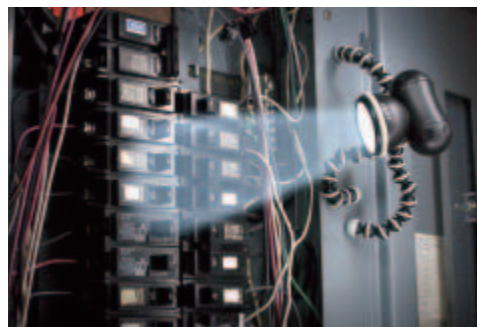


# the digital life

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## ▶ BITS & BYTES



### Making illumination easy

The top-selling Gorillapod camera tripod design has been ported to the equally versatile Joby Gorillatorch, which has a 65-lumens LED light mounted on top. As with the Gorillapod, the Gorillatorch has bendable and flexible polymer and rubber legs with magnetic feet. The light has a dimmer slide and battery life is claimed at up to 60 hours. Requires three AA-size alkaline batteries. Out next month.

### Stylish mobile

The LG GD900 Crystal has a slide-out three-letters-a-button glowing transparent keypad made of tempered glass, which sounds ideal for show-offs texting in nightclubs but otherwise seems a fairly obscure selling point. Redeeming features include a 7.62cm touchscreen, an 8-megapixel camera, gesture control and finger-writing recognition, touchpad-style web surfing and a microSD card slot.



### More touch to your screen

The Xperia X2 is Sony Ericsson's latest and greatest Windows Mobile 6.5 smartphone for email and multimedia use. Among its features are a slide-down QWERTY keyboard, 480x800 8.1cm touch screen, an 8.2-megapixel camera, a TV-out cable for big-screen presentations, Microsoft Exchange, an organiser, media players and a 4GB SanDisk microSD in the box. No price or release date yet but most likely arriving next month.

### Portable 500GB hard drive

External one-terabyte (that's 1000 gigabytes) 8.89cm hard drives now sell for less than \$150 but the convenience of portable 6.35cm drives costs much more. Starting at \$199, the SimpleSave series use the NTFS file system. PC back-up software is included and they have two years' warranty.

# Netbooks make life on the road easy

Integrating modems has enhanced their usefulness and portability, writes Stephen Fenech

**S**ALES of netbooks are booming because they are enabling more users to connect to the web and email when on the move.

With their small size, compact shape and light weight, netbooks make the perfect travel companion but using the internet still requires a physical connection or to be within range of a wireless network.

Another option is to hook into the 3G cellular networks but this requires a separate USB modem that needs to be connected to the netbook.

But what if that connection could be integrated into the netbook itself?

Telstra and Optus have done just that, offering devices which, like a mobile phone plan, can be purchased for \$0 upfront on a 24-month plan.

**Telstra & Acer Aspire One**  
Telstra has teamed up with Acer to provide a fast connection anywhere on board the Aspire One netbook.

The Aspire One has a 25.4cm screen, weighs just 1.1kg with 160GB hard drive and uses Windows XP.

And because the Telstra SIM card and modem is contained with the housing, there is no need to carry and connect a USB modem to the netbook.



The embedded MyPlace connection software gives users a direct link to the Next G network.

Once connected, users can surf the web, check emails and chat via the webcam.

And because you're using a SIM card on a cellular network it is also possible to send and receive SMS.

**Optus & Samsung NC10**  
Optus has joined forces with

Samsung to offer an all-new wireless connectivity solution for its customers.

The NC10 has a 25.9cm screen and weighs 1.33kg.

Powered by an Intel Atom processor, the Samsung NC10 has a 160GB internal hard drive and uses Windows XP.

With an embedded Optus wireless broadband modem inside, users can connect to the internet via the Optus on-screen dashboard which has

shortcuts to the address book, instant messaging client and SMS inbox.

The connection is achieved via the Optus 3G network at the times when connecting a cable or using Wi-Fi is not an option.

But the netbook is like the 4WD of the computer world (well, maybe not that tough) and can be taken just about anywhere so it would be common to connect via the mobile network.

## ▶▶ GAME ON!

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### Halo 3: ODST (XBox 360 - Bungie/Microsoft)

I'M A big fan of SFX-laden, good-versus-evil science fiction and, like its forebears, *Halo 3: ODST* delivers in spades: Cool SF toys, action aplenty against evil enemies, enough tactical depth to keep me thinking but not so much



to frustrate, and pretty graphics from an engine only recently starting to date.

What *ODST* does really well is find new ways of keeping the Halo series' quirks entertaining.

The campaign drops the previous games' linear chapter progression and presents instead an open city in which I can plot my own course. Sneaking through the game has never been more viable.

Combat in the cover-rich streets is still a wonderful tactical juggle but trading one or both you *ODST*'s (Orbital Drop Shock Trooper's) new guns under *Halo*'s two-weapon limit is even more agonising.

The central plot isn't complex but it's always entertaining and gives its cast of characters room to develop.

While he is special ops, your *ODST* is no supersoldier, and the stamina-based damage system, the dark city, the patrolling enemies and the sombre music all build a mood of loneliness and vulnerability.

Then there's Firefight.

*ODST*'s new co-operative multiplayer mode pits up to four friends against wave after wave of incoming enemies without having to brave Xbox Live Matchmaking to find opponents.

Trying to rack up a high score alongside three mates is an utter blast, and ends only when the pool of lives reaches zero. If someone is killed, it affects all the players in the game.

You not only have to look after yourself but your team mates as well, making Firefight the most effective co-operative mode in the *Halo* series yet.

*ODST* also includes a disk with all the multiplayer maps from *Halo 3*, including the downloadable content from Xbox live.

After a week's play, I still want to come back to the campaign and spend much more time with my friends in Firefight.

*Halo 3: ODST* has paid my \$100 investment back - with interest.

■ Review by Rob Farquhar

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