



A Few of Our Favorite Gifts

Make your holidays fun, high-tech and affordable with these gift-giving (and receiving) ideas. *by Electronic House editors*

THERE'S A LIFE-OF-THE-PARTY MACHINE for the host with the most, and a pocket-size trainer for the fitness freak in your family.

There's a streaming baseball package for the sports nut, and a very portable home theater for your favorite movie buff.

There's an HD-quality videophone system for the social butterfly, and solar and smart chargers for the green guy or gal in your life.

Those are just a few of the things in our little treasure chest of holiday gift ideas for your friends and families.

There are no super-expensive gewgaws or luxury gadgets here. Just some practical and fun stuff that most households can afford—with an emphasis on technology, of course.

The gifts were hand-selected by each of our editors, Lisa Montgomery, Arlen Schweiger and Steve Castle, who probably wouldn't mind being presented with a few of their selections.



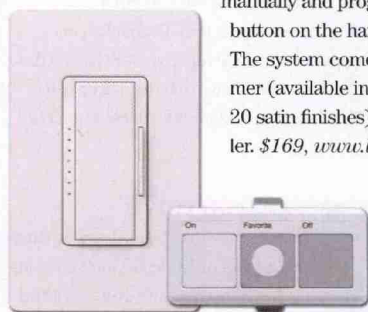
For the Host with the Most

MOOD SWINGER

Some get-togethers are wild and crazy; others are relaxing. A lighting system like the Maestro Wireless from Lutron Electronics can set the mood for any gathering by adjusting the intensity of the lights to preset levels—all from a handy little remote. Setup is easy. Wireless dimmers install in place of a room's standard light switches. Lighting levels are then set

manually and programmed into a button on the handheld controller.

The system comes with one dimmer (available in seven gloss and 20 satin finishes) and one controller. \$169, www.lutron.com



LIFE OF THE PARTY

Every party needs music, and what better way to get everyone involved than with an iPod-, iPad-, iPhone-friendly audio system. As host, you can start things off with your tunes, then turn control over to guests, who can pop in their portables to play. The FloBox Mini from SpeakerCraft, available in glossy yellow, red, silver, black or white, is sure to be the life of the party. Its two 3-inch midrange drivers and two .75-inch tweeters sound sweet, too. \$399, speakercraft.com



LIGHT IT UP

Here's an easy way to set the stage for a killer house party: Light Enhancing Design's LED Light Kit throws off hues of colorful illumination to suit the situation. Buttons on a handheld remote, included with the kit, switch the effects from yellow to blue, red, green and everything in between. The LED light strip, which comes in a variety of lengths, can adhere to the underside of a cabinet, the perimeter of a bar, behind artwork or the underside of a couch. Combine the kit with an audio controller and watch the lights react to the music. Starts at \$51 for 3.28 feet, www.bluebartight.com



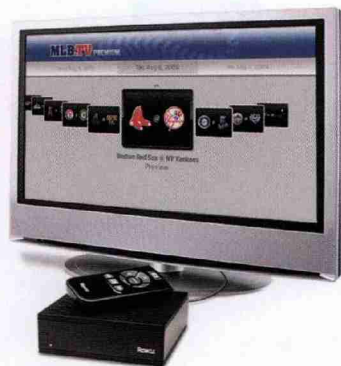
CALLING THE SHOTS

The SideBar Electronic Beverage Dispensing System is a pro at mixing cocktails. All a guest does is press a button on a touchpad, and the system dispenses the perfect amount of liquor into a glass. As many as five bottles can be connected to the system, and stored out of sight beneath a counter as far as 10 feet away from the faucet. Each button can be programmed to automatically dispense a different amount of alcohol—for example, the VODKA button can stop at an ounce, while the RUM button keeps flowing until the button is released. The system comes preassembled and preplumbed. \$499, www.sidebarbeverage.com



HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

For the Sports Nut



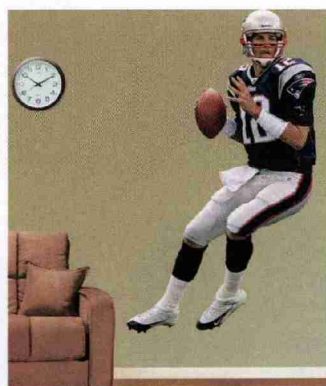
BEST SEATS IN THE HOUSE

Can't get to the game? Bring the game to your home theater by adding some authentic-style stadium chairs. Oasis Home Theatre Seating designs the chairs to be used indoors or outdoors, with materials such as stainless and rustproof cast iron legs and marine-grade, UV-resistant vinyl upholstery. Seats can be semi- or fully upholstered, and seatbacks can be solid or a nostalgic slat design. Designs also include replica row letters on the legs and seat numbers on the backs. You don't even have to bring a blanket to watch frigid football games. *From \$400, www.oasishometheatreseating.com*



STREAM BALL!

Give your baseball fan the gift of watching as many games as possible, even multiple games at the same time, with MLB.com's premium video streaming service. Hook up your computer to a big screen, and the mosaic feature will tile up to six games across the display. You can also watch archived games, and engage DVR functions like FAST-FORWARD, REWIND and PAUSE. The MLB.tv package can also be accessed on a Roku player, certain LG Blu-ray players, PlayStation 3 and software aggregators Boxee and PlayOn. *No pricing for 2011 (at press time), but the premium deal cost \$110 for the 2010 regular season; www.mlb.com*



POSTER BOYS

Want to feel like Tom Brady is sling-ing a pass or Kobe Bryant is driving to the hoop in your room—without requiring the assistance of a 130-inch projection screen? Fathead's lifesize vinyl graphics with low-tack adhesive let you peel and stick your sports heroes to the wall. The company recommends a smooth surface and temperature-controlled room for best results. *Discounts available, most retail for \$99, www.fathead.com*

For the Movie Buff

PORTABLE THEATER

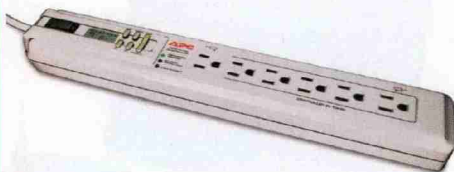
No need for a dedicated home theater with Epson's MovieMate. The recently upgraded 720p HD-resolution projector has a built-in DVD player, so you can bring it outside and project a movie onto your house or a big sheet. Or take it into the kids' playroom and project it onto a wall. The 9.3-pounds MovieMate can produce 120-inch images from 12 feet and includes two built-in 10-watt speakers. If you get tired of movies and TV shows, use the microphone input for karaoke. \$899, www.epson.com



BLU-RAY FOR ALL

No more reason not to upgrade to Blu-ray. A player like Sony's BDP-S770 offers enough for everyone. Along with regular Blu-ray discs, there's 3D support for you to enjoy the latest hits. There's DVD playback, so you don't have to chuck your movie disc library. There's Netflix and Amazon streaming, so you can pick an on-demand flick. There's even DLNA certification, meaning it can tap into your network-stored media and watch home movies. The BDP-S770 has built-in WiFi, and a BD remote app lets you use your iPhone or iPod touch as a controller. \$249, www.sonymstyle.com

For the Green Guy or Gal

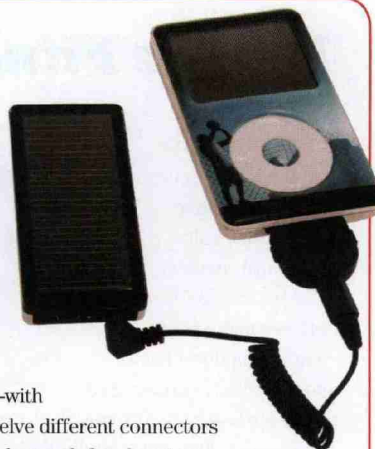


A SMARTER CHARGE

You gotta love APC's P6GC SurgeArrest. It looks like another old surge suppression strip, but this one has a timer that can be programmed to charge your mobile devices for only the amount of time they need to be charged. (Leaving them plugged in longer can waste electricity.) The P6GC has five timer-controlled outlets and one always-on outlet, plus a 3-foot cord. From \$10 and up from a number of online retailers.

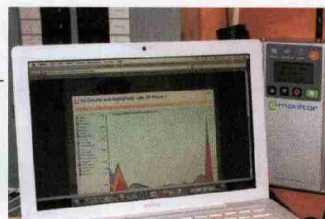
SOLAR CHARGING

Want to charge your mobile electronics without using electricity? The pocket-size Juicebar solar charger can charge an iPod, iPhone or virtually any other cell phone or mobile device—with the sole power of the sun. Twelve different connectors come with the unit in a portable pouch for charging a variety of devices, and tiny LEDs on the business side of the unit indicate when it's collecting energy and when it's charging a device. \$43, www.CableOrganizer.com



ENERGY MONITOR

For the energy geek in your home—or as a housewide present, there's the eMonitor from Powerhouse Dynamics. It can monitor household electricity use by total usage and by individual circuits. It can also monitor the production of a solar electric system. An intuitive web interface provides info on how much electricity is being consumed, the biggest users among circuits, and how you compare with the consumption of other households. A subscription to the service sends alerts when appliances may need maintenance. \$699 for 24 sensors, plus \$249 two-year subscription; \$499 for 12 sensors, plus \$189 two-year subscription. www.powerhousedynamics.com



AWARD WINNING VIDEO

Help your special movie buff by giving a movie collection with a theme. For example, put together an all-Oscar winners package, which could run well under \$200 for the bundle: *The Departed* (2006), *Forrest Gump* (1994), *The Last Emperor* (1987), *The French Connection* (1971), *The Sound of Music* (1965), *Gigi* (1958), *Casablanca* (1943) and *Gone with the Wind* (1939). Best Picture discs get slim pre-1960, but creating a theme is half the fun. Prices vary, www.blu-ray.com to check releases

MOTION ZEN-SING LED

The Sentina PM-316B ZenLight combines the best of ancient Japanese lighting methods with the latest in LED lighting and motion sensor technology. The built-in authentic Japanese Shoji Paper takes the energy-saving LED lights and gives it a soothing and peaceful glow. The built-in motion sensor provides light only when needed, turning on automatically when someone enters the room and shutting off when someone leaves the room. \$40, www.sentinasmart.com



For the Fitness Fanatic

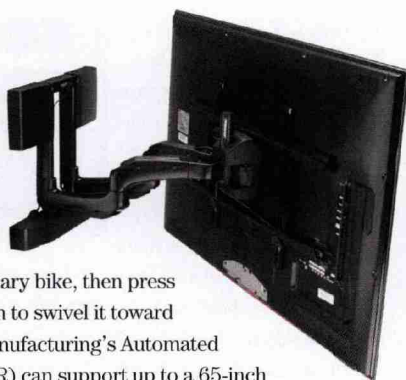
HERE WII GO

Nintendo Wii games are fun, engaging, and—best of all—they burn calories. The Wii Fit platform offers a plethora of workout options, from yoga to skateboarding. And there are scads of awesome accessories, like a pair of adjustable Wii dumbbells and a Wii push-up bar to keep the heart pumping. Take your pick of nifty add-ons from CTA Digital, or package them together to create kick-ass workout combos. *\$19 for dumbbells, \$22 for push-up bar; amazon.com or ctadigital.com*



TWISTABLE TV

If your home gym already has a TV, treat your family to a motorized arm that can reposition the set for optimal viewing. You'll be able to see the set from the stationary bike, then press a remote control button to swivel it toward the treadmill. Chief Manufacturing's Automated Swing Arm Mount (PXR) can support up to a 65-inch flat panel TV, and extend the display 27 inches from the wall, swivel it 90 degrees and tilt it 12 degrees. *\$1,999, chiefmfg.com*



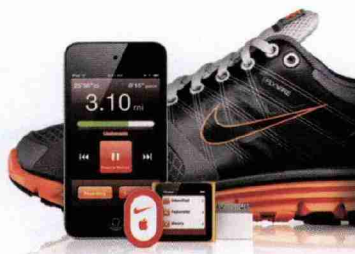
POCKET-SIZED TRAINER

Running the same old course or downward dogging to the same old video is bound to get boring. Shake things up with a gift certificate from iTrain. With a point and click, you can download an exercise routine right into an MP3 player. Led by a personal trainer, the programs cover the gamut: cardio, sculpting, swimming and even hip-hop dancing. Some are specifically for triathlon training, shedding post-baby weight and firming up before a big event. *\$9 to \$50 per downloadable program. Gift certificates are available in choices of \$25, \$50 and \$100, itrain.com*



TUNES WITHOUT BUDS

The iPod has become a necessary accessory for any workout. Dealing with sweaty earbuds, though? No fun. Let your loved-one lose those little plugs once and for all during home routines. Bose offers a handy iPod docking station, the SoundDock Series II, that blasts tunes through its integrated speakers. A handheld remote is included so you can control your music from the treadmill. *\$299, www.bose.com*



JUST TECH IT

The Nike + iPod Sport Kit is a must-have for any avid runner, offering a simple way to maximize your training regimen. The kit includes a tiny sensor that attaches to a running shoe (special sneakers are available with a built-in pocket under the insole). As you listen to music on your iPod Nano, the sensor monitors calorie burn, pace, distance and time. The system transmits verbal updates throughout the session. After a workout is complete, the data can be transferred to the nikeplus web service, where you can track progress and set new goals. For heart rate monitoring, add the Polar WearLink+. *\$29 for the Sport Kit, \$19 for the shoe sensor, \$69 for the Polar WearLink+. Available at the iTunes store or nikebiz.com*

For the Social Butterfly



LOW-TECH EMAIL

Have relatives without even email? You can keep in touch with them with Celery—the technology, not the vegetable. Celery works with a fax machine to convert your emails to faxes and their handwritten faxes to emails. It can print text, HTML based email messages, and JPEG, RTF, GIF, PNG, TIFF or PDF email attachments. It also supports RSS feeds: blogs, Twitter and Facebook. *\$89 for machine, plus \$14 per month for color printing, www.mycelery.com*

HD-QUALITY GRANDMA

Wait, I can get HD-quality videoconferencing ability with a stylish HD camera that fits over my TV, a microphone and a set-top box—all for \$599? I want that thing, and I don't even like videoconferencing. With Cisco's new uni system, you can talk to Grandma and Granddad without all the Skype-like stops and starts—or telecommute from home. And it doesn't cost thousands. *\$600 upfront and a \$25 per month calling plan. www.cisco.com*



HOME CONNECTION

It can control lights, plus audio and video equipment, and even hook up to a digital lock for automated door locking. It's Mi Casa Verde's little Vera system, and it works with wired or wireless web cams as well as Z-Wave compatible light switches and dimmers, outlets, thermostats and motion sensors. *\$249, devices to control cost extra; www.micasaverde.com EH*

