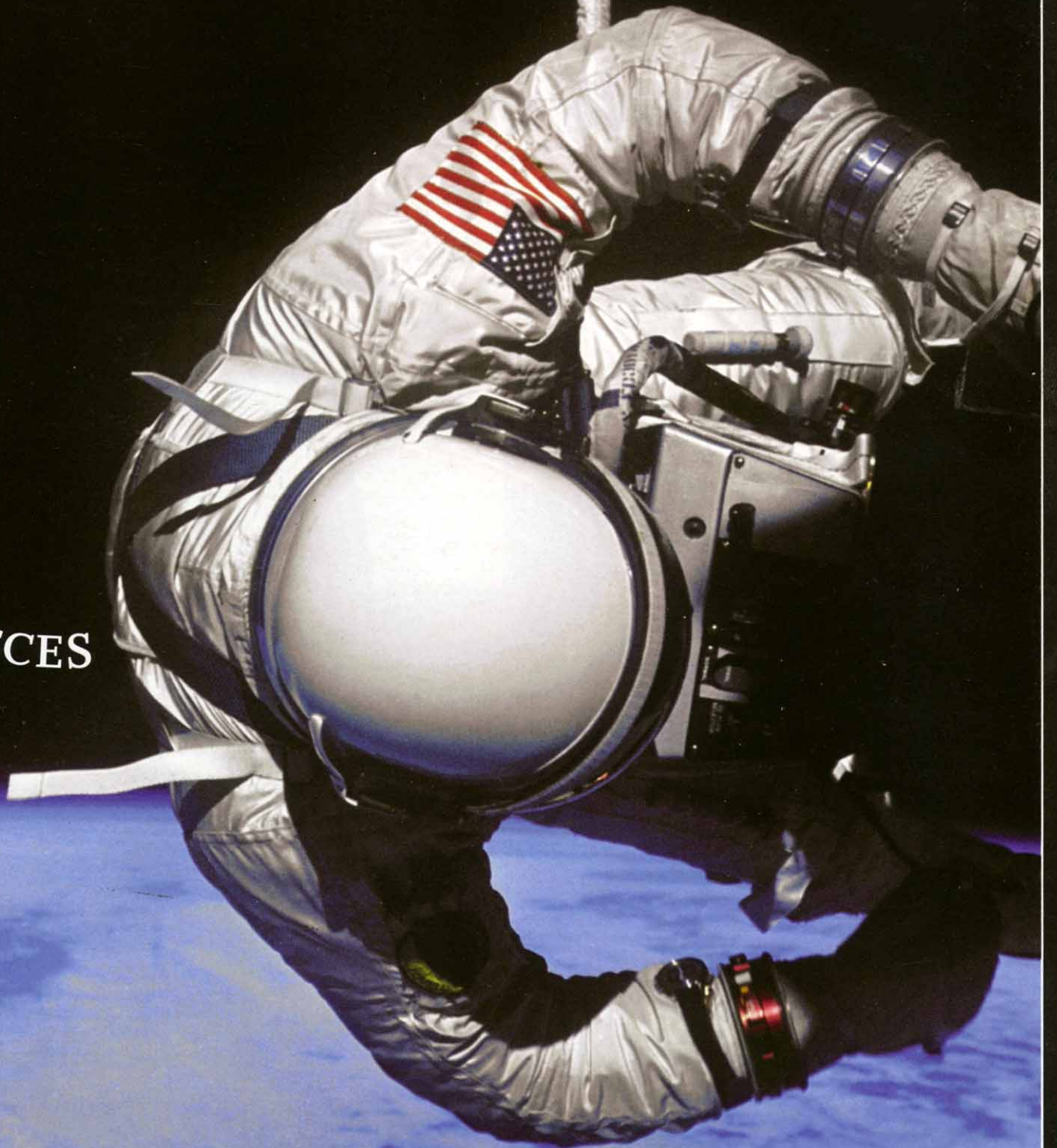


FINANCIAL TIMES

how to spend it

ONE GIANT LEAP FOR TIMEPIECES



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technopolis

Cruise the highways and rat runs of Gizmo City with the grand wizard of gadgetology, Jonathan Margolis.



NOKIA E71

As I predicted a few months ago the iPhone, since its summer upgrade to 3G, push e-mail and satnav (not forgetting its fantastic games), is starting to cut it as a serious business phone as well as the ultimate all-round gadget. At the time of writing, one global bank was considering phasing out the BlackBerry for its people and ordering 200,000 iPhones. It didn't in the end, but it marked a sort of coming of age for the iPhone. All this makes it rather hard taking rival smart phones seriously, but this latest business phone from Nokia, the E71, is a stainless steel beauty. It's about the same size as the iPhone, but arguably even smarter, and has proper keys for those who can't get on with the Apple screen keys (or Apple in general). It has faster-than-3G HSDPA and is also slightly more grounded on planet Earth than the iPhone, providing, as it does, one-touch access to over 1,000 e-mail providers, including Gmail, AOL and so on. It's gorgeous, then - and very, very sensible too. £330, SIM-free, from www.expansys.com; 0161-868 0868 or various deals with contract. See www.nokia.com.

POWERGORILLA

In May, I introduced you to Powermonkey from a brilliant company called Powertraveller.

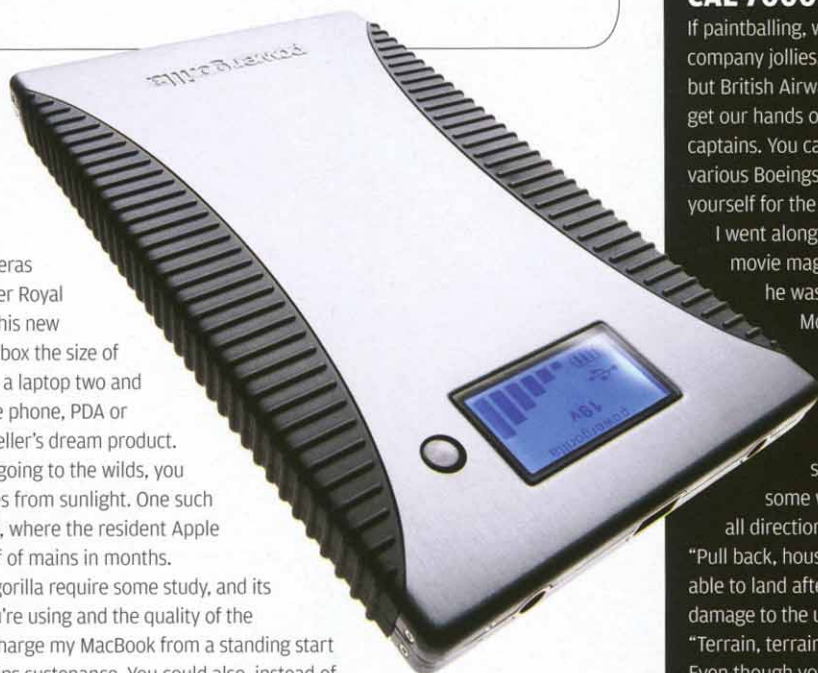
Powermonkey is a pocket-sized power station that charges phones, iPods, cameras etc. Jerry Ranger, Powertraveller's former Royal Marine founder, popped by to show me his new baby, Powergorilla. This is a stylish grey box the size of a large-ish paperback that can recharge a laptop two and a half times, and kickstart a dead mobile phone, PDA or iPod. It seems to be every business traveller's dream product.

It's also pretty tough. If you're really going to the wilds, you can also get a Solargorilla which charges from sunlight. One such rig has been used at Everest base camp, where the resident Apple PowerBook hasn't had or needed a sniff of mains in months.

The various ways of using the Powergorilla require some study, and its powers vary according to the laptop you're using and the quality of the battery it's blessed with. It was able to charge my MacBook from a standing start (dead battery) twice before needing mains sustenance. You could also, instead of using the Powergorilla to recharge, leave it plugged in permanently while working on, say, a long-haul journey where there's no power outlet or the power isn't working. In this mode, I got 11 hours straight. If you wanted to be clever, you could also deploy the Solargorilla on a flight and pick up power from the bright sun outside the blind. You can also daisychain; while you're working, say, in a hotel room, you can keep the Powergorilla

charging from the mains and putting charge into your laptop at the same time, so you leave for the airport with two charged batteries for the effort of one. Beware: the one plug it doesn't have is the wonderful magnetic MagSafe used on MacBooks and Powerbooks; Apple won't license it to third parties, so you need to buy an extra lead from Apple. Annoying, but not a deal breaker. You'll be hearing about more products from Powertraveller as they come out.

Powergorilla, £150; Solargorilla, about £140, both from www.powertraveller.com (01420-542 980).



IDLOKR.COM PASSPORT AND CREDIT CARD SHIELD

The more technological things like passports and credit cards get, the more vulnerable they are to fraudsters. The latest biometric UK passports, and probably several of the cards in your wallet, have an RFID chip within them that can be cheaply and simply read from a distance by criminals. A north Yorkshire company, iQBio Metrics Ltd, has developed a pocket Faraday Cage - OK, it's a foil pouch - to carry your passport and sensitive paraphernalia through tricky places such as airports and shield it from prying scammers with scanners.

Take a look at the scary stuff on its website and you won't hesitate to order. They're a good idea for a prescient corporate giveaway, too, especially if you're in the security field. The company will quote for customising large orders. £4.95 for two, from www.IDLokr.com.



CAE 7000 SERIES FLIGHT SIMULATOR

If paintballing, white water rafting, or even just plain old drinking have lost their appeal as company jollies, I have a feeling this will butter your croissant. It seems almost unbelievable, but British Airways has started allowing us non-Nigels (Nigel is airline slang for a BA pilot) to get our hands on its state-of-the-art £9m full-motion simulators and make like airline captains. You can book anything from a one-hour to a three-hour flight at the controls of various Boeings. For this, you get a pre-flight briefing, flight instruction and a BA pilot to yourself for the duration of your "flight". You can go alone or in a small group.

I went along to BA's unrivalled simulator farm at Heathrow the other evening with my movie magnate son and we had the best time together since we went tank driving when he was at school. The simulators, made by the world leader in the field, CAE of Montreal, look from the outside like props from a *War Of The Worlds*-type movie - huge robots on six scary legs shifting about comically like dads at a disco.

Inside the machine the sensation is indistinguishable from real flying. The visual display alone will make your jaw drop. Hours on these simulators count with the CAA as flying hours, and pilots routinely forget they're on a simulator. But you really don't need to be able to fly to enjoy a session: in some ways it's quite easy. You have a yoke in your hand that controls the aircraft in all directions. As our pilot put it (and I'm sure this is what they tell you at Nigel school), "Pull back, houses get smaller, push forward, houses get bigger." Even an oaf like me was able to land after a few attempts without causing more than a million pounds' worth of damage to the undercarriage (I did hear what every pilot dreads, a robotic voice shouting, "Terrain, terrain" which is short for "You're flying into a mountain" but I did it deliberately). Even though you are piloting 200 tons of metal, the "control inputs" required are almost dainty. Unless you're part of the computer-games generation (my son thrashed me to the extent that he was asked to consider training) you tend to overdo each movement and then have to undo it, setting up a cycle that would more than spill the passengers' coffee.

So, what if you fancy a simulator of your own? These aren't cheap computer games, but I can think of few better ways of escaping thoughts of everyday life and business than popping into the simulator to fly across the Atlantic. CAE can and will supply, fit and maintain a unit for a private individual, although it understandably takes its business seriously and would draw the line if your address was a cave in Afghanistan. Look to be spending around £9m including installation. About £9m, see www.cae.com. To book a simulator experience, from £399 (one hour on a 737) to £1,347 (three hours on a 747), see www.ebaft.com.

SILLY STREET

Dunhill's Mechanical Belt is so complicated that I class it as gadgetry. With one hand you can automatically expand or contract your belt by the precise 35mm, or two thumb widths, that gentlemen apparently need when they step in and out of a car (or perhaps after they've had a good business lunch). The buckle is stainless steel with 18ct rose gold components and some discreet diamonds. It has over 100 movable roller bearings, plates and levers and is fascinating to watch in action. Hurry, though, as Dunhill is only making 25 and just seven of these are allocated to London. £5,895, Alfred Dunhill, Bourdon House, Davies St, London W1 (0845-458 0779; www.dunhill.com).



HUGH THRELFALL