

Plus Edition

The Eagle-Tribune

Sunday, November 27, 2005

Online

NEW BOSTON MORTGAGE

Helping finance *your* American Dream



Search Current Issue

MyTown Search

Business

High tech, but affordable

By **HELP DESK** (single page view)
[\(view as multiple pages\)](#)

Al Gordon

Holiday season is here again and with it the search for suitable gifts. Since previous columns this year have looked at such high-end items as Bose audio systems or Apple computers, let's take a look at some more-affordable high-tech electronics items, for the most part priced at under \$100.

(There were more items to recommend than column space permits, so please check my blog, www.algordon.com/techblog.html, for more ideas.)

Sometimes rather than recommend a specific item, it makes sense to take a look at an entire company: in this case, Griffin Technology (<http://www.griffintechnology.com/>). Griffin is a boutique accessories manufacturer that specializes in gadgets that are both useful and stylish. It's not like nobody else has ever thought of, for example, an external battery pack for an iPod. But Griffin's solution, TuneJuice, is one of the most elegant, a small easy-to-pack plastic rectangle powered by a 9 V "can" battery for which you can find replacements anywhere. On the other hand, nobody else thought of the AirBase — Griffin's pedestal for the Apple AirPort Express wireless transmitter that allows you to position the device securely on a shelf while making it look like some kind of modern sculpture.

But let's not slight the bigger-volume producers. Apple has stopped including docks as standard equipment with most iPods, and Kensington (<http://us.kensington.com>) has filled the void with a new Stereo Dock for iPods that combines a docking/charging stand, stereo hook-up kit, and remote control into one attractive-looking package. For backpack fans, the company's Contour Backpack is an attractively priced package of a cushioned compartment for your laptop, multiple pockets and storage spots for everything else, and a comfortable design that is easy on the back.

Headlines

- ▶ Growers optimistic about Christmas tree sales
- ▶ Creative gift selection can help build a small company's
- ▶ Xbox 360 delivers, for all types of gamers

[More headlines below ads...](#)



HOMES
NORTH

James Armstrong
Participating Agent

More Headlines

- ▶ Supreme Court nominee deals with ethics criticism
- ▶ Police departments scaling back 'always armed' policies
- ▶ Auto Scene
- ▶ Biz banner
- ▶ Biz North Briefcase
- ▶ Photo exhibit traces 4 sisters for 31 years
- ▶ Burn victim discharged from hospital
- ▶ Khmer Rouge victims and killers seek reconciliation
- ▶ Lawmakers get involved in fight to save parakeets
- ▶ Cupholder Cuisine: Food industry caters to drivers eating at the wheel
- ▶ Ecotourism businesses find recovery slow
- ▶ Eye on stocks

Speaking of bags, a couple of my perennial favorites, WaterField (www.sfbags.com) and Vaja (www.vajacases.com or www.vajachoice.com) have new offerings. WaterField added new sizes and leather trim options to its "Cozmo" laptop bags. Depending on your color choices, you can make the bag Corporate Conservative or West Coast Wild. Admittedly the Cozmo's price is in the \$140-150 range, so if you want to stay under \$100 look at WaterField's unmatched line of Gear Pouches, which are terrific for storing a gadget freak's gadgets. Vaja, an Argentinean producer of custom leather goods, has dozens of designs that you can custom tailor into a unique gift. As this is being written, their much-awaited "iVod" cases for the latest iPods are just being unveiled. Note that both WaterField and Vaja have cool cases to hold the much-coveted but much-scratch-prone iPod Nano.

If someone you know already has a digital music player, you can enhance it for them by giving them better earphones. Improving on standard earbuds while keeping to a small size means going with ear plug type phones. Shure's E2c Sound Isolating Earphones get you under the \$100 threshold if you shop carefully. The sound quality is good, but to make that price point, Shure adopted a somewhat clunky design that I found hard to wear comfortably. A better move is to go to the E3c, which costs \$170 (although Internet searching has turned them up for as little as \$120). These are sleek white capsules with excellent sound quality and a slew of ear-piece options that let you get a comfortable fit. Audiophiles with deeper pockets would appreciate Shure's \$300 E4c, a similar design but with higher fidelity — the extra frequency response comes through loud and clear when you are listening to CDs or your home stereo.

Its price is around \$170, but on the theory that you are getting three devices here — a TV, digital video recorder, and DVD video encoder — I think the Hauppauge WinTV-PVR-USB2 (sold for the Mac as the Eskape myTV.PVR) neatly fits into my price criteria. Plus — let's be candid here — in this era of rampant intellectual property litigation you can never be too sure whether somebody is going to try to force this product off the market, so I would advise buying it sooner rather than later. This unit is a device that you hook up to your computer via a USB port and to your TV antenna or cable box via a standard cable input. Install the included software and you can watch TV on your computer and, equally important, record it with DVD quality. You can then use your computer's burning software to put the recording on a DVD. The unit puts the entire TV time shifting concept fully under your control.

Al Gordon is a Massachusetts-based media and political consultant who also writes about technology. You can e-mail him at eagle@algordon.com.

[Click here to become a subscriber](#)

[Back to top](#)

- ▶ [Vt. communities debate fluoride in tap water](#)
- ▶ [Are foreigners losing appetite for U. S. investments?](#)
- ▶ [The Gap is fighting image problems](#)
- ▶ [Oil industry bonanza passing by dealers](#)
- ▶ [High tech, but affordable](#)
- ▶ [Locally made disgusting flavored soda is a hit with children](#)
- ▶ [Police say guns from N.H., Maine, Vt. feeding crime in Boston](#)
- ▶ [Thanksgiving hunger strike keeps drug dealer at bay](#)
- ▶ [Reforms seek to cull 'diet of hate' from Islamic school books](#)
- ▶ [Still in a hole](#)
- ▶ [Program to mark female lobsters nearing end](#)
- ▶ [Plane carrying Chief of Staff makes emergency landing](#)
- ▶ [Professor works to preserve American Indian site](#)
- ▶ [Man sues over initiation gone awry](#)
- ▶ [Massachusetts in Brief](#)
- ▶ [Two women sue their priest father](#)
- ▶ [Prison officials weigh options for female inmates](#)
- ▶ [Shop's use of live models draws mixed reaction](#)
- ▶ [Volvo S60 R puts pizzazz alongside safety](#)
- ▶ [New England in Brief](#)
- ▶ [News to know](#)
- ▶ [Papers show Nixon feared all-out nuclear war](#)
- ▶ [Custom-built playhouses are all the rage for the wealthy](#)
- ▶ [Players must choose: Super Bowl or SAT](#)
- ▶ [Ski areas add expert terrain to attract next-gen customers](#)
- ▶ [Losing parents to tsunami adds to burden of Thai children](#)
- ▶ [Caught in the health-insurance tangle](#)
- ▶ [Easy Being Green: With woodchips in the burner, community college cuts costs and pollution](#)
- ▶ [Tree buying tips](#)



www.FITTRAX.com
Quality Fitness Equipment
- Serving New England -
Cardio & Strength Training Equipment • Sales & Service
FITTRAX
Fitness Systems
Northside Plaza 43 Hamel Drive, Manchester, NH Exit 93 off Rte. 93 (Behind Shorty's)
Phone: (603) 669-3640 1.866.FIT.TRAX



[Contact Us](#) | [FAQs](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Subscriber Services](#) | [Company History](#) | [Submit an Ad](#) | [Submit a Story](#) | [Careers](#)

© Copyright Eagle Tribune Publishing Company. All rights reserved. Terms of Use.
100 Turnpike Street, North Andover, MA 01845 978-946-2000