the Year

EVERY FEW YEARS A PRODUCT COMES ALONG AND PUSHES THE TECHNOLOGICAL BOUNDARIES. THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT LG'S 84LM9600 AND SAMSUNG'S GALAXY NOTE II HAS DONE.

By Tony Ibrahim

LG 84 inch UHD TV (84LM9600) | $17,999 | lg.com/au

The screen spans a whopping 84 inches diagonally. Put it in a room and it will command attention, but you design the room around it. Because it retains the striking looks LG has become famous for. It doesn't matter which angle you look at it from; even from a bird's-eye view it's an artistic feat. But because it's the first television compatible with the Ultra High Definition standard, its exceptional feature-set has been overlooked.

An Ultra High Definition television can produce an image four times clearer than that of a Full HD television. Its 3840 x 2160-pixel resolution results in 8 million pixels being crammed into a single panel—this is in comparison to Full HD's 2 million.

There is a downside to present a lack of UHD content and delivery methods. Granted, supporting content is limited, but we prefer to look at it differently; in our eyes, the 84LM9600 is simply future-proofed.

In the meantime, LG has gone the extra mile by including software that presents Full HD content—content that would otherwise look stretched on an 84-inch screen—impressively.

If you walk up to most similarly priced TV's, the individual pixels can be seen. Seeing how an image is produced—by tiny grids of pixels working together to form an image—sets it apart from the viewing experience. Because LG's UHD TV has four times as many pixels, it's harder to identify an individual pixel. The magic of television is national and viewers can indulge in an 84-inch home entertainment experience.

Click here for more Info

Samsung Galaxy Note II | $899 | samsung.com/au

Samsung's second generation Galaxy Note takes the ethos of the original and takes it to another level. For starters the Note II is powered by Samsung's quad core processor, but it has been overclocked to 1.6GHz. This is but the beginning of a spec frenzy.

The most impressive Jilly Bean is the RAM which has been doubled to 2GB and internal memory that goes up to 4GB. Throw in a 3,100 mAh battery and the Note II begins to resemble more tablet and less smartphone, but I guess Samsung anticipated that when they pumped the screen to 6.5 inches.

For the screen, Samsung has used a Super AMOLED panel with a resolution of 1,280 by 720 (HD). Entertainment is a huge part of the Note II's allure and the screen, coupled with its 4G technology, will make it a powerhouse device to watch movies or stream videos on.

As expected, Samsung's S-Pen has returned. Not only does the stylus ease the transition between old-fashioned hardcopy and modern-day digital, it immerses Samsung's products with a sense of individuality.

On the back of the Note II is an 8MP camera capable of Full HD recording, and a secondary 1.9MP camera is featured on its front. There's a host of connectivity features on board, including WiFi, WiFi Direct, NFC, A-GPS (which has access to Russian Glonass satellites) and Bluetooth 4.0.

The final noteworthy difference is the Note II runs on Android 4.1 (Jelly Bean) out of the box, equipping it with optimised speech recognition software and Google's intuitive Now interface.

Samsung's Galaxy Note II is available in two colours, Marble White or Titanium Grey.

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On the back of the Note 2 is an 8MP camera capable of Full HD recording, and a secondary 1.9MP camera is featured on its front. There’s a host of connectivity features on board, including WiFi, WiFi Direct, NFC, A-GPS (which has access to Russian Glonass satellites) and Bluetooth 4.0. The final noteworthy difference is the Note II runs on Android 4.1 (Jelly Bean) out of the box, equipping it with optimised speech recognition software and Google’s intuitive New interface.

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Television
Winners 2013

Television have always been a portal to a new world we could escape to, but over the past year that world has rapidly evolved. Smart TVs deliver effortless access to content and applications, and offer interactive ways to use them. While the launch of Ultra High Definition television displays this world in unprecedented, reach-out-and-grab-it clarity.

By Tony Shrem

Best Television Over 75 Inches
> LG 84LM9600 | $17,999 | lg.com/au

This television is a pioneer for a method of reasoning, the most obvious of which is its compatibility with Ultra High Definition (UHD) content. UHD televisions offer four times the clarity of a Full HD television by doubling the number of horizontal and vertical pixels on a screen.

Let it sink in: it’s four times clearer than a Blu-ray movie, watched on a 1080p television.

As a result, minute details that would otherwise be lost are rendered in unparalleled clarity, to the extent it’s difficult discounting the individual pixels giving the image together, even if you were standing a mere foot away from the screen.

Throw in a context-aware, extraordinarily 3D skills including dual play gaming, an internet savvy persona, a versatile application portal, a remote akin to a magician’s wand and enough intelligence to transcribe vocal instructions and you begin to understand why this television reigns in this category and has been awarded SmartHouse’s Product of the Year.

Highly Recommended
Sony KD84XS8000
TELEVISIONS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A PORTAL TO A NEW WORLD WE COULD ESCAPE TO, BUT OVER THE PAST YEAR THAT WORLD HAS RAPIDLY EVOLVED. SMART TVS DELIVER EFFORTLESS ACCESS TO CONTENT AND APPLICATIONS, AND OFFER INTERACTIVE WAYS TO USE THEM. WHILE THE LAUNCH OF ULTRA HIGH DEFINITION TELEVISION DISPLAYS THIS WORLD IN UNPRECEDENTED, REACH-OUT-AND-GRAB-IT CLARITY.

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Smart Awards

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Highly Recommended
Sony KD84XS000
Best 65 to 75 inches
> Samsung ES9000 | $9,499 | samsung.com.au

Samsung’s ES9000 is a triple threat television as it models the largest panel Samsung has ever introduced in Australia. It features a powerful dual core processor and sets the benchmark in image quality for a Full HD set.

With this set, image quality is paramount and Samsung has gone all in with a suite of software designed to improve black levels, colour variance and 3D technologies. Combined with their ultra bright LED panel, the ES9000 dominates televisions 70 inches and below on the picture quality front.

Patent processing mireado helps the ES9000 breeze operations, whether it be a quick look at the application store or taking advantage of its gesture controls. In addition to it responding to your hands in its responsiveness to voice instructions.

**Highly Recommended**
Sharp LC70LE736X

Best 55 to 65 inches
> Panasonic TH-P65VT50A | $5,999 | Panasonic.com.au

Although it’s been years, Panasonic’s plasma panels continue to produce “black levels that have been consistently recognised as among the best in the industry.” Like a fine wine, Panasonic’s revered picture quality has matured as it is now has a 100,000 hour lifespan, and a free of mercury and lead. Its environmentally friendly bravado hasn’t come at the expense of performance. It has a luminous 6000:1 contrast ratio, a 1080P native resolution and 24/7/365 equivalent steps of gradation. Together, these technologies produce incredibly vivid images that maintain focus during turning scenes, such as sporting events or car chase. The 65 inch screen still acts as a gateway to Panasonic’s VIERA connect platform which now features cloud-based architecture for the infinite number of apps.

**Highly Recommended**
Samsung UA65ES9000

Best Over 32 Inches
> Hisense XT770 | $1,999 | hisense.com.au

Right out of the box, Hisense’s XT770 looks absolutely stellar. The LED edge-illuminated panel adds in keeping this 65 inch set impressively thin, and its fine transparent border only adds to its minimalistic charm. Then you press the ‘On’ button.

Doing so populates the screen with vibrant, vivid colours, perfectly capable of handling 3D movies or anything else broadcast in Full HD. It has a 4000:1 contrast ratio, a 100Hz refresh rate and a 60ms response time.

As you’d expect from a smart TV, the XT770 is application heavy. It comes pre-installed with SBS1 video-on-demand application, and its remote wears dedicated buttons for YouTube and a tailored Opera browser (bonus points for the latter), while also offering access to Facebook, Twitter, any HD movies with the Video App and a number of other applications.

Wireless technologies enable access to these applications, and other devices. Users have the option of jumping onto a WiFi network or plugging an Ethernet cable in, while DLNA technology enables the XT770 to display your pictures, movies and eBooks from compatible DLNA smartphones and tablets. Plug a hard drive into one of its USB ports and the XT770 functions as a proficient Personal Video Recorder (PVR). An onboard electronic program guide aids in scheduling the shows you want recorded in Full HD or HD resolution, and we’ve particularly fond of its economical ability to record programs from standby.

**Highly Recommended**
Toshiba 55EV930A
Television Winners 2013

By Tony Ibrahim

Best 65 to 75 inches
Samsung ES9000 | $9,499 | samsung.com/au

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Highly Recommended Sharp LC70LE726X

Best 55 to 65 inches
Panasonic TH-P65VT50A | $5,999 | Panasonic.com.au

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Highly Recommended Samsung UA65ES8000

Best Over 32 Inches
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Highly Recommended Toshiba 55L9300A
WIN This 75” Samsung ES9000 Smart TV worth $9,499

At 75 inches, the ES9000 is the largest TV Samsung has ever released in Australia. It’s exquisitely crafted, engineered to produce true-to-life images and has intuitive Smart TV features, including voice control, gesture control and access to Samsung’s world of content.

WIN This 75” Samsung ES9000 Smart TV worth $9,499

IF YOU WANT TO WIN YOUR VERY OWN 75 INCH SAMSUNG ES9000 VALUED AT $9,499, SIMPLY TELL US IN 25 WORDS OR LESS: WHAT’S THE ONE FEATURE YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT THIS TV?

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Visit www.smarthouse.com.au/win to enter
FOR THAT GENUINE CINEMATIC FEEL YOU CANNOT GO PAST A HOME THEATRE PROJECTOR. DIM THE LIGHTS, GRAB SOME POPCORN AND EXPERIENCE MOVIES THE WAY THE DIRECTOR INTENDED.

By Tony Ibrahim

**Projector Winners 2013**

The latest projector to lead Panasonic's home cinema range is the AE8000 and it has the goods to do so admirably. This includes a 220W Red Rich Lamp capable of producing 2,400 lumens of brightness and a rich contrast ratio of 500,000:1. The high-brightness and vast-contrast duo results in popping colours against gradual shades of black.

The AE8000 projects images that are 20 percent brighter than its predecessor and yet ensures there's less crosstalk in 3D viewing, (this is a particularly impressive feat as brighter images tend to show more signs of crosstalk). It also features a suite of 3D software; one of which automatically corrects unnatural 3D movements.

**Highly Recommended**

**Best Home Theatre Projector**

Panasonic AE8000 | $3,899 | panasonic.com.au

With visual content being injected with more vivid colour, higher resolution and extra dimensions, viewers are pushing their home theatres for a more immersive experience. A big chunk of that experience comes from the size of the screen, with larger offerings authentically replicating the movie spectacle. In our opinion no other projector screen facilitates an experience as convincing as Carson Screen’s Selina Pro.

The Selina Pro line-up offers one of the simplest installations in the fixed screen arena and can be customised up to 400 inches. The build quality is exceptional with premium US materials like the four-layer silicone matte white backing and the Asian-built bevelled frames. These extra-thick 120mm frames keep the tension while making an aesthetic statement. Hidden behind the frame are 40 mounting points that hold the backdrop material in place for longer, avoiding sag that pulls away picture quality and ejects you from the experience.

**Highly Recommended**

**Best Projector Screen**

Carson Screen Selina Pro (140 inches) | $3,800 | digitalcinema.com.au

**Stewart CineCurve**
FOR THAT GENUINE CINEMATIC FEEL YOU CANNOT GO PAST A HOME THEATRE PROJECTOR. DIM THE LIGHTS, GRAB SOME POPCORN AND EXPERIENCE MOVIES THE WAY THE DIRECTOR INTENDED.

By Tony Ibrahim

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Best Projector Screen

Stewart CineCurve
Home Theatre

Winners 2013

You no longer need to be a sound-gEEK to value sophisticated Home Theatre setups. New applications make them easy to understand and easier to control, while a host of new wireless technologies enrich their functionality and content portfolio.

By Tony Arrasen

Smart Awards

Best Premium Surround Sound System
> MKSound 750THX 5.1 | $5,799 | qualifi.com.au

It’s with good reason the MK 750 was the first product to receive the THX seal of approval. It’s a 5.1 home theatre system designed by the company George Lucas turned to when making Episodes I, II and III of Star Wars. The 750 is MKSound’s attempt to bring reference-grade audio into the everyday household, and their system delivers audio that effortlessly handles voices, percussive effects and musical instruments with cinematic impact. Highly Recommended

Best Value Surround Sound System
> Samsung HT-E6750W | $1,199 | samsung.com.au

Samsung’s HT-E6750W is a bold entrant by Samsung, mainly because of its roots in yesterday’s technology for inspiration. Masking at the heart of this 7.1, 200 watt system are old-school triaxial tubes responsible for delivering warm sound. This tubes might be an old trick, but the E6750W is far from it. Samsung has modernized the technology by coupling it with a digital amplifier to produce, basically, louder sound. Additionally, it has a strong 2D/3D Blu-ray repertoire and access to Samsung’s vast content/app bank.
**Smart Awards**

**Home Theatre Winners 2013**

You no longer need to be a sound-gEEK to value sophisticated home theatre setups. New applications make them easy to understand and easier to control, while a host of new wireless technologies enrich their functionality and content portfolio.

**Best Premium Surround Sound System**

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**Best Value Surround Sound System**

> Samsung HT-E6750W | $1,199 | samsung.com.au

Samsung’s HT-E6750W is a bold entrant by Samsung, mainly because of its use of yesterday’s technology for inspiration. Sitting at the heart of this 7.1, 220 watt system are old school, vacuum tubes responsible for delivering warm sound. The tubes might be an old trick, but the E6750W is far from it. Samsung has modernized this technology by coupling it with a digital amplifier to produce, basically, louder sound. Additionally, it has a strong 2D/3D Blu-ray repertoire and access to Samsung’s vast content/app bank.
Best Premium SoundBar
> Yamaha YSP-4300 | $1,999 | au.yamaha.com

Yamaha was the first to identify the need for a space saving entertainment system capable of producing theatrical sound. They tended to this need by introducing the soundbar category back in 2006, and they’ve been at the forefront of it ever since. Their latest offering, the YSP-4300, solidifies their leading home-theatre technological status.

Highly Recommended
Harman Kardon SB40

Best Value SoundBar
> Panasonic SC-HTB550 | $599 | Panasonic.com.au

Panasonic’s SC-HTB550 is a sound bar with a nifty party trick: it snaps clean in half. Assisting a rare form factor, this speaker can be parted in two by using the inclusive stands, can transform into a classic 2.1 theatre setup. The complementary woofer is wireless and can be positioned anywhere in the room without any compromise to audio performance. The total power of this 2.1 system is 240 watts, of which 120 watts are pumping the sub.

CLICK HERE TO PLAY VIDEO
Highly Recommended
JBL SB600

Highly Recommended Surround Sound System
> LG BH9520TW | $999 | lg.com/au

LG’s flagship home theatre system brings together immersive sound, proficient 3D technology and a vast content portfolio. It manages to pump 1,100 watts of power through 9.1 channels. No one wants a tower that clutters up their living room, so thinking ahead, LG has planted an upward firing speaker on each tower stand. As a result, the sound is even more immersive as it cascades down upon listeners.

The Blu-ray player plays 3D movies and will add a third dimension to ordinary films. 3D sound zooming compliments the onscreen action by zooming in and out in synchronisation with the depth of 3D images. In addition to its tasteful handling of 3D Blu-rays, the BH9520TW is distinguished by a slew of connectivity options. Pictures, videos and music on Apple devices can be played through the home theatre system when they’re plugged into the front USB port, while simultaneously charging them. The BH9520TW can replay content wirelessly from smartphones and tablets compatible with DLNA technology. It actually takes remote control functionality a couple of steps further, firstly by working with LG’s smartphone application, and secondly, by offering WiFi Direct. With WiFi Direct the BH9520TW will establish its own wireless network with compatible devices, eliminating the need for a wireless home network.

However, LG’s BH9520TW is WiFi friendly and connecting it to your wireless home network will reap many rewards. It can access LG’s content portfolio and applications, delivering catch-up TV services like ABC iView to your big screen.

Highly Recommended
KEF 200T
Smart Awards

Home Theatre Winners 2013
By Tony Vajtai

Best Premium SoundBar
> Yamaha YSP-4300 | $1,999 | au.yamaha.com

Yamaha was the first to identify the need for a space saving entertainment system capable of producing theatrical sound. They tackled this need by introducing the soundbar category back in 2006, and they’re still at the forefront of it ever since.

Their latest offering, the YSP-4300, satisfies their leading home theatre technology into one elegantly styled soundbar. Inside its shallow body are 22 array speakers—of which two are 6.5cm woofers—engineered to produce realistic sound. A wireless 120 watt subwoofer ensures low end frequencies are justly played, while keeping your room’s decorum intact.

Highly Recommended
Harman Kardon SB40

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Highly Recommended
JBL SB500

Highly Recommended Surround Sound System
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TO KEEP YOUR ROOM DECORUM INTACT: LG’S BH9520TW HAS WIRELESS REAR SPEAKERS

Highly Recommended
JBL Control 2080

Ready to experience the full range of your audio enjoyment? Call 1300 363 303 for your nearest retailer or visit the website today.
**Best Premium Receiver**

> Denon AVR-3313 | $1,799 | audioproducts.com.au

You can see Denon’s passion for sound in the AVR-3313 and that’s partly why we love it so much; the other part has to do with its simplicity. Smartphone-friendly personality. Simply connect the AVR-3313 to a home network via Ethernet and you can wirelessly stream content to it via AirPlay or DLNA. Additionally, there’s the option of controlling the AVR-3313 with ease from your smartphone or tablet through a dedicated Denon Android or Apple iOS app. Being a high-end Denon receiver, you can of course expect stunning sound. Each of its seven speaker channels outputs at optimum performance levels regardless of the action in other channels. Each channel has a clean 150W amplifiers, and for faster audio processing with less interference, Denon uses the latest 32-bit Digital Signal Processors (produced by Sharc). The AVR-3313 is packed with clever features such as built-in Spotify, 4K Video Scaling, Audyssey calibration and compressed audio restoration. It’s also powerful enough to manage content across three zones. In other words, this receiver can transmit one film to one television, a sporting match to a second screen, and then some music to a third area. This outside entertainment desk perhaps, all simultaneously. It’s a case of making sophisticated technology simple and accessible. It all begins with Denon’s Advanced Setup Assistant. This appears on the TV and walks you through the options for complete customisation to suit your individual needs and home, and configures the receiver during the process.

**Best Blu-ray Player**

> Panasonic DMR-BWT820 | $999 | Panasonic.com.au

Panasonic’s DMR-BWT820 performs the ordinary things extraordinarily and then goes one further by expanding the functionality of the traditional Blu-ray player. I’ll record Full HD and 3D content straight to its 1TB hard drive; will allow you to view your personal pictures and movies on your TV by slotting in your camera’s SD card, and will wirelessly access Blu-ray info and Panasonic’s Viera Connect platform through WiFi. We’re particularly fond of how Panasonic has taken advantage of smartphone and tablets. Through the use of a Blu-ray player, DLNA wireless connectivity and Panasonic’s iOS/Android app, smartphone users can stream through channel lists and then watch the channel of their choice right on their smartphone.

**Best Value Receiver**

> Marantz SR5007 | $1,320 | qualify.com.au

Combining network capability and audiophile sound, the Marantz SR5007 Home Theatre Receiver is an ideal media centre for any home theatre system. It can manage 7 channels with 100 watts of power each, hosts an Ethernet port for networking media to other devices, is AirPlay compatible and can access 14,000 internet radio stations worldwide. Audyssey’s technology helps calibrate your setup exactly, while Dolby’s TrueHD and DTS HD Master Audio gets the best possible sound from your speakers. Ultra High Definition compliant, it’s ready for the next generation in content and will appreciate audiophiles looking for better custom integration by using an RS222 port, a DC trigger and Flasher input.

**Highly Recommended**
Yamaha RX-V670

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**Smart Awards**

**Home Theatre Winners 2013**

By Tony Ibrahim
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Highly Recommended
Yamaha RX-A870

Highly Recommended
Pioneer SC-LX80-K
Smart Awards

Sound System
Winners 2013

THE RIGHT SOUND GEAR WILL RIP YOU AWAY FROM THE EVERYDAY GRIND AND TRANSPORT YOU TO A MORE EXCITING PLACE, WHETHER IT’S THE MOSH PIT OF A CONCERT OR A MEMORY YOU THOUGHT YOU’D NEVER RELIVE.

By Troy Drahman

Best Small Speakers
> KEF LS50 | $1,999 | advancedaudio.com.au

The LS50s stand a mere 30 centimetres tall, but these monitors aren’t hemmed by their diminutive size. Similarly sized speakers tend to suffer in lower frequencies, providing bass that sounds disproportionate to the mid and high ranges, but the LS50s overcome this crippling shortfall.

They sound balanced, lending to the soundstage equitably and startling audiophiles with their terrific volume and clarity. Even though they borrow the Uni-Q driver from KEF’s much larger (and more expensive) flagships, you don’t expect sonic performance this proficient from speakers this small.

This Uni-Q driver unit might look like one complete component, but it’s actually an intricate arrangement. It consists of a 29mm aluminium dome tweeter in the centre of a 15cm magnesium/aluminium-coned mid/bass. Covering the tweeter is a waveguide responsible for managing high frequencies. These components have been assembled in a way that maintains sound while conforming to KEF’s distinctive styling. Of course, the new gold colouring contributes to the LS50s undeniable charm.

This result is a pair of monitors that sound as good as they look. The LS50s are breathtaking, even across the range and for their size, impressively voluminous. The LS50s don’t just celebrate 50 years of KEF’s heritage; they present an argument suggesting KEF will go on to celebrate 60 more.

CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO

Highly Recommended

B&W P7!
Smart Awards

Sound System
Winners 2013

THE RIGHT SOUND GEAR WILL RIP YOU AWAY FROM THE EVERYDAY GRIND AND TRANSPORT YOU TO A MORE EXCITING PLACE, WHETHER IT'S THE MOSH PIT OF A CONCERT OR A MEMORY YOU THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER RELIVE.

By Tony Diakoff

Best Small Speakers
> KEF LS50 | $1,999 | advancedaudio.com.au

The LS50s stand a mere 30 centimetres tall, but these monitors aren't hemmed in by their diminutive size. Typically sized speakers tend to suffer in lower frequencies, providing bass that sounds disengendered to the mid and highs. But the LS50s overcome this crippling shortfall.

They sound balanced, lending the soundstage equitably and driving audiophiles with their terrific volume and clarity. Even though they house the Uni-Q driver from KEF, it sounds much larger (and more expensive) flagships, you don't expect audio performance this proficient from speakers this small.

This Uni-Q driver unit might look like one complete component, but it's actually an intricate arrangement. It consists of a 25mm aluminium dome tweeter in the centre of a 75mm magnesium/aluminium-coned mid/bass. Covering the tweeter is a waveguide responsible for managing high frequencies.

Three components have been assembled in a way that stresses sound while conforming to KEF's distinctive styling. Of course, the new gold-coloured drivers contribute to the LS50s undeniably warm and energetic sound. This result is a pair of monitors that sound as good as they look fantastic. Sound is enriching, even across the range, and for their size, impressively voluminous. The LS50s don't just celebrate 50 years of KEF's heritage, they present an argument suggesting KEF will go on to celebrate 60 more years.

CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO

Highly Recommended
R&W PM!
Smart Awards

Sound System Winners 2013
By Tony Ibrahim

Best Large Speakers
> Focal Electra 1038Be | $14,999 | audiomarketing.com.au

Focal’s Electra 1038Be is the result of an obsession, a need to evolve every component to its best for near-perfect sound reproduction. Characterizing these elegant floor standers are five drivers: three woofers, one midrange driver, and a tweeter, all in a three-way bass reflex design. The three woofers are a 7 inch, the midrange reaches 6.5 inch and the upgraded tweeter employs beryllium over the previous aluminum/magnesium composite. By using beryllium, the tweeter is lighter, more rapid and can play past 40kHz without break-up, while the drivers can handle a frequency response range of 20Hz to 40kHz. In the studio music might be an engineering feat, but along the way it translates into an emotive pleasure. Focal mirror this in launching the 1038Be’s in real wood coated in four desirable finishes, including champagne, saffron mahogany and black lacquer.

Best Sub-woofer
> Bowers & Wilkins PV1D | $1,899 | bowers-wilkins.com

The B&W PV1D is a real pocket rocket; it produces great sound from a relatively small enclosure. It benefits from new drive units and amplification, allowing it to discharge deep bass quicker than the previous model. On the front is a touch OLED panel that allows users to fine-tune a variety of presetts, but those in the know how have the option of manually tuning the sound. These more advanced tuning options can be managed via B&W’s SubApp PC software.

Best Network Music Player
> Musical Fidelity M1 Ctic | $1,999 | audiomarketing.com.au

The best things in life are simple and doesn’t Musical Fidelity know it. From the look of it, the M1 Ctic looks like an understated box, but in reality this simple console delivers a versatile music portfolio. It is a high-quality streaming music player, an internet radio, a 24-bit/192kHz Digital-to-Audio Converter (DAC) and a pre-amplifier in one minimalist body. The understated front hasn’t influenced its versatility as the M1 Ctic’s rear bristles with connectivity options. Odds are any device you’re using is supported, including disc players, tape players, power amplifiers and preamps. Of course, support for the digital age is present by way of generic USB ports, optical, coax and networked jacks. Finding your way through your music collections is easy as it uses an intuitive, aesthetic and evolving interface. Music can be gleaned from wired and wireless sources, but the quality will be enhanced, whether it is from an Apple/iPad/iPhone/iPad, USB drive, notebook or a more traditional source.

Best In Ceiling Speakers
> Focal IC1002 | $1,299 a pair | audiomarketing.com.au

The premium in-ceiling speaker achieved in high fidelity series by borrowing the aluminum/magnesium alloy inverted dome tweeter, along with its 30W sandwich woofers, found in Focal’s Emmy Award winning Electra series. Its monolithic design accommodates adjustments for tweeter response from -3dB to 0dB, in addition to the tweeter mount being swivelled. Its performance is more impressive when you recognize its economical handling of power. Being efficient, at 88dB, a recommended power range 20-150w gives plenty of scope for matching to various amplifiers; however, these top-tier ceiling speakers deserve premium amplification.
Smart Awards

Sound System Winners 2013
By Tony Crook

Best Large Speakers
> Focal Electra 1038Be | $14,999 | audiomarketing.com.au

Focal’s Electra 1038Be is the result of an obsession, a need to evolve every component to its best for non-perfect sound reproduction. Characterising these elegant floor standers are five drivers: three woofers, one midrange driver and a tweeter, taking advantage of the 1038Be’s true three-way bass reflex design. The three woofers measure 7 inches, the midrange stretches 6 and a half and the upgraded tweeter employs beryllium over the previous aluminium/magnesium composite. By using beryllium, the tweeter is lighter, more rigid and can play past 40kHz without break-up, while the drivers can handle a frequency response range of 30Hz to 40kHz. In the studio music might be an engineering feat, but out the way it translates into an emotional pleasure. Focal mirror this in launching the 1038Be’s in real wood coated in four desirable finishes, including champagne, saffron, mahogany and black lacquer.

Best Sub-woofer
> Bowers & Wilkins PV1D | $1,899 | bowers-wilkins.com

The B&W PV1D is a real pocket rocket; it produces great sound from a relatively small enclosure. It benefits from new drive units and amplification, allowing it to discharge deeper bass quicker than the previous model. On the front is a touch OLED panel that allows users to nominate a variety of presets, but those in the know how have the option of manually tuning the sound. These more advanced tuning options can be managed via B&W’s SubApp PC software.

Best Network Music Player
> Musical Fidelity M1 CiiC | $1,999 | audiomarketing.com.au

The best things in life are simple and don’t Musical Fidelity know it. From the look of it, the M1 CiiC looks like an understated box, but in reality this simple console delivers a versatile music portfolio. It is a high-quality streaming music player, an internet radio, a 24-bit/192kHz Digital-to-Audio Converter (DAC) and a pre-amplifier in one minimalist body. The understated front hasn’t influenced its versatility at all. The M1 CiiC’s rear bristles with connectivity options. Odds are any device you’re using is supported, including disc players, tapes players, power amplifiers and preamps. Of course, support for the digital age is present by way of genuine USB ports, optical 24-bit and networking jacks. Finding your way through your music collection is easy as it uses an intuitive, aesthetic and evolving interface. Music can be gleaned from wired and wireless sources, but the quality will be enhanced, whether it is an Apple/iPad/iPhone/iPod, USB drive, notebook or a more traditional source.

Best In Ceiling Speakers
> Focal IC1002 | $1,299 a pair | audiomarketing.com.au

The premium in-ceiling speaker achieves its high fidelity series by borrowing the aluminium/magnesium beryllium inverted dome tweeter, along with its MW sandwich woofer, found in Focal’s famous Electra series. Its instantaneous design accommodates adjustments for tweeter response from -3dB to Zero to +3dB, in addition to the tweeter’s being swivelled. Its performance is more intelligible when you recognise its exponential handling of power. Being efficient at 86dB, a recommended power range of 20-100w, you plenty of scope for matching to various amplifiers; however, those top-tier ceiling speakers deserve premium amplification.
Arcam has always known how to convert digital signals into high-quality music and they continue the tradition with the rDAC-kw. More often than not, music streaming comes at the expense of audio quality to the distaste of audiophiles. Arcam’s rDAC-kw will stream music while upgrading tracks to the best possible quality, delivering vast music collections in pristine quality. The ‘kw’ separating this device from the introductory model is its wireless capabilities. By simply plugging in a dedicated USB dongle into a computer, it will stream audio files directly to the rDAC while it nestles out of sight behind the HiFi system. Combining ease of use with a premium finish makes this DAC a standout for serious music enthusiasts.

Highly Recommended
Musical Fidelity M1 DAC

The first Debut turntable, introduced in the late 1990s, was a revolution for the hi-fi industry. The new Debut Carbon lives up to its pedigree. The design has changed and the inclusion of a Carbon Tube for the tone arm, increases stiffness and decreases unwanted resonance.

Best Turntable
> Project Debut Carbon Phono (with USB) | $599 | project-audio.com

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Life is too short for second best. That’s why Sennheiser only creates the most advanced sound solutions to make the soul of music come alive. Just like with our new MOMENTUM: crisp, clear and powerful detailed sound. In addition the leather padded headband and earpads ensure optimum comfort. Audition the MOMENTUM headset today. www.sennheiser.com.au

Highly Recommended
Raga RP8

Best DAC
> Arcam rDAC-kw | $775 | arcam.co.uk

Smart Awards

Sound System Winners 2013
By Tony Ibrahim
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Highly Recommended

Rega RP6

Best DAC
> Arcam rDAC-kw | $775 | arcam.co.uk

Best Turntable
> Project Debut Carbon Phono (with USB) | $599 | project-audio.com

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www.sennheiser.com.au

Like Us
YOUR SMARTPHONE KEEPS YOUR PERSONAL MULTIMEDIA AT HAND, BUT IF YOU WANT MUSIC THAT MESMERISES YOU’LL POP THAT PHONE OR TABLET INTO A DOCK. THIS YEAR’S WINNERS LOOK FANTASTIC, ARE HIGHLY FUNCTIONAL AND BREATHE LIFE INTO EVERYDAY CHORES BY EMANATING SPIRITED SOUND.

By Tony Ibrahim

Best Dock
> Samsung DA-E750 Wireless Audio Dock

If you are looking for a dock that delivers big sound with a touch of old fashioned theatrics, then you can’t go past the Samsung E750. It is finished in mahogany, with chrome and dark silver accents for the front-facing speakers, but best of all has twin vacuum tubes which subtly glow when in use. Uniquely it’s fluent in docking Samsung and Apple devices, equipped with each company’s respective wireless standards and offers support to the masses through USB and Bluetooth.

Highly Recommended
Bowers & Wilkins Zeppelin Air

Best Wireless Audio System
> Pioneer XW-SMA4

What we have here is the result of a very special recipe. First Pioneer has taken some high end hardware, wrapped it up in an enclosure that is gentle on the eye and then equipped it to speak with virtually any device. The result is a powerful speaker which can be used independently or can form part of a larger, modular speaker system, allowing for various speakers to be scattered across the home as they ooze the same, synchronised melody at the touch of a button. It doesn’t matter if you have a smartphone, tablet, PC or Mac, through AirPlay, DLNA, WLAN and WiFi Direct you can stream high quality music wirelessly to the XW-SMA4, Pioneer’s flagship modular speaker and SmartHouse’s Best Wireless Audio System Winner.

Highly Recommended
Loewe Air/Speaker

Best Wireless Speaker
> Sonos Sub

The new Sonos Wireless sub looks like a stylish doughnut monolith. It dispenses impressive sound compliments of two force-cancelling speakers positioned face to face, dual acoustic ports and two Class-D digital amplifiers specially tuned for the hardware. Whether it sits upright or flat on its back, it will deliver forceful low frequency sound when connected to the Sonos audio system, filling rooms with the welcomed shudder of powerful bass.

CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO
Highly Recommended
Loewe Air/Speaker

Best Wireless Audio System
> Samsung E750 Wireless Audio Dock

Highly Recommended
Samsung DA-E750 Wireless Audio Dock

Best Wireless Speaker
> Sonos Sub

Highly Recommended
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Best Dock
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Best Wireless Audio System
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Highly Recommended
Sonos Sub

CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO
Highly Recommended
Sonos Sub

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Highly Recommended
Sonos Sub
If you are looking for a dock that delivers big sound with a touch of old fashioned theatrics, then you can’t go past the Samsung E750. It is finished in mahogany, with chrome and dark silver accents for the front-facing speakers, but best of all has twin vacuum tubes which subtly glow when in use. Uniquely it’s fluent in docking Samsung and Apple devices, equipped with each company’s respective wireless standards and offers support to the masses through USB and Bluetooth.

**Best Dock**

> Samsung DA-E750 Wireless Audio Dock

By Tony Ibrahim

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**Best Wireless Audio System**

> Pioneer XW-SMA4

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**Best Wireless Audio Product**

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Smart Awards

Docks & Radio
Winners 2013

By Tony Ibrahim

Best Digital Radio
> Pure Contour 100Di | $199 | pure.com/au

Shaped like a semi-sphere and equipped with a swivelling Apple dock, Pure’s aptly named Contour 100Di is a digital and FM radio that'll leave a lasting impression. Inside its contoured body are two full-range 3 inch drive units capable of producing enough sound to fill a run-of-the-mill room. The curious shape looks great, easily accommodates the two speakers and harbours an intriguing dock. Touch the right side of the Pure logo and it automatically rotates 180 degrees, presenting a dock compatible with Apple’s iPod, iPhone or iPad. All of the Apple devices comfortably nestle on the dock, which will simultaneously charge your device while you play music.

If you ever tire of your native collection, Apple and Android users can access thousands of internet radio stations and on-demand programmes by downloading the free Pure Connect app. Internet radio offers a vast amount of constantly ripe music, and if you prefer a data efficient option, the Contour 1000Di’s Digital and FM radios are ideal for you. Non Apple devices can make use of the Contour 1000Di’s speakers through the customary auxiliary input or its USB port. The USB port will also come in handy when it’s time to update the 1000Di’s software. For wireless control, a remote is included in the bundle kit.

Highly Recommended
Vita Audio R2i

For your closest demonstration: www.synergyaudio.com or call 03 9459 7474
Whilst REL strive to produce beautiful designs in a category not known for them, our engineering team ensures that every REL is built to the most rigorous standards. The result are products both beautiful to behold, and offer industry-leading performance.

T-9 features a rugged, 300W monoblock amplifier driving an Ultra Long Throw™ 10” engine with a matching fluid-coupled passive resulting in the equivalent driven surface area of a 15” driver. All this performance is encased in a solid 1-inch thick cabinet braced carefully and finished off in 5 coats of hand-rubbed lacquer.

REL Acoustics Ltd., where beauty lies more than skin deep.
Smart Awards

Headphone
Winners 2013

THE ADVENT OF PORTABLE MUSIC PLAYERS HAS SEEN HEADPHONES RAPIDLY GROW. THIS YEAR’S WINNERS ARE AT THE FRONT OF THE PACK IN PERFORMANCE, STYLING AND VALUE.

By Tony Ibrahim

Best Wireless Headphones
> Philips SHC8535 | $149.95 | philips.com.au

These headphones from Philips deliver surprising sound and incredible value, even more so when you recognize they’re wireless, ideal for watching television without disturbing the sleeping family. These headphones build upon Philips’ expertise in wireless technologies to deliver sound in a practical range of 25-40 metres. After some 16 hours of use, an on-board indicator tells you it’s time to pop them on the rechargeable plate.

Sometimes the simple solutions are the best, and Philips’ SHC8535 make the complex technologies look simple. Take the stand for instance, ingeniously hiding the headphones upright while they recharge on the on-board batteries. But they don’t look like a foreign piece of tech-wizardry, masquerading a mantle simply there to present the headphones to passerby. Throw in the premium finish and these headphones are a real all-rounder for your home entertainment gear.

The headphones themselves are characterised by plush leatherette cup edges to hug your ears, passively blocking out external distractions. The brass boasts the same leather dressing and can be adjusted to fit one of three settings. Volume control is clearly articulated by 40mm speaker drivers made of a composite material chosen for its ability to distort. They’re equipped to handle a broad range of musical genres and add a sense of theatricality to movies by subtly enhancing the bass, doing all they can to involve you in the experience.

Best In-Ears
> Sennheiser IE 80 | $599.95 | sennheiser.com.au

Sennheiser’s IE 80s sit inside your ears, forming a seal that stops your music in and the distracting outside world out. An unburdened enthusiasm will put your ears active from the loud volumes before any distortion kicks in and, whereas conventional in-ears dangle down, these wrap around the back of your ear for a more comfortable fit. The head-mounted housing is rugged, the cable is interchangeable so you can tune the headphones to your liking.

Highly Recommended
B&W LS

Highly Recommended
Sennheiser RS200s
Smart Awards

Headphone Winners 2013

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These headphones from Philips deliver surprising sound and incredible value, even more so when you recognize they're wireless. Ideal for watching television without disturbing the sleeping family, these headphones build upon Philips' expertise in wireless technologies to deliver sound in a practical range of 30-40 metres. After some 16 hours of use, an on-board indicator tells you it's time to pop them on the rechargeable plate.

Sometimes the simple solutions are the best, and Philips' SHC8533 make the complex technologies look simple. Take the stand for instance, elegantly holding the headphones upright while they recharge the on board batteries. But they don't look like a foreign piece of tech-wizardry, masquerading a Martha simply there to present the headphones to passerby's. Throw in the premium finish and these headphones own a seat alongside your home entertainment gas.

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Highly Recommended
B&W LS

Highly Recommended
Sennheiser RS220s
**Headphone Winners 2013**

By Tony Ibrahim

**Best Headphones**

> Sennheiser HD 800 | $1,699.95 | sennheiser.com.au

Visually bold with their metallic, industrial design and ergonomically refined with some of the best sound you’ll ever hear in a pair of headphones, these cans will cocoon you in a sea of phonic bliss. They output quality with a frequency response of 5-61,000 Hz and less than 0.05% harmonic distortion. In other words, they deliver a higher band of frequency than your ear can ever pick up. These aren’t for pumping up that little iPod, but for getting the full experience warranted on a 300 dollar headset out of a business-grade set up. These earcups are imposing, but they have to be with the large 56mm headphone transducers. The earcups pivot and sit slightly to sit comfortably around the ears without actually touching them. From here you’re graced with an expansive soundscape that immerses you in whatever you’re listening to. As the speakers fire sound at a slight angle toward your ears you perceive the sound in a multi-dimensional level that replicates the real sound – and not in the T1 output kind of way. Bass is powerful, but never distorted; trebles are articulately crisp and the mid-range is natural throughout.

**Yamaha Sound Bars**

**True Wireless Surround Sound**

Experience the excitement of surround sound without speakers and wires cluttering the room. Yamaha’s range of elegantly designed sound bars replaces the need for complicated multi-speaker systems, immersing you in the action with exhilarating surround sound.

**Wireless streaming**

Stream music wirelessly from iOS devices and computers with Yamaha’s patented AXWired technology.

**Wireless subwoofer**

Experience tight and deep bass while enjoying the versatility of being able to position the subwoofer anywhere in the room.
Smart Awards

Headphone
Winners 2013

By Tony Abraham

Best Headphones
> Sennheiser HD 800 | $1,699.95 | sennheiser.com.au

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Best Headphones

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Visually bold with their metallic, industrial design and expertly refined with some of the best sound you’ll ever hear in a pair of headphones, these cans will cocoon you in a sea of phonic bliss. They output quality with a frequency response of 5 to 35,000 Hz and less than 0.009% harmonic distortion. In other words, they deliver a higher band of frequency than your ear can even pick up. They aren’t for pumping up that iPod, but for getting the full experience warranted on a 2500-ohm headphones out of a bass-heavy sound set up. These earcups are massive, but they have to be with the large 56mm headphone transducers. The earcups pivot and tilt slightly to sit comfortably around the ears without actually touching them. From here you’re graced with an expansive soundscape that immerses you in whatever you’re listening to. As the speakers fire sound at a slight angle toward your ears, you perceive the sound in a multidimensional level that replicates the real sound – and not in the T3 surround kind of way. Bass is powerful but never distorted, treble is articulate and crisp and the mid-range is natural throughout.

Highly Recommended (Bowers & Wilkins 75)
Over the years, the interface used to manage a Control4 home automation system has become easier to use and available on more devices. People can control their entire Control4 home automation system directly from the biggest screen in the house; their television. The option of controlling the system from a PC is available, but the promise comes from Control4’s Android and Apple applications. With the technologies in your home working harmoniously, every experience is a little better, starting with the device-cluttered home theatre system. With the touch of a button, your television, Bluray player, receiver and speakers swiftly apply the best settings for watching a movie, while the shades close and the lights subtly fade.

If someone else is using the home theatre setup there’s no need to stress. A Control4 system can distribute your HD video to any room in the house, in addition to playing any song at any volume in any room, from in-wall and in-ceiling speakers that are virtually invisible. The same diligent approach is applied your home’s security, climate, lighting, and music. But their system does more than reap the best performance from your home’s technology; it does so economically. The brains of a Control4 system are its controllers and they offer three different solutions. They’re unobtrusive hubs which make it possible to build your ideal home control system over time.

Best Premium Home Automation
> Control4 | control4.advanceaudio.com.au

Push earns this year’s award for delivering previously sophisticated home automation on a budget the majority can afford. Their system has been tailored to work on Apple’s iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch. Their applications are easy to use and can be customised to accommodate your precise needs. A downloadable widget allows Android users to also manage their home automation system. One of two controllers are offered by Push; the powerful PC1 and the PC4, both of which are qualified to manage your home theatre setup, climate, lighting, blinds, irrigation system and security system. With each device working in harmony, day-to-day operations are more efficient, environmentally friendly and enjoyable. In the warm summer months, a Push Control system can be instructed to close the shades at the hottest time of the day, and maintain the cooler temperature by turning on the air conditioning just before you arrive home. Alternatively it can warm the place up when winter nears. Security is an area effectively managed by a Push Control system. Multiple security camera feeds can be viewed remotely on your tablet and smartphone, providing you with the option of zooming in and panning. It’s a valuable additive if you want to keep an eye on your kids while on-the-go or in case of an emergency.

Best Value Home Automation
> Push Controls | pushcontrols.com.au

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Best Value Home Automation
> Push Controls | pushcontrols.com/australia

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> Control4 | control4.advanceaudio.com.au

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Smart Awards
Home Automation
Winners 2013
By Tony Ibrahim
Samsung’s Galaxy Camera earns this award for converging polished smartphone technology with respectable photographic capabilities. From smartphones, the Galaxy Camera borrows the refined Android operating system, versed in multi-touch gestures, connectivity and a 600,000 strong application store. These features have evolved much more on smartphones and are a significant improvement over any compact cam’s usability and interface. Most of the computing hardware is borrowed from Samsung’s Galaxy S3, such as its HD screen, quad core processor, 1GB of RAM, and microSD memory. But it combines these technologies with a 1/2.3-inch backside-illuminated CMOS sensor that’ll snap photos at 16MP resolution and record Full HD video. The lens has a 23mm wide angle and features 21x optical zoom, which is respectable for any compact cam. The result is a camera the vast majority knows how to use, can operate independently from a computer and can capture finite moments with more than enough detail needed for today’s digital age.

Best Compact Camera
> Samsung Galaxy Camera | $599 | samsung.com/au

Best DSLR
> Nikon D3200 | $TBD | nikon.com.au

Nikon’s intro D3200 DSLR uses a newly developed Nikon DX-format CMOS sensor and Nikon’s famed Expeed 3 processing engine to deliver Full HD videos and 24.2MP images which are crisp with clarity, bursting with colour and true to life. An intuitive menu and an ergonomic layout helps budding photographers take advantage of its intelligible shooting options. The software perpetuates this ease-of-use by including an enhanced guide mode—which will lead you through the process of set-up and shooting various scenarios—and six scene modes will educate users on the right settings for most lighting conditions.

Highly Recommended
Canon EOS 5D Mark III

Best Mirrorless Camera
> Panasonic GH3 | $1,599 | panasonic.com.au

Panasonic’s mirrorless flagship offers a commentary of the industry: you can have the photographic prowess and versatility of a DSLR in a smaller body. The GH3 is a testament to this, coming equipped with the very latest technologies Panasonic as a company has to offer, including WiFi and two OLED screens. At the camera’s core are a 16MP Live MOS sensor and a Venus Engine. The two work hand-in-hand to capture high resolution images quickly, up to 6 frames per second, while ensuring the snapped pics are free from noise. It has a wide ISO range stretching between ISO 125 to ISO 12,800, but in extended mode it’ll reach ISO 25,600, proving adept to a variety of lighting conditions.

Highly Recommended
Fujifilm X-Pro 1
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Highly Recommended
Fujifilm X-Pro 1
Digital Photography

Digital Photography
Winners 2013

By Tony Ibrahim

Best Tough Cam
> Panasonic Lumix DMC FT4 | $499 | panasonic.com.au

Panasonic’s FT4 is waterproof to an industry rating of 12 metres, can withstand 2 metre drops and temperatures up to -10°C. With such ruggedness, you’d expect the FT4 to compromise on the mechanics and resemble a bond sphere (albeit smaller). Instead it’s astonishingly thin on the arm, with its new body thinner and lighter than its predecessor, thanks possibly by a Leica DC Vario-Summicron 24-90mm wide-angle lens which Panasonic insist is the “fattest in its class”. Captured pictures are snapped at 12MP and it features 4:6 times optical zoom, while full HD videos are captured at 50i in AVCHD format.

Best Video Camera
> JVC GZ-GX3B | $1,099 | jvc.com.au

JVC’s GZ-GX3B is a crme de la crme HD camcorder that outstrips almost all its competitors by featuring built-in Wi-Fi. With Wi-Fi on-board, live footage can be streamed to your smartphone, letting you capture natural phenomena from the sidelines, such as a bird feeding its young. Additionally, your photos and videos can be transferred to your iOS or Android device easily. Apart from having Wi-Fi, the GZ-GX3B records video at 1920x1080/50p, has 200GB of internal flash memory and has a SDXC card slot. Videos can be viewed right from the camcorder’s 2.8-inch touchscreen touch-receptive LCD screen and its peripheral sensor is known as.

The ultra compact Lumix GX1.
YOU DON’T HAVE TO BE A GREAT PHOTOGRAPHER TO TAKE GREAT PHOTOS.

"Intelligent Auto" makes taking great photos a breeze with the new GX1. Ultra compact but decidedly big on features, the GX1 offers full high definition video, touch screen display and a range of interchangeable lenses. So now professional shooting is at your fingertips. All you have to do is aim and shoot. So simple, it almost doesn’t seem fair.

Available at:

JB Hi-Fi

1st

Hot Digital Single Lens Mirrors

www.panasonic.com.au
The ultra compact Lumix GX1.

YOU DON’T HAVE TO BE A GREAT PHOTOGRAPHER TO TAKE GREAT PHOTOS.

Available at:

JB HI-FI

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Best Tough Cam

> Panasonic Lumix DMC FT4 | $499 | panasonic.com.au

Panasonic’s FT4 is waterproof to an industry-leading 12 metres, can withstand 2 metre drops and temperatures up to -10°C. With such a rugged panasonic you’d expect the FT4 to compromise on the mechanics and resemble a bomb shelter (albeit smaller). Instead it’s sophisticated on the eye front with its new body thinner and lighter than its predecessors, made possible by a Leica DC vario zoom (24mm wide-angle) lens which Panasonic insist is the ‘immersed in cloud’ Captured pics are snapped at 16MP and if footage 4.6 times optical zoom, while Full HD video are captured at 50p in AVCHD format.

CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO

Highly Recommended Olympus TG1

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Best Video Camera

> JVC GZ-GX3B | $1,099 | jvc.com.au

JVC’s GZ-GX3B is a capable Full HD camcorder that rules supreme in its competition by featuring built-in WIF With WiFi on board, live footage can be viewed on a smartphone, letting you capture natural phenomena from afar. Such as a bird flying for young. Additionally, your photos and videos can be transferred to an iOS or Android device ready. Apart from hosting WiFi, the GZ-GX3B records video at 1920x1080/50p, has 30GB of internal flash memory and has a 3DVC card slot. Videos can be viewed right from the camcorder’s 2.8 inch touchscreen back screen and its peripheral support is formidable.

CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO

Highly Recommended Sony HDR/DG60W

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Digital Photography Winners 2013

By Tony Abraham

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Smart Awards
Communication
Winners 2013

WE NOW CONTROL OUR MULTIMEDIA, DOCUMENTS, EMAILS, WEB BROWSING AND HOME AUTOMATION FROM A DEVICE THAT SITS IN THE PALM OF OUR HANDS. IT’S A BRAVE NEW WORLD.

By Tony Abrahim

Best Home Phone
> Panasonic KX-TG856 | $149 | panasonic.com.au

Just when we all thought the advent of smartphones and unlimited plans doomed the landline obsolete, Panasonic adds an innovation essential for any new parent. The company’s 856 series home phone doubles as a baby monitor by automatically detecting when a baby is crying and notifying a paired handset (or pre-registered external line). It will also operate during a blackout by simply placing the handset on the base, and if this blackout occurs while on the phone, they’ll dig into their 1 minute reserve.

Highly Recommended
Uniden XDECT R865 - 1

Smartphone of the Year
> Samsung Galaxy S3 4G | $899 | samsung.com/au

The Galaxy S3 doesn’t feel like a smartphone as much as it feels like the thing missing from your hand. There are other powerful smartphones, or smartphones that are easy to use, but we take our hat off to Samsung for marrying the two so well. Recently the 4.8 inch quad core monster scored a 4G update, making it a master of all trades. It’s intuitive, intelligent, powerful and best of all, simple.

CLICK HERE TO PLAY VIDEO
Smart Awards

Communication
Winners 2013

We now control our multimedia, documents, emails, web browsing and home automation from a device that sits in the palm of our hands. It’s a brave new world.

By Tony Abaten

Best Home Phone
> Panasonic KX-TG856 | $149 | panasonic.com.au

Just when we all thought the advent of smartphones and unlimited plans doomed the landline obsolete, Panasonic adds an innovation essential for any new parent. The company’s new baby phone doubles as a baby monitor by automatically detecting when a baby is crying and notifying a paired handset (or pre-registered external line). It will also operate during a blackout by simply placing the handset on the base, and if the blackout occurs while on the phone, they’ll dig into their 1 minute reserve.

Highly Recommended
Uniden XDECT 2585 plus 1

Smartphone of the Year
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Smart Awards

Communication Winners 2013

Highly Recommended

> HTC One XL | $799 | htc.com/au

HTC emerged as a serious contender in 2012, releasing a handful of quality smartphones that readers could not afford to ignore. Of its smartphone portfolio, we were most impressed with the company’s One XL.

A lot of the One XL’s genesis comes from its sibling, the One X, but it benefits from a spritely 4G modem. With 4G internet speeds, it soars through webpages and streamed videos up to five times faster than most smartphones on the market.

The other noticeable difference between the One X and the One XL is the processor. Inside it’s a dual-core processor clocked at 1GHz, 1GB of RAM and a reputable 32GB of internal memory. These powerful components handle the Android 4.0 (Ice Cream Sandwich) operating system diligently, facilitating the seamless use of applications and games.

Even though it’s not in hardware, the One XL is more about the experience being greater than the sum of its parts. The quick processor and internet speeds would be wasted if it didn’t feature a quality screen. Fortunately, it’s an allrounder, catering to visuals with a 4.7 inch, high definition (720x1280) display.

The One XL’s camera was a noticeable standout because HTC chose to improve its functionality and not just its resolution. The 8MP rear cam captures still shots mid-video, features a burst shooting mode and will record videos in Full HD (1080p).

Understanding the soundtrack is just as vital as image quality. HTC turned to the pros at Beats Audio. They equipped the smartphone with a variety of sound profiles that are optimal in different genres, but their finesse isn’t limited to music playback as it shines through movie playback and even streamed content such as YouTube videos.

> $549.95 | uniden.com.au

Uniden’s Guardian is the first true plug and play security solution. It’s a basic setup, consisting of two weatherproof cameras and a 7” tablet-styled monitor that has an intuitive touch screen interface.

The Guardian system can support four cameras in total, and its recording patterns can be set to a schedule, triggered by motion or instructed manually. The footage is stored on the local SD card (6GB is included in the kit) and in an industry first, up to four cameras can record simultaneously.

No matter the conditions—rain, hail or shine—the cameras will continue recording. By equipping the cameras with infrared LEDs, Uniden’s cameras can record video within a 12 meter range in pitch black night.

Uniden boast the security system takes just minutes to setup. The weatherproof cameras can be mounted onto a wall or a ceiling, allowing you to record from the very best vantage points, such as at the front door, garage, garage or side of the house.

Once up and running, the system will transmit interference-free video and audio signals within a 180 meter range. To protect your home from squatting and hacking, Uniden put to work the latest digitally-encrypted FHSS technology.

Users can log into the home monitor remotely via a Mac or PC, feeding live footage to them wherever they are. If they can’t get to a computer, they can view the feed directly from their Android or iOS smartphones compliments of Uniden’s app.

Click here to play video

Click here to play video
**Smart Awards**

**Communication Winners 2013**

**Highly Recommended**

> HTC One XL | $799 | htc.com/au

HTC emerged as a serious contender in 2012, releasing a handful of quality smartphones that rivals could not afford to ignore. Of its smartphone portfolio, we were most impressed with the company’s One XL.

A lot of the One XL’s success comes from its ability to appeal to users who want a smartphone that is more than just a phone. The One XL is a smartphone that is more than just a phone. It is a smartphone that is more than just a phone.

Even if it’s not a real smartphone, the One XL is more about the experience being greater than the sum of its parts. The quick processor and internet speeds would be wasted if it didn’t feature a quality screen. Fortunately, it’s an all-out winner, catering to views with a 4.7-inch high-definition (720x1280) display.

The One XL’s camera is a noticeable improvement because HTC chose to improve its functionality and not just its resolution. The 8MP rear cam captures still photos and videos, and features a burst shooting mode and will record videos in Full HD (1080p).

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[CLICK HERE TO PLAY VIDEO]

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**Security**

**Uniden Guardian**

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No matter the conditions—rain, hail or shine—the camera will continue recording. By equipping the cameras with infrared LEDs, Uniden’s cameras can record video within a 1/2 mile range in pitch black night. Uniden boast the security system takes just minutes to setup. The weatherproof cameras can be mounted onto a wall or a ceiling, allowing you to record from the very best vantage points, such as at the front door, gate, garage or side of the house.

Once up and running, this system will transmit interference-free video and audio signals within a 1/4 mile range. To protect your from break-ins and hacking, Uniden put to work the latest digitally-encrypted FHSS technology.

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[CLICK HERE TO PLAY VIDEO]
Smart Awards

Computing
Winners 2013

2012 was a big year for computers. In a brief 12 months it was the year of the ultrabook, the year of the tablet and the year of the hybrid. These devices are faster, lighter and definitely better entertainers than their ancestors.

By Tony Ibrahim

Best Ultrabook
> Toshiba U920T | $1,699 | Toshiba.com.au

We’re harsh critics of the new Windows 8, but Toshiba has managed to suckle the most functionality by adopting an entirely new form factor. It’s a full-functioning Ultrabook—modelling an excellent array of parts and powerful inside—but the screen slides over the keyboard, holding it morph from a lightweight notebook into an Intel powered tablet.

There are a few hybrid Ultrabooks available but the U920T wins us over by not getting its computing capabilities at the expense of its tablet mobility. It manages to do both at once, and best of all, it does both well.

Highly Recommended
Acer UX21

Best All In one
> Apple 27 inch iMac | From $1,999 | apple.com.au

Apple’s 27 inch iMac has long set the benchmark for all-in-one computers. Much of its charm stems from every component working together in harmony, especially because Apple makes the hardware, the software and a vast number of supporting apps. This result is an all-in-one computer that is versatile and fun to use.

In its latest form, Apple’s iMac continues to make ground on its Windows rivals. It might have ditched the optical disk drive, but the new iMac makes up for it and then some with a screen that is a ridiculous 5mm thin. We’re surprised it doesn’t come with a wall mount.

Highly Recommended
Acer 7600U

Best Notebook
> Samsung 900X3C | $1,599 | samsung.com/au

The 900X3C is one of a few products you come across and ponder “how did they do that?” Even though it is the smallest notebook in the world, every part of it— including the most mundane, delicate—has been meticulously engineered. (Even the SD slot is a thing of beauty). The screen is blindingly bright, the keyboard and mouse are sumptuously comfortable, and it is also the back of your hand beautiful.

Highly Recommended
Apple MacBook Pro with Retina (15 inch)
Computing Winners 2013

2012 was a big year for computers. In a brief 12 months it was the year of the Ultrabook, the year of the Tablet and the year of the Hybrid. These devices are faster, lighter and definitely better entertainers than their ancestors.

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Highly Recommended
Acer UX31

Best All In One
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Acer Y560U

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Rather than condemning it to the dark corners of your bag, you'll gladly grasp it under your arm with this Samsung logo printing outwards.

Highly Recommended
Apple MacBook Pro with Retina (15 inch)
Best Tablet above 9 inches
> Apple iPad | From $539 | Apple.com/au

It’s no surprise Apple has won this award for the second year on the trot. The company injected new vigour into the category and has been leading ever since. The iPad has managed to maintain a monopolistic-like lead over its rivals by having superior application support, an incredibly vivid screen and a mature operating system. It’s a case of synergy with each part of the iPad being perfectly refined to produce a flawless user experience.

Highly Recommended
Asus Transformer Prime TF700T

Best Tablet below 9 inches
> Google Nexus 7 From $249 | google.com/Nexus

The Nexus 7 is the by-product of a great collaboration between Google and Asus. Together, the two companies managed to produce a powerful 7 inch tablet characterised by a high resolution screen, powerful quad-core processor and next-generation software (Android Jelly Bean) all from $249. When it was released, the Nexus 7 sent shockwaves through the industry, letting the players know that a quality tablet can be sold at a bargain.

Highly Recommended
Apple iPad Mini

Best eReader
> Amazon Kindle Fire HD $329 | Amazon.com

The Kindle Fire HD from Amazon blurs the line between tablet and eReader. Its feature-set might resemble a tablet, but its custom skins are a nod to its eBook heritage. On top of its articulate eReader portfolio, the Kindle Fire HD is compatible with apps, games, magazines and movies from Amazon’s own app store, giving it an advantage over its monochrome rivals. With a dual core processor, 1GB RAM, 1280x800 resolution screen and a 2MP camera, the hardware helps this eReader-meets-tablet deliver big value for money.

Highly Recommended
Kindle Touch

Best WebCam
> Creative Live! Cam Connect HD 1080 | $99.95 | au.creative.com

As its name suggests, Creative’s Live! Cam Connect HD 1080 records video in Full-HD 1080p resolution, but it’ll also snap still shots in 18MP. Just like Creative’s SoundBlaster Axx, this webcam suppresses noise outside of an established zone, allowing the user to hold a conversation free from whatever interference fills the background. It’s a wonderfully focussed product fulfilling its few duties extraordinarily well.

Highly Recommended
Logitech HD Pro Webcam C920

Best Portable Drive
> Seagate BackUp Plus From $139 | seagate.com/au

This is a great portable hard drive varied in the prompt transfer of files and optimised through idiot-proof software. The ability to back up your digital life (Facebook, Flickr) is an option envied by its rivals and gives it the deal-making advantage.

Highly Recommended
WD Slim

Best Network Storage Drive
> Western Digital MyBook Live Duo 6TB | wd.com

By connecting the MyBook Live Duo to a router, you create your own personal, secure cloud. This provides all of your devices—smartphones, tablets, gaming consoles, notebooks, PCs and Macs—with access to your content whenever you need it. Better yet, with the WD2Go app for iOS and Android, your mobile and tablet can log onto your personal cloud wherever there’s an internet connection, essentially granting you access to terabytes of data on the go. Rounding off this solution is RAID mirroring: a second inbuilt hard drive that automatically makes a copy of your work in the unlikely event the first drive fails. A backup of a backup? Talk about ease of mind.

Highly Recommended
Seagate GoFlex Desk External Drive 3TB
This is a great portable hard drive versed in the prompt transfer of files and optimised through idiot-proof software. The ability to back up your digital life (Facebook, Flickr) is an option envied by its rivals and gives it the deal-making advantage.

The drive itself is small, lightweight and very practical. It measures just 14.5mm thin, weighs 224 grams and is short enough to fit in your jacket pocket comfortably. File transfers are painless due to the use of USB 3.0 technology and you can upgrade your connection by way of a swappable adapter.

**Best Tablet above 9 inches**

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**Best eReader**

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**Best Portable Drive**

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**Best Network Storage Drive**

> Western Digital MyBook Live Duo 6TB | $649 | wd.com

By connecting the MyBook Live Duo to a router, you create your own personal, secure cloud. This provides all of your devices—smartphones, tablets, gaming consoles, notebooks, PCs and Macs—with access to your content when you need it. Better yet, with the WD2GO app for iOS and Android, your mobile and tablet can log onto your personal cloud wherever there’s an internet connection, essentially granting you access to terabytes of data on the go. Rounding off this solution is RAID mirroring: a second inbuilt hard drive that automatically makes a copy of your work in the unlikely event the first drive fails. A backup of a backup? Talk about ease of mind.
Best Monitor Over 23 inches
> LG IPS271 | $499 | lg.com.au

You don’t ever work on LG’s IPS271 monitor because the bland nature of work is enriched by excellent colours, rich shadowing and exact lines. The IPS27 is a LED-backlit LCD monitor uses LG’s IPS panel technology for rich colour reproduction and a wide 178° viewing angle. A single look under the skin reveals a variety of impressive specifications, although we’re taken specifically by the 27 inch model; every-one in the range has a Full HD (1920x1080) resolution, a high contrast ratio of 5,000,000:1 and a response time of 5ms. Those credentials are actually better than those featured in some notable rival models. By combining 260 nits of brightness with a matte finish screen, the IPS27 reduces the amount of legibility loss under sunlight and keeps colours wholsome.

On the outside, the IPS27 merges its deep black screen with its 1.2mm bezel. The entire look is monochromatic, but by using premium materials the IPS27 evokes a sense of quality craftsmanship. It also extends to the IPS27’s stand which is a subtle nod to LG’s televisions. Recognizing more people are using their smartphones and tablets to store multimedia, the IPS27 features Mobile High Definition Link (MHL) technology. MHL enables the viewing of photos and videos on the monitor’s screen through a single cable. You don’t have to worry about draining your battery either, because the IPS27 will charge your smartphone and tablet simultaneously.

Highly Recommended
Best Buy IFW730V

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Computing

Smart Awards

Computing Winners 2013

By Tony Ibrahim

Best Monitor Over 23 inches

> LG IPSS27 $499 | lg.com/au

You don’t even work on LG’s IPS27 monitor because the image quality is so good. It has a Full HD (1920x1080) resolution, a high contrast ratio of 5,000:1 and a response time of 5ms. These credentials are actually better than those featured in some of the high-end models. By combining 250 nits of brightness with a matt finish, the IPS27 reduces the amount of legibility loss under sunlight and keeps colours wholsome.

On the inside, the IPS27 offers the Deep Black Screen with 1.2mm band. The entire look is monochromatic, but by using premium materials the IPS27 evokes a sense of quality craftsmanship. It also extends to the IPS27’s stand which is a subtle nod to LG’s televisions. Recognising more people are using their smartphones and tablets to stores multimedia, the IPS27 features Mobile High Definition Link (MHL) technology, MHL enables the viewing of photos and videos on the monitor’s screen through a single cable. You don’t have to worry about draining your battery either, because the IPS27 will charge your smartphone and tablet simultaneously.

Digital Surround Sound for Home Theatre and Gaming

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*Because music matters*
Smart Awards

Navigator

Winners 2013

TO GET THERE QUICKLY, TO GET THERE SAFELY, TO DISCOVER NEW AREAS,
TO LEARN NEW THINGS, TO SEE BEYOND THE CORNER, TO HAVE FUN DRIVING.

By Tony Johnson

Best In Car Navigation

> TomTom 2050 [ $399 ] tomtom.com / au

TomTom’s 2050 isn’t just a great GPS unit; it’s one of the few products we consider an all-time great. It has a 5-inch capacitive touchscreen, fluent in multi-touch gestures, an easy-click magnetic mount and an accelerometer, which will automatically rotate the screen the right way up. Complementing the robust hardware is TomTom’s mapping system. It is focussed, detailed and intuitive, without distracting divers from the task in hand. But shining victory for TomTom is their HD Traffic software. It’s a continually updated traffic feed by an impressive 2-minute interval which helps drivers avoid areas that are congested, navigating around the stop-started traffic.

Highly Recommended

> Navman My350LMT [ $279 ] navman.com.au

Whereas other GPS systems demand you learn their lingo, Navman’s My350LMT speaks plain English. It recognises the directions around you and tells you where to go, using an angle, like the colour of a building, to point out points of interest and landmarks. “Enter the Coca Cola sign turn right into Victoria Street” is just one example.

It’s a feature Navman call Landmark Guidance Plus and these simple, conversational-style instructions make it feel like you have a buddy in the car riding shotgun rather than another computer.

The point of a GPS system isn’t just to take you to your destination. It’s to get you there safely. That’s why keeping your eyes on the road is imperative, and the My350LMT’s ability to respond to your voice is one way it helps you focus. It’s a subordinate system that will happily adjust the volume or tweak the brightness when you tell it.

There are a slew of features, but a notable addition is Bluetooth. With in-transit phone calls becoming more stringent, the ability to manage calls seamlessly—and legally—without having to buy and manage an separate Bluetooth headset is a definite plus.

We value its ability to think ahead for you. For instance, if you drive for over two hours straight, the My350LMT won’t just remind you to stop nearby. It’ll go one step further by suggesting all of the available options, such as petrol stations, public restrooms, food outlets or rest areas.
**Smart Awards**

**Navigator Winners 2013**

To get there quickly, to get there safely, to discover new areas, to learn new things, to see beyond the corner, to have fun driving.

*By Tony Drabkin*

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**Best In Car Navigation**

> TomTom 2050 | $399 | tomtom.com/au

TomTom’s 2050 isn’t just a great GPS unit; it’s one of the few products we consider an all-times great. It has a 5-inch capacitive touchscreen; fluid multi-touch gestures, an easy click magnetic mount and an accelerometer which will automatically orient the screen the right way up. Complementing the robust hardware is TomTom’s mapping system. It is focussed, detailed and intuitive, without distracting divers from the road ahead (but diverting diverted attention). TomTom is their HD Traffic software. It’s a continuously updated traffic feed by an impressive 2-minute interval which helps drivers avoid areas that are congested, navigating around the style diverted alternate to get people on their way quicker.

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**Highly Recommended**

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When other GPS systems demand you learn their language, Navman’s My350LMT speaks plain English. It recognises the classroom around you and tells you where to go. 360-degree visibility is excellent; the texture of a building’s facade, the colour of a building, nearby points of interest and landmarks. “Enter the Coca Cola sign turn right onto Victoria Street” is just one example.

It’s a feature Navman calls ‘Landmark Guidance Plus’ and these simple, conversational-style instructions makes it feel like you have a buddy in the car riding shotgun rather than another computer. The point of a GPS system isn’t just to take you to your destination, it’s to get you there safely. That’s why keeping your eyes on the road is imperative, and the Navman’s ability to respond to your voice is one way it helps you focus. It’s a statuette system that will happily adjust the volume or tweak the brightness when you tell it. There are a slew of features, but a notable addition is Bluetooth. With mining phones now becoming more stringent, the ability to manage calls seamlessly—legally—without having to buy and manage a separate Bluetooth headset is a definite plus.

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Smart Awards

Gaming
Winners 2013

UNLIKE EVERYTHING ELSE IN THIS WORLD, THE WHOLE POINT OF GAMING IS TO HELP YOU GROW DOWN. OVER THE COURSE OF A YEAR WE’VE SEEN SOME STELLAR GAMING TITLES, NEW GAMING TECHNOLOGIES AND THE METAMORPHOSIS OF THE GAMING CONSOLE INTO AN ENTERTAINMENT HUB.

By Tony Ibrahim

Between the colourful language, unapologetic plot, smooth-as graphics and the fleshed out characters, the successor to the Max Payne series faithfully recreates the hard-boiled attitude gamers around the world fell in love with. It brings a level of engagement familiar to profound cinema, and will leave an impression that resonates longer than usual. Max Payne 3 then is a worthy addition, carrying the beloved legacy forward and not just cashing in on the name.

Highly Recommended

Mass Effect 3

In the week Nintendo’s brand new Wii U launched, Microsoft’s Xbox 360 outsold it 2:1, thanks in part to its gaming pedigree, but also because Microsoft has done an amazing job at amassing a vast content portfolio for Xbox Live subscribers. The Xbox 360 wasn’t our console of choice when it launched, but Microsoft’s ongoing support, their unbelievable Kinect camera and now the new content portfolio has pushed it ahead of its rivals.

Highly Recommended

Sony PlayStation 3

Traditionally we’d baulk at the idea that bigger is better, but in the case of Nintendo’s 3DS, the gaming legends are on the money. The screen is 90% bigger, the battery life has gone up and the existing game catalogue takes advantage of the improved hardware. These upgrades are a trip of its glass-free 3D and the unique experience of playing a game with two screens.

Highly Recommended

Apple iPhone 5

Best Gaming Console
> Microsoft Xbox 360 4GB Console with Kinect | $299 | xbox.com.au

Best Handheld Console
> Nintendo 3D XL | $249.95 | nintendo.com.au

Game of the Year
> Max Payne 3 | $99.95 | rockstargames.com/maxpayne3

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UNLIKE EVERYTHING ELSE IN THIS WORLD, THE WHOLE POINT OF GAMING IS TO HELP YOU GROW DOWN. OVER THE COURSE OF A YEAR WE’VE SEEN SOME STELLAR GAMING TITLES, NEW GAMING TECHNOLOGIES AND THE METAMORPHOSIS OF THE GAMING CONSOLE INTO AN ENTERTAINMENT HUB.

By Tony Ibrahim

Smart Awards

Between the colourful language, unapologetic plot, smooth-as graphics and the fleshed out characters, the successor to the Max Payne series faithfully recreates the hard-boiled attitude gamers around the world fell in love with. It brings a level of engagement familiar to profound cinema, and will leave an impression that resonates longer than usual. Max Payne 3 then is a worthy addition, carrying the beloved legacy forward and not just cashing in on the name.

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Highly Recommended

Mass Effect 3

By Tony Ibrahim
If this product had a face, it would ALWAYS be smiling. It's a lovably loud, stylish and elegant solution to portable sound, without skimping on the sound. Connect it to your smartphone, tablet or PC via Bluetooth and it'll fill any room with party-grade ambience. Then when you're done, throw it in your bag and take it outdoors without having to worry about charging it because it's good for 15 hours straight, or 500 hours on standby.

Highly Recommended
Yamaha PDX-11

The last thing you want from a home entertainment setup is to waste some of the video and audio quality. To ensure you get the very best results, a quality HDMI cable is needed. In this area, Crest's ProHD2 sets the benchmark. Crest has 35 years of AV experience and are an official HDMI Associate Member ensuring every cable meets an exact standard.

The ProHD2 is a well-built cable that can transfer data at a rate of 10.2 gigabits per second. It uses 24K gold plated connectors, High Gauge Oxygen Free Copper for the best transfer rate, and is braided and shielded with Aluminum and Copper foil for extra protection against Electro-Magnetic Interference. This makes the ProHD2 the ideal cable for intensive applications, 3D gaming or even the upcoming Ultra High Definition (HD) standard. Ultra HD might not be commonplace today, but the ProHD2 is future proofed to spare you from spending money on a replacement. Additionally, the ProHD2 can manage sound with the use of a built in Audio Return Channel. This feature makes it possible to hear the sound of your TV Blu-ray player or other device through your surround sound system, while also enabling audio from the TV's built-in HD tuner to travel upstream through the HDMI cable to your sound system, removing the need for a separate Toslink optical cable. Recognising the next generation of home entertainment equipment is internet savvy, the ProHD2 can be used to network a wide range of IP-enabled home entertainment devices, from TVs and gaming consoles, to DVRs and more. Crest's Pro HD2 is available now from the Good Guys and Bing Lee.

Highly Recommended
Kordz EVX
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Kordz EVX

Best Portable Speaker
> Jawbone Big Jambox | $359 | jawbone.com/au

Best HDMI Cable
> Crest ProHD2 | $129.95 | Crest.com.au
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