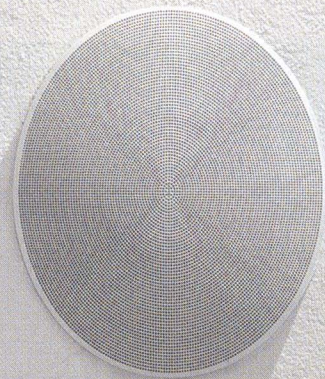


show time

From watching movies in the bath to listening to music while gardening, entertainment is more than ever an integral part of our routines.

WORDS BELINDA JACKSON & PAUL TAYLOR

The way we entertain ourselves at home is rapidly changing the way we live. Photos, music and videos, interactive games and the internet... Not only do they not fit neatly into one room (or category), but the idea of a dedicated home theatre, while alluring, is a luxury for most of us anyway. Instead, we're seeing entertainment weave itself into the very fabric of our homes. We're talking media nooks, home offices-cum-media rooms and integrated entertainment systems everywhere – speakers in the bathroom, a laptop in the kitchen, and cinema-like TV screens which won't ruin the look of your living room. Now you don't need to limit your entertainment options to your lounge area – bring the technology to you wherever you are!



This page (on wall): the discreet and stylish **BeoVox 1** loudspeaker, \$950/pair, Bang & Olufsen.

PHOTOGRAPHY: COFFEE LTD/SIRIMON/REMY



what's hot

High-definition viewing

First, we had VHS, then DVD; now there's high-definition (HD) video. To receive a HD signal, you need a TV with a built-in HD tuner; if it's 'HD ready', you need a set-top box. Expect to pay: LCD TV with HD tuner, from \$2200 (32") to \$3400 (42"); HD set-top box, \$400-\$1000.

Digital TV

The analogue TV signal that we all use will be turned off between 2010 and 2012 when clearer, better-sounding digital TV takes over. So after that time, you'll need either a set-top box or a TV with an inbuilt digital tuner.



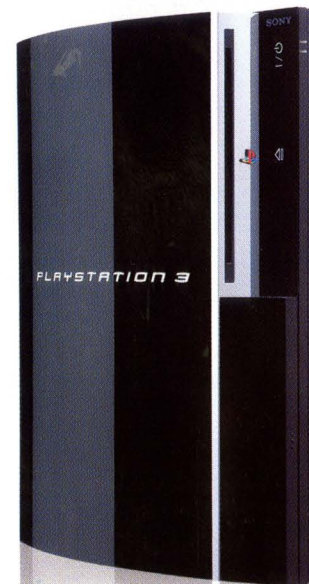
wired for sound

Home music systems

Forget cranking up the volume so you can hear your lounge-room stereo in the backyard. Prices for multi-room music systems have plummeted in the past couple of years and their capabilities have grown: many stand-alone sound systems will play music from your MP3 player, stereo, PC or even USB drive. You can expect to pay from \$900 for an out-of-the-box system to \$20,000 for a customised one. Tap into the music on your computer or home-theatre system with the Sonos multi-room sound system (above), which will play music from your PC, Mac, stereo and MP3 player throughout your home.

The Sonos Digital Music System I30 Bundle includes a wireless full-colour LCD remote and two ZonePlayers. **Sonos BU130BU**, \$1899, Playback Systems.

GETTING STARTED: ASK WHETHER THE BRAND OF THE PRODUCT YOU'RE PURCHASING HAS A HOME INSTALLATION SERVICE, OR TAP INTO A RANGE OF SERVICE PROVIDERS WHO WILL COME TO YOUR HOME TO INSTALL, TROUBLESHOOT AND CONDUCT HEALTH CHECKS ON YOUR NETWORKS. TRY GIZMO, 1300 275 449, WWW.GIZMO.COM.AU



console yourself

Once the bastion of geeks in bedrooms, video-game consoles have well and truly broken free and now sit comfortably in the family living room. These wonder boxes can do everything – play DVDs, high-definition DVDs (aka HD DVDs or Blu-ray), store and display photos, play music, connect to the internet and, of course, play games.

The top two players in the home-entertainment stakes are Sony's glossy black PlayStation 3 (PS3, left) and Microsoft's white wonder Xbox 360 (right). The PS3 comes with a built-in hard drive, whereas the Xbox 360 is available with a hard drive (Pro) or without (Core). Both are super easy to navigate. Plus, skip the computer when sifting through photos and plug your digital camera into either of these for an instant slideshow – most MP3 players will do the same. One major difference between them is that they play a different format of high-definition video: PS3 plays Blu-ray movies straight out of the box, while Xbox 360 plays HD DVDs using an optional drive.

Left: PlayStation 3, \$999, Sony. Right: Xbox 360 Pro, \$649, and HD DVD Player, \$249, both Microsoft. Stockists, page 166

